
Tourism and Transportation Stakeholders' Meeting November 23rd, 2010 @ the Lion's Den

- Notes -

Updates / Current context –

Kootenay Rockies Tourism Association (KRTA) – Transportation Committee

Julian England provided the group with an update regarding the KRTA's recent activities addressing tourism and transportation opportunities and challenges. KRTA has identified that transportation is challenging throughout the area marketed as the 'Powder Highway' and that there is some desire to explore creating itineraries for tourist travel in this area. Several of the operators involved with KRTA agreed to form a transportation committee. This committee is very newly formed and to date there has been no research conducted on market demand or transportation options. Possible points of origin for transportation service were discussed and included Cranbrook, Castlegar, Kelowna and Calgary.

Currently there is some coordinated service within the 'Powder Highway' region with buses running for example between Kelowna and Nelson. Historically there has been some service between Kicking Horse and Fernie.

Questions:

Is summer transportation included within the scope of the committees work?

- Could look into whether or not summer travel should be included.

Will transportation options for the 'Powder Highway' include Alberta resort as much of our marketing does?

- May be difficult given the mandated scope of KRTA – could be a longer term goal.

Pure Travel Group

Joanne Sweeting and David James from the Pure Travel Group provided the group with an update on their current services and future plans. Pure Travel is primarily focused on winter transportation as summer options are limited and not financially viable at this time. They provide charter services for groups, regularly scheduled service between Calgary and Golden/Kicking Horse Mountain Resort, and several options for day trips (to Revelstoke for example). They have been working with local tourism operators to create tailor made transportation solutions to meet their collective needs and are open to working with others as well. Further, Pure Travel is working toward coordinating services with Revelstoke transportation providers to and from Calgary which may improve their ability to provide more scheduled travel times.

This year their regularly scheduled shuttle service will start in the second week of the ski season (this is when there is sufficient demand) and will run 7 services over 5 days every week (see attached service schedule for more information).

One challenge that Pure Travel faces is competition with unlicensed transportation providers. There is not a lot of enforcement of regulations in the industry but regulations are quite serious. Pure Travel is fully licensed and follow all statutory regulations and requirements; this can be costly and is why many companies operate without the necessary licenses and open themselves to liability issues.

In the future, Pure Travel would like to be able to continue provided regularly scheduled, safe, high quality service. In order to do so, and provide more scheduled options, we collectively need to consider how we market Golden as a tourism destination, appealing to visitors who are interested in travelling by the modes we have currently available (shuttle service, bus transportation, rental vehicles, self-drive, etc...) until we have more options.

Questions:

Are scheduled trips guaranteed?

- Yes! We always do scheduled trips even if there is only one passenger.

Kicking Horse Mountain Resort

Julian England provided an update on KHMR's activities related to transportation for their visitors. For KHMR it's a 'chicken and egg' scenario. They need to establish a daily shuttle service option to serve their clients but it's expensive and needs to be running for them to advertise it and get people using it to justify its presence. KHMR would like to explore options to work collectively with local accommodators and service providers to provide a service like this as it's expensive to run meaning that no one organisation can backstop it, and that everyone benefits from it's existence.

Questions:

Are there other services available right now?

- Darrin Derosa from the Cedar House Restaurant and Chalets is working towards establishing a restaurant shuttle. He has the necessary equipment and is working on sorting out and adhering to the necessary licensing requirements.
- In the past there has been a Town Shuttle funded by KHMR (75%), BC Transit, the Town of Golden and the CSRD (collectively sharing the remaining (25%). Negotiations are currently underway for this year to determine if the service will be offered again.

Discussion –

Local Transportation

- We need service from Town and Hwy 1 to KHMR.
- Jon Wilsgard provided some context for the community bus service which is a partnership between BC Transit and local governments and is intended to serve the needs of residents. The shuttle service to KHMR is in its last year of an agreement with BC Transit. We will likely need a new bus in order to comply with their regulations. Using the current school bus is an anomaly for BC Transit province wide and is unlikely to be an option when a new partnership is negotiated.
- Is Resort Municipalities Initiatives (RMI) funding an option for supporting some of these services?
 - There is a session on RMI being hosted by the Kicking Horse Chamber of Commerce through their 'Let's do Lunch' series tomorrow, November 24th.
 - What other transportation options are currently available?
- Mount 7 taxi service – visitors sometimes experience long waits due to the limited availability of vehicles during peak season. Concerns were expressed regarding the cost of service. Would like to engage them in this conversation as they were not able to be present due to the short notice provided for the meeting. (*See correspondence section for details and input following the meeting).
- Impacts of liquor law enforcement on transportation.

Regional Transportation

- Greyhound provides service to the area. It's not ideal. Passengers have to get from the airport to the bus terminal in Calgary on their own. The timing of scheduled service is not very convenient. Getting to other places in the Kootenays (South) is not practical / feasible. They are well connected to the West if the timing works out.
- Need to have this conversation at a regional / provincial level as well.
- We need more than just transportation options to get people to the community.

Other

- Understanding how people travel and want to travel. Do we need a needs assessment?
- Signage, marketing – How can Tourism Golden play a role? Possibly in marketing and advertising support depending on the outcome. Buses as moving billboards as a possible option.

Next Steps:

- What are our priorities: Powder Highway? Local Transportation? KHMR and Commercial Hwy Corridor to Historic downtown? Connect to Calgary, Connect South, Connect West?
- **The group agreed on the following two (2) priorities:**
 1. *Identifying opportunities to improve local transportation options of visitors, and;*
 2. *Identifying opportunities for expanding service options and access for visitors along the 'Northern Corridor' (extending from Calgary, via Golden, to Revelstoke).*
- **Working group:**
 - The following people volunteered to participate in working group to follow up on this conversation and the identified priorities.
 - o Miro Micovsky (Tourism Golden)
 - o David James
 - o Kat Coatesworth
 - o Darrin Derosa
 - o Greg Porter
 - o Bill Pitcher
 - o Barry Cox
 - o Julian England
 - o Abi and Gerald Wagner
 - o Laura Archer (GAI)
 - o Ruth Kowalski (Kicking Horse Chamber of Commerce) – To be confirmed.
 - o Sonja Schmidt (*See attachment for details of Laura's conversation with Sonja at Mt. & Taxi following this meeting).

Action items:

Laura will –

1. Type and circulate the notes within two weeks of the meeting (prior to December 7th, 2010).
2. E-mail the link to the stakeholder survey ASAP
3. Collate the survey data, including an inventory of current services available within two weeks of the meeting (prior to December 7th, 2010).
4. Organize a meeting of the working group.

Correspondence:

In advance of and following the meeting I received a great deal of feed back and input from several stakeholders who were not able to attend. I've compiled their input below.

- How to work with the RCMP to improve their relationship with tourists and local bars and keep this a fun place to visit.
- What impact does transportation in terms of commerce have on our community? How will initiatives like the Provincial Gateway plan impact traffic and travel on Hwy 1? Should we be looking at transportation from a broader perspective then just tourism?
- Can Golden (and the BC Visitor's Centre – BCVC - possibly) become a central HUB for transportation in the area.
 - o we could offer tours etc... starting and finishing at a local land mark like the BCVC
- Mt. 7 taxi would have liked to attend the meeting to contribute and participate. As a result of the short notice for the meeting they were not able to do so but provided the following in terms of feedback on the process.
 - o Transportation is a highly regulated industry and is a challenging business to be in.
 - o Mt. 7 taxi strives not only to provide high quality service, but also be a great employer, offering fair wages and benefits to their employees.
 - o There have been several events locally that have affected the local / private transportation market, including Hallcon's (a transportation company that serves CP Rail exclusively) recent presence that has affected their market base.
 - o Sonja, from Mt. 7 Taxi is willing and excited to participate with the working group to discuss transportation options and opportunities for collaboration in order to expand and improve access to transportation options for visitors in Kicking Horse Country.