

2017

# West Coast Transportation Study Scope Setting

Transportation in the rural and remote west coast communities of the Alberni Clayoquot Regional District

This report is intended to define the desired scope of the transit system and current transportation assets in the region while engaging key community stakeholders to confirm buy in for the 2018 – 2019 process and ensure local input into the reports.



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## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

In 2009 a BC Transit Pre-Feasibility Study was undertaken with the District of Tofino to analyze viability of a local transit system between the communities of Tofino and Ucluelet. While no action was taken following the release of this initial study, work in the area has reignited interest in the pursuit of increased transportation options in the region. Regional partners have been united to plan around transportation aimed at increasing access to health in the region and have identified the pursuit of a BC Transit Feasibility Study as a top priority, adding more partners and capacity to this planning through the process.

Discussions with BC Transit identified an ability to plan for a regional feasibility study in 2018-2019 fiscal. In order to ensure scope of the project is set in advance and some pre work has already been completed the ACRD West Coast Committee has allocated \$5000 to initiate this work in the 2017-2018 fiscal. Pre work will define the desired scope of the transit system and current transportation assets in the region while engaging key community stakeholders to confirm buy in for the 2018 – 2019 process and ensure local input into the reports. The Alberni Clayoquot Regional District (ACRD) West Coast Committee has representation from both municipalities, Electoral Area C and the Ma-Nulth Nations of Toquaht and Yuu-thlu-ilth-aht, the remaining three nations are members of the Nuu-Chah-Nulth Tribal Council and will be engaged separately as required for this study.

## 2.0 COMMUNITY PROFILES

The west coast communities of the Alberni Clayoquot Regional District (ACRD) are made up of the two municipalities of Tofino and Ucluelet; the ACRD Electoral Area C; and the 5 Nuu-Chah-Nulth Nations, Hesquiaht, Ahousaht, Tla-o-qui-aht, Yuu-thlu-ilth-aht and Toquaht. Travel between these rural and remote communities varies between highway access, logging roads, boats and float planes. This study will focus on travel services between communities with paved road access along highway 4 and Port Albion Road - Ucluelet, Hitacu, Esowista, Ty-Histanis, Tofino and ACRD Area C - but the implications of a transit system on health, education and employment for the regional population is profound.

This section provides a breakdown of population and demographic information from the 2016 Census, the Clayoquot Biosphere Trust community survey, Living Wage Report and Clayoquot Vital Signs Report as well as in housing and population data from communities in the proposed study area. Due to challenges in information collection between the 2011 and 2016 census and inaccurate numbers reported for First Nation communities additional data sources have been sought to ensure a more accurate representation of the study area.

Communities in this region rely on shared resources, economics and amenities in order to develop and maintain a good quality of life. Communities are characterized by small populations (under 5000) which share amenities and rely on the tourism industry which is predominately centered in the two municipalities. As industry in the region grows it has become increasingly important to further connect the region to ensure all community members have access to housing, employment and community infrastructure.

### 2.1 POPULATION AND DEMOGRAPHICS

The 2016 Census recorded a permanent population of approximately 5340 residents in the west coast communities over 3228 square kilometres of diverse geography with 17% identifying as aboriginal in the Alberni Clayoquot Region. The west coast communities host a young population with a median age of 34. According to the 2016 census, 26% of the population is aged 20 to 34, followed by those aged 35 to 49 at 23% and 19% of residents from age 50 to 64. The region has a smaller youth and senior population with 13% of youth aged 0 to 19 and 12% age 65 and older.

<b>Table 1: Study Area Community Population – 2016 Census and In Community Data</b>				
<b>Community in Proposed Study Area</b>	<b>Reported 2011 Census Population</b>	<b>Reported 2016 Census Population</b>	<b>Population Increase</b>	<b>Population Reported by Community (2017)</b>
<b>Tofino</b>	1876	1932	3 %	3200 (approx.)
<b>Ucluelet</b>	1627	1717	5.5%	1717
<b>Alberni Clayoquot Area C</b>	433	677	56.4%	677
<b>Hitacu (Ittasoo)</b>	240	274	14.2 %	274
<b>Esowista (and Ty-Histanis)</b>	176	94	-46%	431
<b>Totals</b>	<b>4352</b>	<b>4694</b>	<b>6.6%</b>	<b>6349</b>

According to the 2016 Census the permanent population of the west coast communities located within the study area is 4694 and showing growth. Due to some ongoing challenges in census data with in the west coast communities the Tla-o-qui-aht community of Esowista and new development of Ty-Histanis saw a notable under reporting of residents as did the District of Tofino while the Alberni Clayoquot Area C and Yuu-thlu-ilth-aht community of Hitacu suspect slight over reporting. For the purposes of this study each community was contacted to validate population through housing departments and district records where possible, population data which could be verified was updated in Table 1. With community data incorporated the west coast communities in this study area have a permanent population of 6349 showing considerable growth since the 2011 census.

## 2.2 COMMUNITY EVOLUTION

The allure of the Pacific Rim National Park and marketing for the region as a tourist destination has led to growth and a significant tourism economy in the west coast communities.

- The region sees an annual influx of visitors and seasonal workers, 940 000 visits to Pacific Rim National Park between May and October in 2015 according to Parks Canada.
- Most opportunities for employment are located in the municipalities of Ucluelet and Tofino, with ongoing economic and community growth the need for housing and transportation services within and between communities becomes more evident.
- Seasonality of the tourism industry draws a young demographic which are often not accounted for as residents in our municipalities for census although Districts are working to address this information gap.
- New housing developments in the First Nation communities have led to growing populations, increased training and employment opportunities in community as well as need to access services in neighboring communities.
- Although 2016 Census numbers identify a 6.6% growth, when community population data is incorporated the growth rate is significant and development is continuing.

## 2.3 COMMUNITY LAND USE AND FORM

Communities in the study area are comprised primarily of single family dwellings which account for 66% of housing. Official community plans and housing studies in the area as a whole are recognizing the need for increased affordability and housing options in order to accommodate long term residents and seasonal workers while balancing the demands of an attractive vacation destination. First Nation communities with in as well as outside of the study area have been active in developing new housing opportunities for members which has seen an increase to populations as well as an increased need develop community amenities and means to access those in neighboring communities.

## 2.4 EMPLOYMENT

2016 Census reports that the median income after tax for households in the study area is \$52,448 while the 2017 Clayoquot Living Wage calculation suggests an annual household income of \$73,200 is required to meet regional living expenses. A large percentage of residents rely on sales and service roles in tourism as a primary occupation with 26.6% of residents reporting that they have 2 jobs and 11.6% have 3+ jobs. According to the Clayoquot Living Wage calculation 40% of residents earn less than or close to minimum wage and 67% of residents earn less than the calculated living wage of \$20.11. The 2016 census demonstrates the strong trend towards the tourism based economic drivers, the top concentrations of industries which residents in the study area are employed:

- 28% in accommodation and food services;
- 9% in retail trade;
- 7% in agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting;
- 7% in construction;
- And 6% in public administration, healthcare and social work and transportation and warehousing respectively.

## 2.5 COMMUNITY AMENITIES AND TRIP GENERATORS

Due to the small permanent population in the region infrastructure for basic needs such as health care, education, recreation and employment are shared between communities. Most infrastructure and employment opportunities are located in one of the two municipalities which necessitates increased travel between communities. Recreation facilities and halls exist throughout the region with local programming for residents, annual and special events at both indoor and outdoor venues in part due to the tourism industry as well as the prevalence of outdoor activities and culture. The following table outlines infrastructure distribution in communities throughout the region.

<b>Table 2: Community Infrastructure</b>									
<b>Infrastructure</b>	<b>Communities Within Study Area</b>				<b>Communities Outside of Study Area</b>				
	<b>Tofino</b>	<b>Esowista/ Ty- Histanis</b>	<b>Ucluelet</b>	<b>Hitacu</b>	<b>Area C</b>	<b>Ahousaht</b>	<b>Hot Springs Cove</b>	<b>Opitsaht</b>	<b>Macoah</b>
<b>Health Care</b>									
<b>Hospital</b>	X								
<b>Medical Clinic</b>	X		X						
<b>Health Centre (Visiting Practitioners)</b>		X		X		X	X	X	X
<b>Education</b>									
<b>Elementary</b>	X		X			X	X		
<b>High School</b>			X			X			
<b>Post-Secondary</b>			X						
<b>Grocery</b>									
<b>Grocery Store</b>	X		X						
<b>General Store</b>		X				X			X
<b>Employment and Economic Centres</b>									
<b>Primary Employers</b>	X		X						

In order to secure employment and services community members in the study area as well as those residing in more remote communities rely on private modes of transportation, hitchhiking and ride sharing to travel within and between communities. The 2014 Clayoquot Biosphere Trust Regional Survey, in which 518 community members participated, identified travel habits:

- 33% identified that transportation options would improve their quality of life;
- 23.5% commute to a community for work which is different from where they live;
- 30.7% identified that a lack of transportation has regularly affected their ability to participate in social events;
- 21.3% identified that a lack of transportation is a constant burden in their life;
- And 4.2% identified hitch hiking as their primary mode of transportation.

When surveyed for the 2015 Clayoquot Region Vital Signs Report local youth reported:

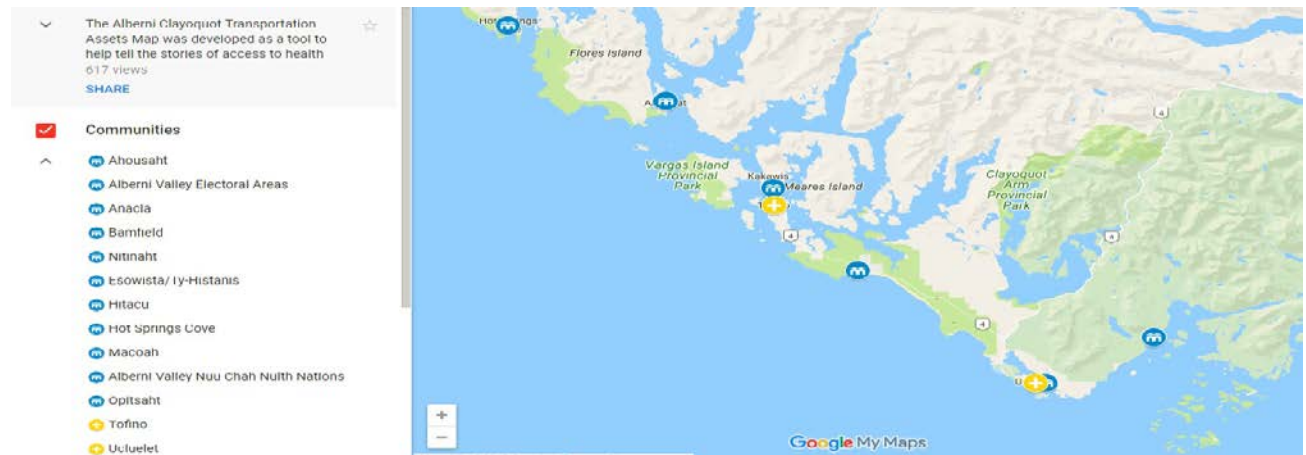
- 24% reported that they hitch hike;
- 36% missed a sport, club or event because they had no way to get there;
- 10% missed school;
- And 6% missed work.

## 2.6 SUMMARY

West coast communities of the Alberni Clayoquot Regional District are small rural remote communities experiencing growth which is accounted for and expected to continue through tourism based economic drivers. These communities experience a high level of interdependence, sharing basic amenities in order to meet the basic needs of community members for employment, education, health services and grocery. Due to the predominance of typically lower paid tourism and retail based jobs combined with amenity sharing and housing shortages the need for affordable solutions to increase mobility in the region are evident and well supported by local leadership. Transportation service between communities would be an asset to increasing accessibility to basic needs while providing safer transportation options to individuals without personal modes of transportation.

### 3.0 EXISTING TRANSPORTATION OPTIONS

The west coast communities of the Alberni Clayoquot Regional District can be accessed by highway 4 from Port Alberni. There are five communities located in the area with paved road access as well as a few rural subdivisions of ACRD Area C, the remaining four west coast communities are considered remote with access via logging roads, boat or float plane. In 2016 the Alberni Clayoquot Health Network undertook a mapping project to document the modes, cost, frequency and distance of travel from each community with in the ACRD and can be accessed for more information at [www.achn.ca/transportation/](http://www.achn.ca/transportation/). Community and transportation profile PDF's hosted on this map outline access to community amenities and transportation options, both motorized and active.



#### 3.1 ROADWAYS

Highway 4 is the connector between the municipalities of Tofino and Ucluelet, the communities of Esowista and Ty-Histanis are located mid-way with a few ACRD Area C subdivisions and dwellings located along the route. Hitacu and the Area C subdivision of Port Albion are located off of highway 4 on Port Albion Road, a paved spur road. All communities within the study area have paved roadways and some sidewalk infrastructure within communities.

#### 3.2 WALKING AND CYCLING

As with many rural communities walking and cycling infrastructure can be limited in certain sections of each community, shoulders on highways are narrow if present at all but recent efforts to plan more accessible active transportation options has seen improvements to this. Both municipalities have active transportation infrastructure adjacent to the main corridors which also runs adjacent to highway 4 for a few kms outside of the villages, the new Tla-o-qui-aht Nation development of Ty-Histanis has incorporated sidewalks and lighting for increased community mobility throughout its development. Additionally communities along highway 4 will soon be connected via a walking and cycling trail through the Pacific Rim National Park which will ensure increased safety for those who choose to utilise active transportation on this 40 km stretch of highway.

### 3.3 BUS SERVICE

Tofino Bus operates a route between Tofino and Ucluelet with 1 round trip (\$17 for an adult, \$9 for children per trip) between communities each day with an additional trip Friday and Sunday. Routes are increased during busy tourism season but the majority of Tofino Bus operations are focused on routes between communities throughout the island.

<b>Ucluelet</b>	<b>1:50 pm</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>8:35 pm</b>	<b>-</b>
<b>Tofino</b>	<b>2:40 pm</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>9:15 pm</b>	<b>-</b>

\* These routes operated with Interline carriers. Tofino Bus promotions not available.

<b>Tofino Express Southbound</b>				
for departures from	daily	daily	Fri & Sun only	Fri & Sun only
<b>Tofino</b>	-	<b>10:25 am</b>	<b>12:45 pm</b>	-
<b>Ucluelet</b>	-	<b>11:05 am</b>	<b>1:05 pm</b>	-

Since 2012, the District of Tofino has offered a free hourly, daytime shuttle from late June to early September through a contract with Tofino Bus. This service is funded by a blend of Resort Municipality Initiative funding, pay parking revenue, and Gas Tax grant funding. Ridership statistics from this six year seasonal shuttle indicate steady growth and an increase in usage by residents and visitors alike. In 2017, the shuttle operated from 8:00 am to 10:00 pm with nine stops servicing 26,270 riders over the two-month program. When the shuttle service was established in 202, riders were charged a \$2 fare. In 2014, the fare was eliminated and ridership tripled compared to the previous year. Detailed usage statistics and records on local and visitor usage have been kept by the District staff and are accessible upon request.

<b>Tofino Free Shuttle Annual Usage</b>						
Year	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
<b>Annual Usage</b>	4,264	4,563	11,859	13,460	15,101	26,270

School District 70 contracts Tofino Bus to transport students to: Ucluelet Elementary School from Hitacu and Area C subdivisions; Wickannish Elementary school from Esowista, Ty-Histanis and subdivisions of Tofino; and Ucluelet High School from Tofino, Opitsaht, Esowista, Ty-Histanis, Hitacu and Area C. With a 5pm bus operating Tuesday to Thursday for students attending classes in Ucluelet travelling home to Hitacu, Port Albion, Ty-hi-stanis, Esowista, Tofino and Opitsaht for extracurricular activities. This service is operated free for students only.



### 3.4 OTHER TRANSPORTATION

As noted previously many of the residents of the west coast communities rely on private transportation options in order to access basic needs, as such less safe transportation options such as hitch hiking are also common to those without personal transportation. Communities outside of the study area must either access private transportation to navigate logging roads in the case of the Toquaht Nation community of Macoah or boat and float plane transport to Tofino for services for the Hesquiaht Nation community of Hot Springs Cove, Ahousaht Nation and Tla-o-qui-aht Nation community of Opitsaht which are located on surrounding land masses. Additional opportunities for transportation exist in the region which increases accessibility to residents and visitors alike:

- Long Beach Airport – located off Long Beach on highway 4 mid way between municipalities with limited transportation services, recently updated facilities have increased and continue to increase air traffic into the region
  - Orca Airlines – up to 5 scheduled flights to region per day from Vancouver and Victoria
  - KD Air – up to 2 scheduled flights to region per day from Vancouver
  - Pacific Coastal Airlines – newly announced planned daily scheduled flights starting Spring 2018
  - Charter flights from four additional companies as airport traffic increases
- Budget Car Rental – located at the Long Beach Airport, \$150+/day
- Tofino Taxi – One way fares; \$35 to Esowista/Ty-Histanis, \$90 to Ucluelet
- Ucluelet Taxi – One way fares; \$35 Hitacu, \$90 to Tofino
- Pacific Rim Navigator - \$95 one way between Ucluelet and Tofino
- Wheels for Wellness – by donation for medical transport to Port Alberni and beyond

## 4.0 WORKS CITED

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Statistics Canada. (2016). National Household Survey.