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STRATEGIC PLAN

2025 – 2028



BOW VALLEY REGIONAL TRANSIT SERVICES COMMISSION

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Introduction

The Bow Valley Regional Transit Services Commission (BVRTSC) was formed to provide or coordinate local and regional public transit services within the regional service area. The Commission is composed of three voting members—Town of Banff, Town of Canmore and Improvement District No. 9—who provide funding and strategic direction for long-range transit planning.

The Commission is supported by administration staff from the towns of Banff and Canmore and ID9. As well, Parks Canada attends all Board meetings and actively participates as a non-voting member of the Commission. The voting members and Parks Canada value public transit as an essential service. Public transit contributes to broader community sustainability goals by reducing greenhouse gas emissions, traffic congestion and providing transportation options for the Bow Valley's diverse residents and visitors.

This plan is intended to provide guidance on the continuing development, growth and operation of the BVRTSC for 2025 through to 2028. This long-range transit strategy envisions what BVRTSC's transit network should look like 5, 10, and 15 years from now and describes the priorities, infrastructure and investment needed to achieve the Commission's goals. BVRTSC's operational plan is a supplement to this long-term strategy document as it will outline the timeline and budget requirements to support the key actions of this strategy.

This plan is intended to provide guidance on the continuing development, growth and operation of the BVRTSC for 2025 through to 2028.

Context

Since the four-year 2021 Strategic Plan for BVRTSC was published, there have been significant changes in the Bow Valley that impact public transit. Notably, visitation and transit use has returned to levels well above those pre-COVID, and there have been significant transit improvements, including:

- » **Service expansion:**
 - **Banff:** free transit for 400,000 Banff resident trips in 2023
 - **Canmore:** seasonal route added to serve Grassi Lakes area
 - **ID9:** added Route 11 pilot in Lake Louise to help locals and Lake Louise hotel guests move around the community
 - » **A 48% increase in service hours** since 2019
 - » **A 74% increase in ridership on all routes** (from 1.5M to 2.6M in 2023)
 - **Ridership on Banff local routes up by 60%**
 - **Ridership on Canmore local transit up 117%**
 - **Ridership on 8X Lake Louise Express up 116%**
 - **Note:** Population growth or increased densification in Canmore is another factor impacting ridership growth
 - » **Bus fleet has grown from 23 to a projected 41 buses (2025)**
 - » **Only service from Calgary to Canmore, Banff and Lake Louise is managed by the BVRTSC and has seen significant expansion**
- Infrastructure improvements have included:
- » **The addition of a new operations training and storage facility in Banff (2021)**
 - » **Additional office space and indoor bus parking** secured in the Canmore Protective Services Building (2023)
 - » **Purchase of a newly constructed 5 bedroom, 5 bathroom staff accommodation unit in Canmore (2023)**
 - » **Intercept Parking at the West Entrance to Banff** (767 stalls), lots full by 11 a.m. on weekends, most weekdays
 - » **Nancy Pauw Bridge**, had 5,000 crossings per day in summer of 2023. This is 30% of all pedestrian river crossings and means 38% of river crossings are now through transit and active modes
 - » **Banff Pedestrian Zone (2020 to 2024)**, which incentivized visitors and residents to park and walk in town. This also acts as a priority lane for Transit
 - » **Visitor Pay Parking** (since 2021 in Banff, and 2022 in downtown Canmore), which incentivizes intercept parking and transit use and provides a significant revenue stream (net \$3.5M in 2023 in Banff; \$1.5M in 2023 in Canmore) to help fund transportation initiatives
 - » **New priority transit lane construction on Mountain Ave in Banff (2024)**
 - » **The Town of Canmore has invested significantly in bus stop improvements, installing 9 transit shelters in 2021/22 with another 16 contracted for installation in Fall 2024 and Spring 2025.**
 - » **Parks Canada has implemented:**
 - Paid parking at upper Lake Louise
 - Moraine Lake Road Personal Vehicle Restriction
 - Movement of the Parks Canada Park and Ride to Lake Louise Ski Area
 - Minnewanka Park and Ride Pilot
- These improvements have led to a dramatic modal shift away from personal vehicle use. The Town of Banff is seeing downward trends of vehicular traffic at key sites, including the bridge and on Mountain Avenue as south side ridership has increased by 67%, yet the road network remains beyond capacity in peak season.

Key planning considerations



BANFF NATIONAL PARK MANAGEMENT PLAN IMPLEMENTATION:

The 2022 Banff National Park of Canada Management Plan includes development of a comprehensive people-movement plan for the park that sets ten-year goals, objectives and measurable targets, and considers local, regional, municipal and private transportation offers, existing pathways and trails, key attractions, and current and projected levels and patterns of visitor use. In addition, recommendations arising from the Moving People Sustainably Report may increase demand for transit within the Bow Valley.

VISITATION RELATED CHALLENGES:

Visitation is expected to continue to grow due to population growth in Calgary and Canada, as a result of additional housing units and hotel rooms in Banff and Canmore, and in response to provincial and federal initiatives to increase tourism overall. Driving disincentives, mass transit or intercept parking will be needed to get daytrip visitors out of vehicles.

FUTURE TRANSIT DEMAND TO INCREASE, BUT GROWTH PROJECTIONS ARE UNCLEAR:

In the past 10 years, transit ridership has increased by 400% in Banff, and is anticipated to increase by 270% in Canmore by 2030. BVRTSC needs reliable targets for future resource planning. Today, the Commission is experiencing:

- » Seasonal bus overload challenges
- » Fleet reliability issues
- » Space shortages (fleet storage, charging, administration)
- » Driver recruitment and retention challenges, including issues hiring short-term seasonal driver positions. At issue is cost of living and housing.



PROVINCIAL AND FEDERAL FUNDING AVAILABILITY:

BVRTSC and its partners rely on grant funding for capital projects, including the building of transit infrastructure and purchase of new vehicles. Upcoming Federal and Provincial elections over the term of this plan have the potential to affect available grant funding.

HUMAN RESOURCE CAPACITY:

BVRTSC currently does not have the human resource or infrastructure capacity to serve the number of visitors/residents who require public transportation. Any planned increase to transit service must consider all aspects of additional human capital and infrastructure needed.

INTEGRATED MODAL SHIFT:

Transit is just one way to move people in our communities, an integrated modal shift is required to address vehicle capacity on roadways (e.g., Town of Banff already at maximum vehicle capacity in summer) and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Integrated services will have an impact on BVRTSC:

- » More people arriving by mass transit, including OnIt, has the potential to increase demand for local transit
- » The Government of Alberta's Passenger Rail Master Plan will increase the demand for transit services if a line from Calgary to Banff is approved and funded.
- » Parks Canada is preparing Visitor Use Management Plans for key sites, which will inform how specific areas will be managed.

Organization's committed to sustainable transportation in the Bow Valley will all have a role getting people out of their cars if they arrive by personal vehicle in the future.

TECHNOLOGICAL CHANGE:

BVRTSC needs to be prepared to embrace emerging technology. This could involve the introduction of new vehicle and propulsion types, including the possibility of autonomous vehicles. As well, technological advances are occurring rapidly in fare payment and data collection areas, and Roam needs to be prepared to research and adopt changes that can enhance efficiency. Technological advances that assist with creating a fully integrated transportation network throughout the Bow Valley need to be fully investigated and considered.

Strategic Direction

TOWN OF BANFF

The Town of Banff has a vehicle problem. The community's road system is finite and in order to manage ever-increasing volumes of visitors arriving in vehicles, we need to park vehicles and move people in other ways. We also recognize the role that transit plays in helping solve our housing crisis by enabling residents to live in the Bow Valley without the need to own a vehicle.

Banff aims to continue working towards making transit, walking and cycling the preferred choices for more trips by residents and visitors. Recent changes to help achieve this goal include: intercept parking; increases in transit frequency; the Nancy Pauw Pedestrian Bridge; Banff Ave pedestrian zone (and transit lane); a new transit storage facility; bus investments; free transit for Banff residents; e-bike rebates; and the Mountain Avenue transit lane.

Visitor pay parking frees up highly coveted parking spaces and dissuades driving downtown, while helping to offset the costs of these solutions. In the 5-year period that all these changes have occurred we've seen transit ridership increase by 70% on the Banff local routes and more than double on all routes combined. We have seen firsthand a "build it and they will come" phenomenon.

The Town of Banff aims to build on successes by implementing strategies to reduce reliance on personal vehicles to get to Banff and move around town, and by providing a sustainable mass transit system that enhances

the resident and visitor experience. The Town's incorporation agreement states that Banff "serve(s), as its primary function, as a centre for visitors to the Park" and we take our role as a hub for welcoming visitors from across the world seriously. We are keen to work with Parks Canada on implementing the 2022 Banff National Park of Canada Management Plan, including using recommendations from the Expert Panel on Moving People Sustainably.

AREAS OF FOCUS

- » Provide a sustainable transportation system that enhances the resident and visitor experience
- » Implement strategies to reduce reliance on personal vehicles to get to Banff and to move around town
- » Develop new and enhanced active mode infrastructure and initiatives
- » Pursue convenient, affordable, and frequent mass transit connecting Banff with Calgary, other communities in the Bow Valley and attractions in the park.





TOWN OF CANMORE

Canmore is a world-class destination and home to a growing community. With our increasing popularity and geographical constraints, traffic delays during peak times are expected to worsen without proactive solutions. To address these demands, the Town of Canmore is committed to improving long-term mobility.

We promote alternative transportation by making cycling, walking, and public transit more accessible, safe, and convenient. This aligns with our Council's 2023-2026 Strategic Plan to enhance Canmore's reputation as an environmental leader while improving livability.

Our focus is on moving people safely and efficiently by advancing the vision of our Integrated Transportation Plan. We aim for a 40% non-vehicular trip share by 2030, 5% of which we intend will be by transit. As transportation also significantly contributes to greenhouse gas emissions in Canmore, our Climate Emergency Action Plan emphasizes the shift to sustainable and affordable transportation options, including expanding free fare local transit.

We support Bow Valley Regional Transit Services as they develop strategies to enhance our network. The growth of Roam Transit, with over 300,000 rides on local Route 5 in 2023—a 73% increase from 2022—shows potential for meeting our 2030 targets. Future planning should increase travel trips around the Town Centre from 1-2% to 5% by 2030 to ensure that Canmore remains a place where all residents can thrive.

AREAS OF FOCUS

- » Increase affordable and convenient options to encourage more trips by fare-free transit, foot, or bicycle
- » Work to combat climate change and prepare for climate adaptation through our programs and initiatives, especially through transitioning to clean energy, advocating for net zero building standards, and supporting alternate modes of transportation in and around the community.

ID9

Improvement District No 9 (ID9) aims to help residents and visitors experience the incredibly unique destination of ID9 through collaborative relationships with local, provincial and federal agencies to provide access to a wide-variety of economically responsible services. Through our annual strategic planning process, regional transit was identified as an area of high importance. As well, focusing time and attention on services for residents is top of mind. Our focus is ensuring ID9 is an incredible place to live, do business and visit. ID9 strives to balance the transit needs of visitors and residents to connect to areas within ID9 and to outside communities and destinations for essential services and pleasure.

AREAS OF FOCUS

- » Pilot a Lake Louise local service
- » Support the BVRTSC to better understand and define our identity and purpose in regards to users, service levels, and destinations
- » Work with Parks Canada to decrease traffic congestion and parking related issues
- » Provide a transportation system that is economically sustainable and affordable
- » Increase the reliability and frequency of service focusing on optimizing schedule adherence
- » Reduce our carbon footprint.

PARKS CANADA

As per the Banff National Park of Canada Management Plan (2022), Parks Canada will plan for people moving within the park hand-in-hand with planning for visitor use, with the constraints and opportunities that drive it, and with ecological integrity as a cornerstone. Planning will be done with a long-term view to our warming climate, through incorporating concepts such as opportunities for self-propelled transportation, incentives for non-fossil fuel dependent transport, and use of recycled or permeable materials for path or road construction.

Parks Canada continues to support the work of the Bow Valley Regional Transit Services Commission, as they develop transportation systems for the Bow Valley to reduce traffic congestion within and outside of park communities, and enhance access to trailheads, campgrounds, parkways, and day-use areas. Public transit remains an important tool in park and visitor use management, sustainability, and addressing visitor infrastructure capacity challenges at select locations in Banff National Park.

VISION:

The best way to travel in and around the Bow Valley is to (use) Roam.

MISSION:

We provide sustainable, accessible and convenient public transit, so residents and visitors to the Bow Valley are able to travel without the use of a private vehicle.



STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

1 Sustainable and seamless public service delivery that supports increased frequency and year-round transit:

We are committed to taking climate action, and delivering a sustainable transit system that makes it as easy as possible for our riders to reach the places they want to go.

2 Modernized fleet, infrastructure and enabling technology:

We are committed to increasing the energy efficiency of our fleet and facilities and implementing new technology to optimize our network and operational performance.

3 Employer of choice:

We rely on an engaged Roam team to meet our goals, which is why we are committed to investing in our people to ensure we can continue to attract top talent and keep them.

OBJECTIVES:

1 Support broader sustainable transportation plans for each of our administrative partner communities to support:

- » Transportation choice by providing accessible and convenient transit
- » Reduced vehicle congestion
- » A cultural shift toward walking, cycling and use of other sustainable transportation options of the future
- » Climate action

2 Be known as an employer of choice, with low employee turnover and high employee engagement.

3 Be celebrated as an accessible, easy to use transit system because BVRTSC is the preferred way to travel and is integrated with other active travel modes.

KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

- » Rider Net Promoter Score
- » On Time Performance
- » Network Performance
 - Boardings per revenue hour
 - Seasonal overload
 - Cost per passenger trip
 - Cost recovery
 - Staff retention and engagement
 - Fuel/energy consumption
- » Finance

The service levels we aim to provide:

OUR STRATEGY

- » Become proactive in our service delivery and operations approach
- » Provide expert guidance to the Town of Banff, Town of Canmore, and ID9 Council's to help meet their service expectations
- » Leverage partnerships with other transit transportation partners/shuttle providers
- » Work with Parks Canada to support the development of appropriate and integrated transit infrastructure within the park
- » Manage our growth by:
 - Setting parameters around the # of riders BVRTSC can support each year and clearly communicating
 - Build a year-round service that benefits residents and visitors, while allowing for human resource stability
 - Securing the infrastructure funding to support manageable growth
 - Optimizing our fleet maintenance structure.



5 YEARS

SHORT-TERM GOAL:

Serving 3M riders and providing year-round transit that allows locals to move around within their community and supports visitor mode shift.

What will be required:

- » Ensure future network designs focus on reliability, frequency and convenience
- » Limit short-term growth to ensure maintenance and operational teams are able to deliver efficient and consistently reliable transit service
- » Capital growth that supports ridership and network future expansion (e.g., Nine new buses by March 2025, bringing the total Roam fleet to 43)
- » New facilities to house and maintain future fleet and team
- » Transit prioritization and better integration with other active modes of transportation
- » Reduce the 'peaks and valleys' of service throughout the year—consistent service areas and service levels year round
- » Exploration of new high volume transit technology and modes, including double deckers, articulated buses, etc.



10 YEARS

MID-TERM GOAL:

Serving 5M riders, and explore expansion to other areas of the Bow Valley Corridor (including Calgary).

What will be required:

- » A network that is known for being reliable and convenient
- » The rolling stock necessary to match ridership needs
- » Exploration of new high volume transit technology and modes
- » A mobility pass + app that shows partial system integration (note: communication integration not operational integration)
- » The possibility to add on-demand micro-transit services in underserved areas
- » Transit is easier than driving



15 YEARS

LONG-TERM GOAL:

Serving 7M riders, and achievement of transportation mode equity.

What will be required:

- » A network that is known for being the optimal way to travel in the Bow Corridor
- » The rolling stock necessary to match ridership needs
- » Addition of new high volume transit technology and modes, including autonomous buses, electric double deckers, etc.
- » An integrated Bow Valley transportation network
- » BVRTSC prepared to support intercept lots in all partner communities
- » Driving into communities no longer viewed as a preferred option



5 YEARS | SHORT-TERM ACTIONS:

Serving 3M riders and providing year-round transit that allows locals to move around within their community and supports visitor mode shift.

SUSTAINABLE AND SEAMLESS SERVICE DELIVERY

1.1 Undertake a Bow Valley Transit Corridor Study to gain clarity on growth of transit use in near, mid-term and long-term scenarios

There are many factors outside BVRTSC's control that are influencing ridership. BVRTSC will develop a future ridership model that considers population growth (i.e. Calgary and Bow Valley), the Federal and Provincial governments' tourism growth strategies, other guiding municipal policies, local marketing strategies to increase transit ridership, patterns of visitor and resident behaviours around transit ridership, and how Parks Canada's Visitor Use Management Plans for key sites will impact use. To deliver optimized network performance, a study is required to provide the Commission with an analysis of what to expect for growth and inform BVRTSC under what conditions could operations be expanded into regional transit operations, ski areas and Parks Canada destinations to create a further integrated network.

A key consideration of the study will be to consider how controlled growth can help with a plan to design a more sustainable year-round service that supports human resource stability and meets future consumer needs/expectations.

1.2 Develop an updated and sustainable funding model that is equitable for partners and allows each to achieve their goals

Today, Administrative Partners equally pay

1/3rd of BVRTSC administrative costs as well as the operating costs for the routes in their municipality/district. Completing a review of the BVRTSC's Operating Bylaws will help assess the fairness of the Commission's current funding model. The review will consider how network performance goals are prioritized based on administrative partner funding and needs. In addition a new funding model will need to explore opportunities to consider using debt servicing to support growth, future grant funding from provincial and federal sources and consider future requests for "fare-free routes" by partners or "locals pricing."

Following this review and the potential development of a revised funding model, BVRTSC will design equitable criteria on how the Commission will work with partners to develop a stronger governance structure.

1.3 Create a transit fare strategy

The fare payment system for Roam needs to be easy to use for customers and easy to administer. It needs to also consider the impact of fare – free service on routes 1 and 2 in Banff and the possible integration of transit tickets combined with hotel stay costs/gondola tickets, etc. in the future.

1.4 Update BVRTSC's overall communication and marketing strategy

It will be important to proactively communicate with partners and visitors around what to expect from transit (e.g., is there a way to pre-communicate "the next bus is full" to stops where

guests are waiting for buses). Overpromising on service delivery has the potential to create long-term damage to Roam's reputation and could, therefore, negatively impact future modal behaviour shift needed to support sustainable transportation in the Bow Valley.

In addition, BVRTSC will gather more data on rider satisfaction and motivation to ride and will integrate insights into its marketing and partner communications strategy. All communication channels will be considered, including proactive social media activities.

1.5 Work with the Canadian Urban Transit Association (CUTA) to align on federal and provincial transit funding priorities

BVRTSC will work with partners at CUTA to ensure political alignment on transit issues from both federal and provincial governments to ensure the best support for the Bow Valley. The Commission will also consider whether it needs to develop a stronger government relations strategy to inform future funding needs locally and regionally.

MODERNIZED FLEET, INFRASTRUCTURE AND ENABLING TECHNOLOGY

1.6 Develop a fleet management and infrastructure strategy to meet future service level needs

Following completion of the corridor study, BVRTSC will identify the number of and type of buses needed to provide appropriate service levels. This strategy will include recommendations on future facilities needed to support long-term ridership (i.e. bus garage, bus shelters, amenities at stops, technology requirements, etc.).

BVRTSC will ensure effective management of maintenance services, including a fleet strategy identifying a parts inventory plan that will keep buses in service.

1.7 Investigate opportunities for transit prioritization

In 2024, the Town of Banff constructed an express lane for Transit, and ID9 and Parks Canada has made similar changes to improve transit access to parking lots in Lake Louise and Moraine Lake. BVRTSC will work with partners to investigate additional prioritization opportunities to include but not limited to:

- » Transit priority lanes at Campground entrances during busy summer days/time of day
- » Bus priority lanes at the Upper and Lower Sulphur Mountain Parking lots
- » Transit Priority lanes in Canmore at high congestion locations (Shops of Canmore)
- » Transit Priority traffic signal technology in Banff and Canmore (hold a green light for nearby transit buses).

1.8 Continue to innovate through the introduction of technology

Users of public transit have come to expect a certain level of technology be part of their transit experience. Through the Roam Transit Customer Survey, we learned that Roam users want the ability to check on the live location of their bus, plan a trip, pay for a fare with a smart or credit card, and travel efficiently. Roam has traditionally been at the forefront of many transit specific technologies (i.e. smart fareboxes, curbside digital signage, Google Transit integration) and will continue to prioritize technology advancement. We will continue to:

- » Work with partners to identify locations where technology can assist with on-time performance.

- » Continue to promote Roam's real time bus location technology, which enables customers to receive real time bus arrival predictions as well as real time service updates like stop closures service delays, and detours
- » As part of a fare technology review, look to the acceptance of fare payment on board buses using debit and credit card
- » Consider implementing fare capping options, so riders can be assured they are travelling in the most effective way.

EMPLOYER OF CHOICE

I.9 Develop an updated human resource management plan and housing strategy that considers year-round service and is based on short, mid and long-term actions

The aim is to develop a plan that firmly positions the Commission as an equitable employer of choice, able to house a percentage of BVRTSC's diverse workforce, offer staff incentives and highly competitive compensation, and host staff events. This plan will ensure BVRTSC has the administrative and operational support to manage growth and support high staff retention, so it will include performance management considerations as well as an ongoing training plan (customer service, bus maintenance/mechanics, etc.).





10 YEARS | MID-TERM ACTIONS:

Serving 5M riders, and explore expansion to other areas of the Bow Valley Corridor (including Calgary).

10 YEARS

SUSTAINABLE AND SEAMLESS SERVICE DELIVERY

2.1 Investigate a service expansion plan

Tourism growth means there will be an increased demand for transit services across the Bow Valley Corridor. Utilizing the results of the Bow Valley Transit Corridor Study, BVRTSC will explore the possibility of expanding its service to other surrounding areas, including, Calgary, Kananaskis Country, MD of Bighorn, Banff National Park and even alignment to Jasper National Park even providing connections along Highway 93 North (i.e. Icefields Parkway).

2.2 Exploration and potential launch of on-demand micro-transit plan

BVRTSC will consider whether to provide additional on-demand transit to low population communities (i.e. Larch or Peaks of Grassi in Canmore) or provide service during off-peak, low ridership hours.

2.3 Launch of new technology to enhance trip planning

BVRTSC will continue to investigate the development of an app or smart technology and possibly create a centralized online trip planning technology that integrates all available public transportation systems.

This will enhance seamless service delivery by showing transit users the integrated transportation services available and improve their transportation planning capability.

2.4 Update BVRTSC's communication strategy

Continue to align with transportation network partners on how a more integrated and expanded transit service offering for the visitors is communicated.

MODERNIZED FLEET, INFRASTRUCTURE AND ENABLING TECHNOLOGY

2.5 Develop an infrastructure plan to support the next stage of growth

2.6 Update Capital Plan and fleet requirements including replacement of fleet that is at end of life. Current estimations indicate this represents 30% of 2024's total fleet.

EMPLOYER OF CHOICE

2.7 Provide a comprehensive compensation and benefits package, aimed at attracting career minded team members

2.8 Offer career advancement and enhanced educational opportunities

2.9 Design staffing levels to ensure a highly attractive work/life balance



15 YEARS | LONG-TERM ACTIONS:

Serving 7M riders, and achievement of transportation mode equity.

SUSTAINABLE AND SEAMLESS SERVICE DELIVERY

3.1 Future strategic planning must consider new funding partners and network changes to enhance service.

MODERNIZED FLEET, INFRASTRUCTURE AND ENABLING TECHNOLOGY

3.2 Future strategic planning must ensure continued integration of new technology, such as autonomous buses and high volume transportation services (i.e. passenger rail) into the BVRTSC fleet.

EMPLOYER OF CHOICE

3.3 Provide a comprehensive compensation and benefits package, aimed at attracting career minded team members

3.4 Offer career advancement and enhanced educational opportunities

3.5 Ensure staffing levels designed to ensure a highly attractive work/life balance





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ROAM 2040

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