



WEST HANTS REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY
Climate Action Committee (CAC) Meeting Minutes
July 22, 2026, 11:02am – 12:09pm
Sanford Council Chambers / Zoom / YouTube Live

PRESENT: Deputy Mayor Debbie Francis, District 5, Chair
Councillor Jim Ivey, District 11
Councillor Bonnie Smith, District 10
Lauren Douglas, Resident Member
Mark Phillips, Chief Administrative Officer
Sara Poirier, Director of Planning & Development
Chelsea Woodman, Financial Services designate
Kaleigh McCarthy, Public Works designate
Kathy Kehoe, Director of Community Development

STAFF: John Ogilvie, Climate Action Coordinator
Jessica Norman, Environment and Energy Programs Intern
Vanessa Lake, Meeting Secretary

GUEST: David McCusker, WSP

REGRETS: There were no regrets.

1.0 Call to Order and Introductions

Deputy Mayor Francis called the meeting to order at 11:02 am. All committee members were present. Everyone introduced themselves and identified their designation. David McCusker from WSP was present to give a presentation on the Zero Emissions Transportation Feasibility Study.

2.0 Approval of Agenda

The agenda was approved as circulated by unanimous consent.

3.0 Approval of Minutes (May 6, 2026)

The minutes were approved as circulated by unanimous consent.

4.0 New Business

4.1 Recommendation: Adoption of Zero Emissions Transportation Feasibility Study

Throughout late 2025 and early 2026, staff worked with consultants at WSP to review the technical details, complete public and stakeholder engagement, and refine routing options for public transit within WHRM, with a focus on a zero emissions system. David McCusker gave a presentation on behalf of WSP. A copy of the presentation has been included with the minutes. The study identified the many benefits of public transit. Based on community feedback, the expectations of a public transit service are convenience and reliability, accessibility, affordability, and being fiscally responsible and sustainable. Over half of the survey respondents said they would use this service if available. David discussed the different buses considered and battery management strategies that would be needed, service delivery types (urban and rural), projected bus route(s), and operational considerations.

The Committee thanked David for an excellent presentation and all the work that has gone into the study. David welcomed any questions or comments.

Councillor Ivey noted that the presentation shows that multiple 26 ft diesel mini-buses could be purchased for the price of one (1) 35 ft battery-electric, urban transit bus. He asked if a mini-bus fleet was possible. David replied that it was, however, WSP recommends the larger, battery-powered bus. The focus of the study was zero emissions, and the larger bus would hold more passengers and would reduce the risk of a full bus having to drive past people waiting at a stop. David also noted that an urban transit bus is purpose built and offers a more comfortable riding experience.

Councillor Ivey asked why Three Mile Plains, another Growth Centre, was not included in the proposed urban route. David replied that WSP modeled several scenarios, some of which included Three Mile Plains and other centres. After lengthy discussions, it was decided that including certain portions of Three Mile Plains may potentially be less efficient due to the existing population density.

Lauren asked if the map showing residences within the 5 min walking distance/400 m radius was as the crow flies, as there may not be a direct path via sidewalks. David replied that the map does show the distances as the crow flies and was more for a general visual representation, but the graph in the presentation/report considers the actual 5 min walking distance, sidewalks and other obstacles considered.

Councillor B. Smith asked how many seats on each bus. David replied that it depends on how many spaces for wheelchairs may be present, but the smaller buses generally have 18-20 seats and the urban transit style buses usually have at least 36.

Councillor Ivey asked about the reference to a 6-year life cycle referenced in the report, and if that refers to the bus or the battery. David replied that 6 years is the entire life of the minibus. The urban transit buses have a 18-20 year lifespan and generally outlive their batteries.

Director Poirier noted that this service would not generate revenue for Council and asked if the fares would offset the cost. David said it is expected to be about 15-25% cost recovery, which is typical. There is a value to this service outside of financial numbers. It is a community service that improves quality of life.

Deputy Mayor Francis also expressed concern over Three Mile Plains not being part of the planned route. David explained that WSP's design was conservative, based on what could be done within a 1-hour cycle. He explained that with experience, operators may find more is possible, and the route may be expanded. Deviations may also be considered, such as flex-routing, and riders calling for pickup beforehand on their designated transit days or waving down a bus as it drives by.

Councillor Ivey asked what the mentioned "more detailed analysis" would include. John replied that this refers to charging stations, bus stops, and budget allocations etc. Deputy Mayor Francis asked if it would be possible to acquire provincial funding. John replied that it is a possibility, and since a feasibility study and zero emission considerations are required for most funding opportunities, WHRM is already one step ahead. He added that the services can be expanded to other areas such as Three Mile Plains if needed. It is expected to be an ever-evolving service as the Municipality grows and changes.

Moved by Councillor Bonnie Smith and seconded by Kaleigh McCarthy that the Climate Action Committee recommends that Council adopt the Zero Emissions Transportation Feasibility Study, authored by WSP Canada Inc., in a manner substantively the same as Attachment A to the staff

report titled “Adoption of the Zero Emissions Transportation Feasibility Study”, dated July 22, 2026. Motion carried unanimously.

4.2 Recommendation: Report Form Template Amendments for Environmental Considerations

John’s report is available with the agenda package on the municipal website. The purpose of the proposed amendments is to include a standardized environmental lens to each staff report. This would ensure that everyday decisions consider the potential impacts of any issue or discussion on the environment. Including more consistent in-depth discussion of environmental considerations will ensure staff, resident members, and Council are well informed, and projects are analyzed critically to ensure long term sustainability.

Moved by Councillor Jim Ivey and seconded by Councillor Bonnie Smith that the Climate Action Committee recommends that Council direct staff to amend Appendix A “Report Form” of the Meeting and Committee Procedural Policy, in a manner substantively the same as outlined in the staff report titled “Report Form Template: Amendments for Environmental Considerations”, dated July 22, 2026. Motion carried unanimously.

5.0 Business Arising from the Minutes

There was no business arising from the minutes.

6.0 Roundtable Discussion

John thanked Jessica for everything she has done during her time at the Municipality. She has been a huge help and a great asset to WHRM.

Jessica thanked WHRM and the Committee for the opportunity to take part.

Director Kehoe shared that there are many community groups applying for funding that will support the work being done by this committee.

Director Poirier shared that the Planning and Development Department received a grant through the Nova Scotia Federation of Municipalities (NSFM) to cover the entire cost of Coastal Planning Engagement support. This will include up to 7 public engagement sessions within WHRM to gain public insights into planning document amendments for coastal planning. Staff have engaged with UPLAND as consultants, and a start-up meeting is set for July 28, 2026.

7.0 Public Comments

The public is encouraged to attend the meeting or contact staff directly with any questions or comments. No members of the public were present at the meeting. John can be reached at

JOgilvie@westhants.ca or 902-798-8291 ext. 147. Other staff contact information is available on the municipal website at <https://www.westhants.ca/municipal-staff.html>.

8.0 Next Meeting Date

The next meeting is scheduled for September 10, 2026, at 11:00am. The Committee and the public will be notified if there are any changes.

9.0 Adjournment

With no further business, the meeting adjourned at 12:09pm.



WEST HANTS REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY

ZERO EMISSION TRANSPORTATION FEASIBILITY STUDY

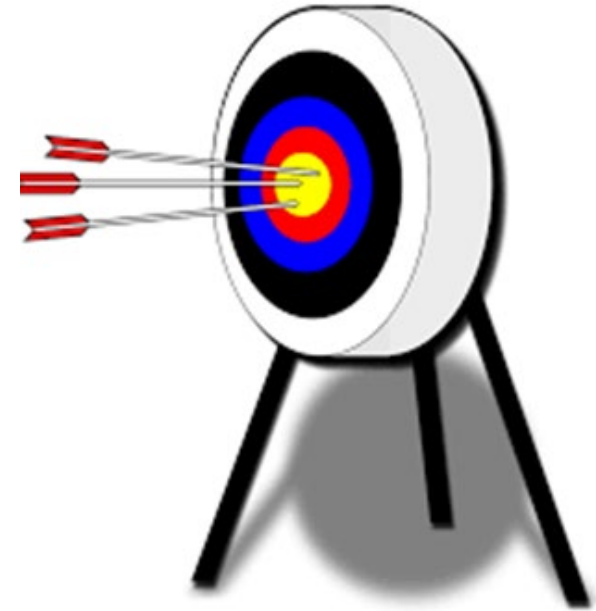


Study Purpose

The study responds to Council's priorities and the WHRM GHG Emission Local Action Plan.

There is recognition that public transit can:

- Improve inclusivity and social equity;
- Reduce impacts on the environment;
- Contribute to the economic well-being of the community;
- Increase housing options;
- Improve the quality of life; and
- Add to the value and attractiveness of residential and commercial properties.

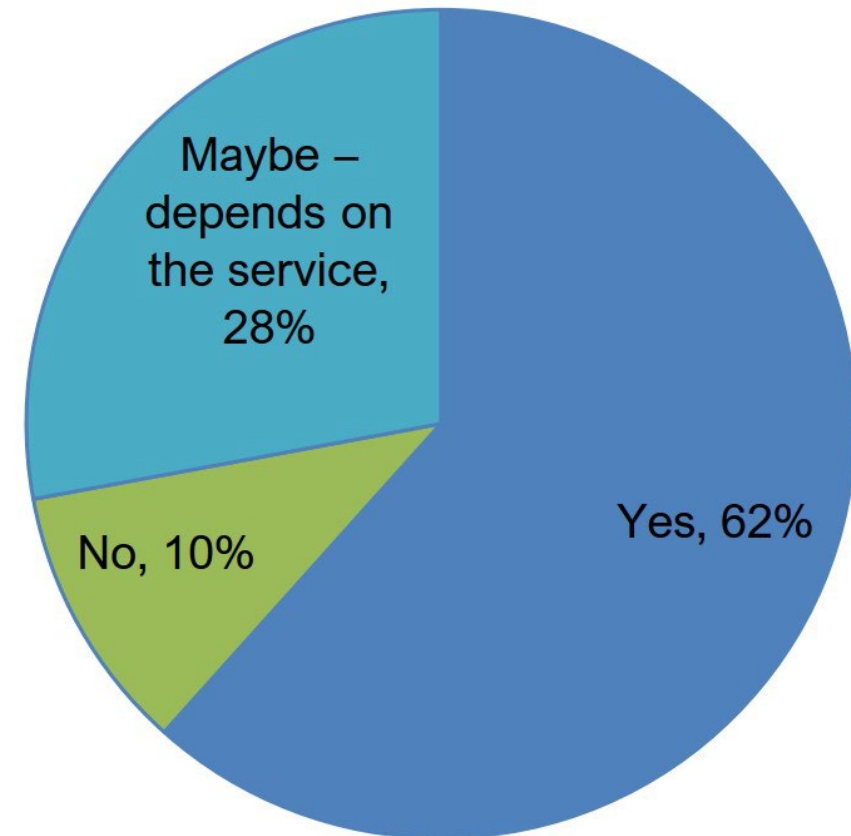


Study Process

Starts with Community Engagement

- 11 Stakeholder Interviews;
- 2 Staff Workshop Sessions;
- 6 Public Open Houses; and
- An Online Community Survey (87 submissions)

Would you consider using public transit if it were available?

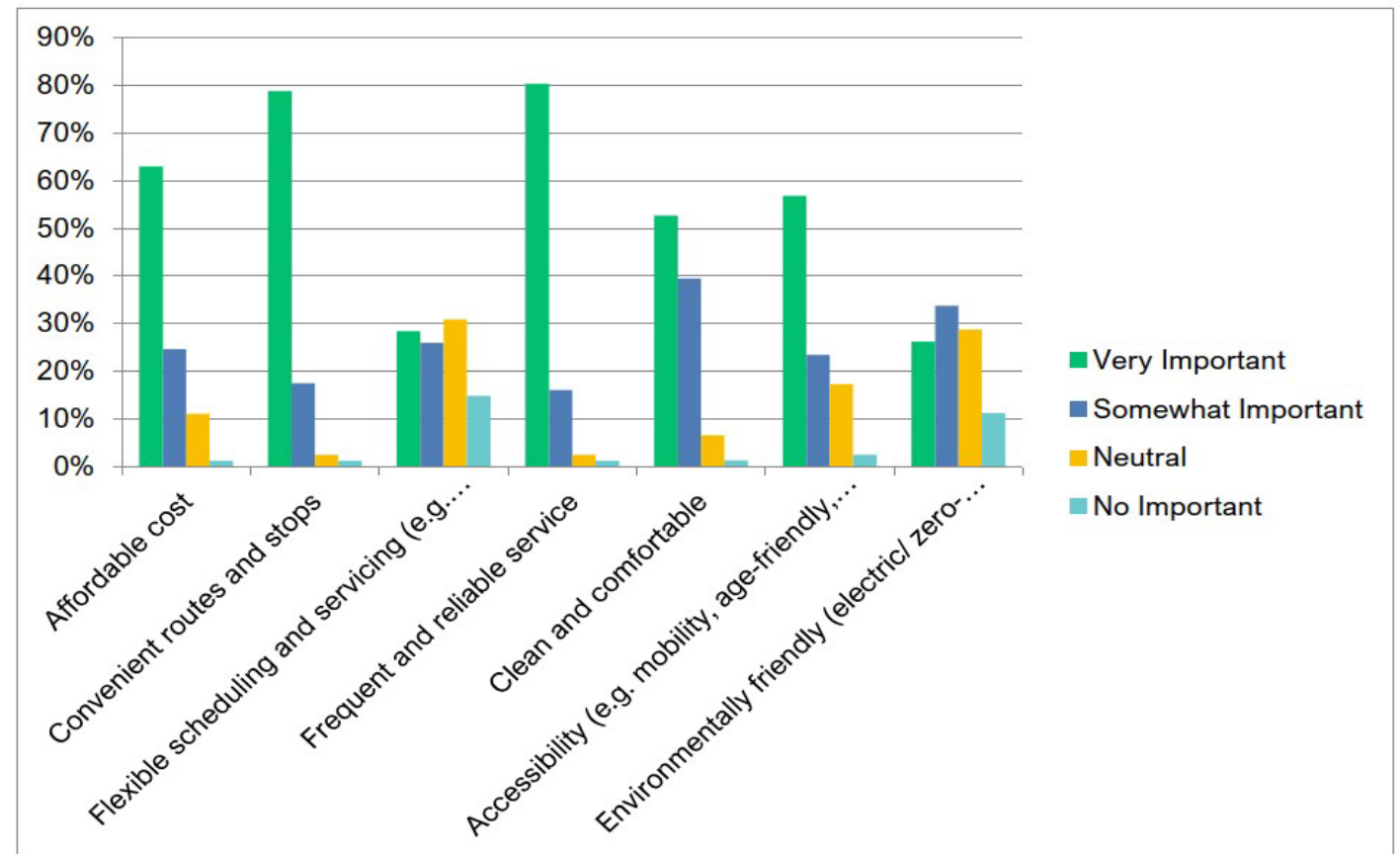


What We Heard

What is Expected of Public Transit

- Convenient and reliable
- Accessible
- Affordable
- Fiscally responsible and sustainable

How important are these factors to you when considering using a transit service?



Modeling Future Service

Divided urban study area (Windsor and Falmouth) into 45 zones

Determined trip producers (population)

Dwelling unit counts conducted manually by zone

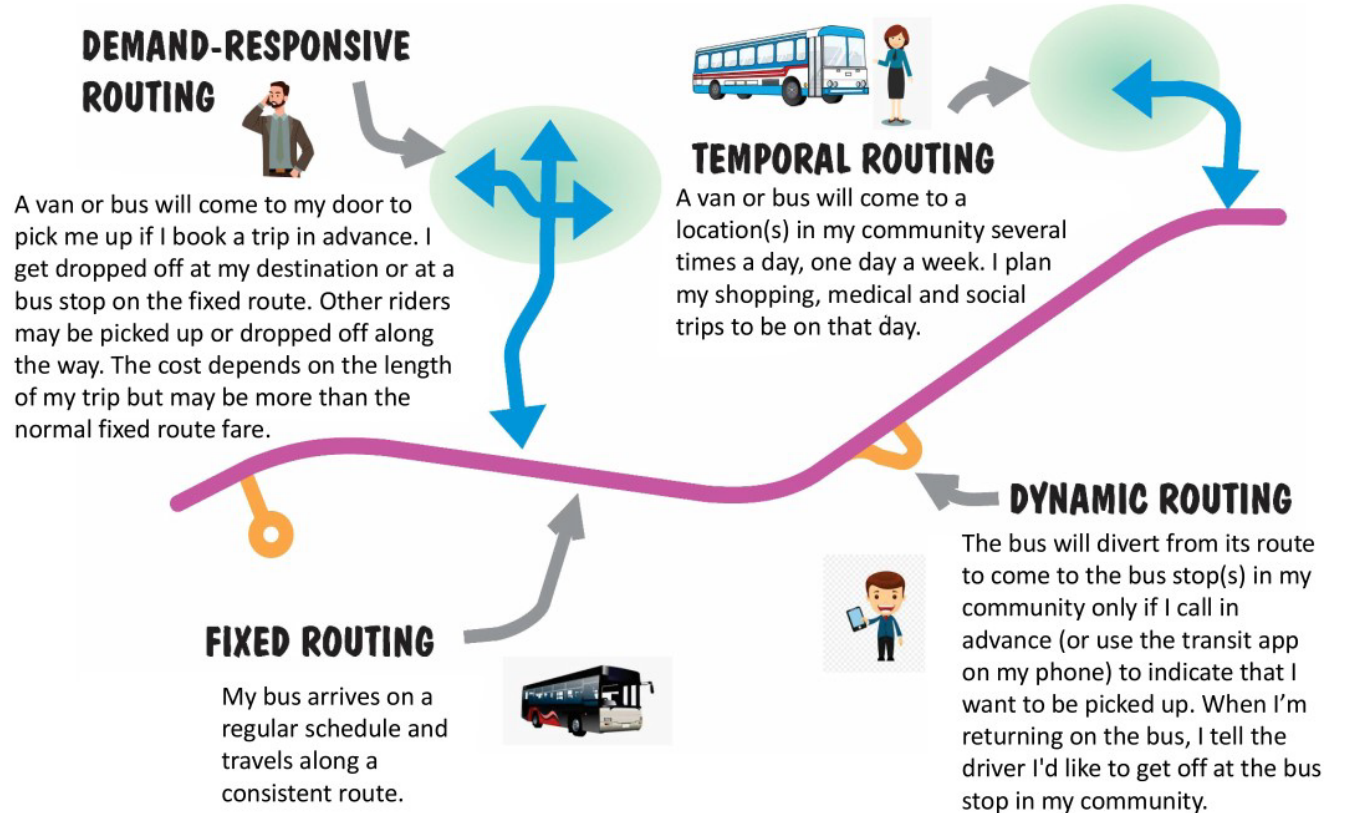
Determined trip attractors (destinations)

Destination points assigned by expectation of attractiveness for transit trips

Zone	Destinations Within Zone	Destination Score	Dwelling Units
1	- Downtown Windsor - Windsor Curling Club - Fort Edward Historical Site	8	122
2	- Downtown Windsor - Access NS	6	104
3	- Hants Aquatic Centre (Seasonal)	1	72
4			219
5	- Community Centre - Lawtons - Commercial Plaza	3	76
6			92
7	- King's Edgehill School	1	16
8			113
9	- Sobey's - Royal Canadian Legion - Kent - West Hants Education Centre	4	6

Service Delivery Types

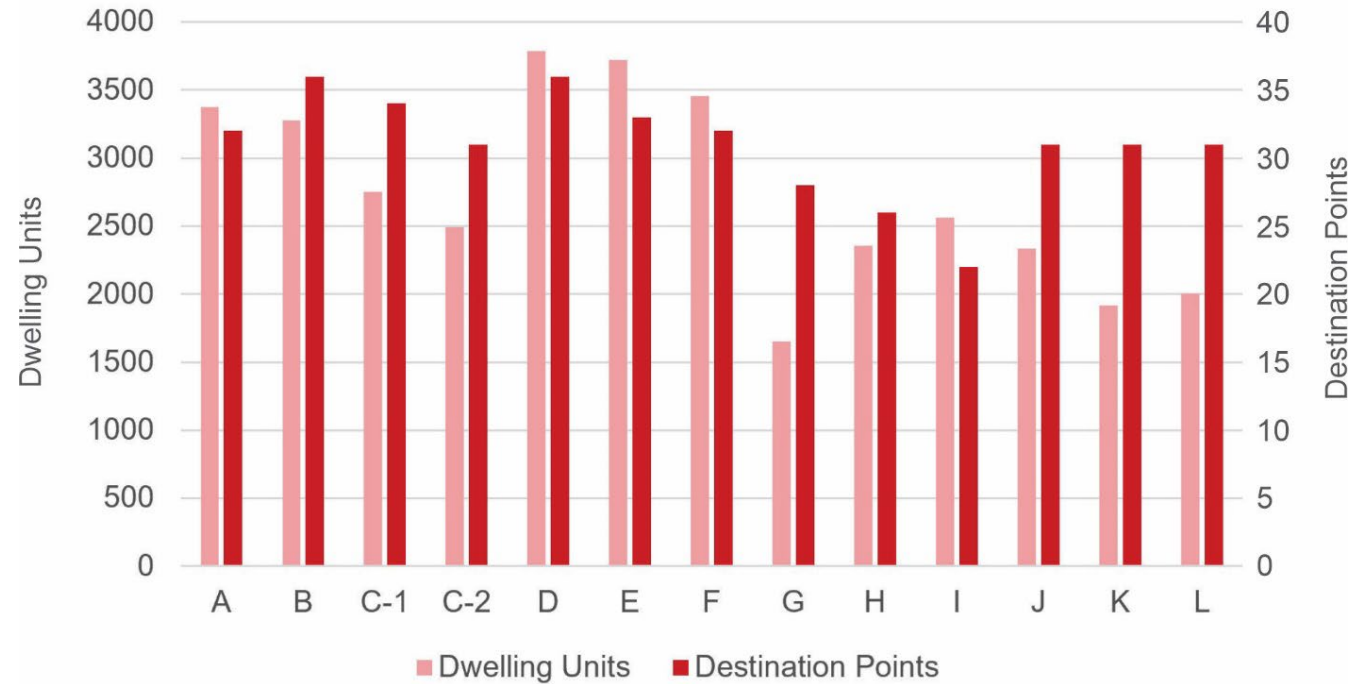
- Urban-rural fixed route
- Urban fixed route
- Demand responsive
- Flex-route
- Rural day-a-week

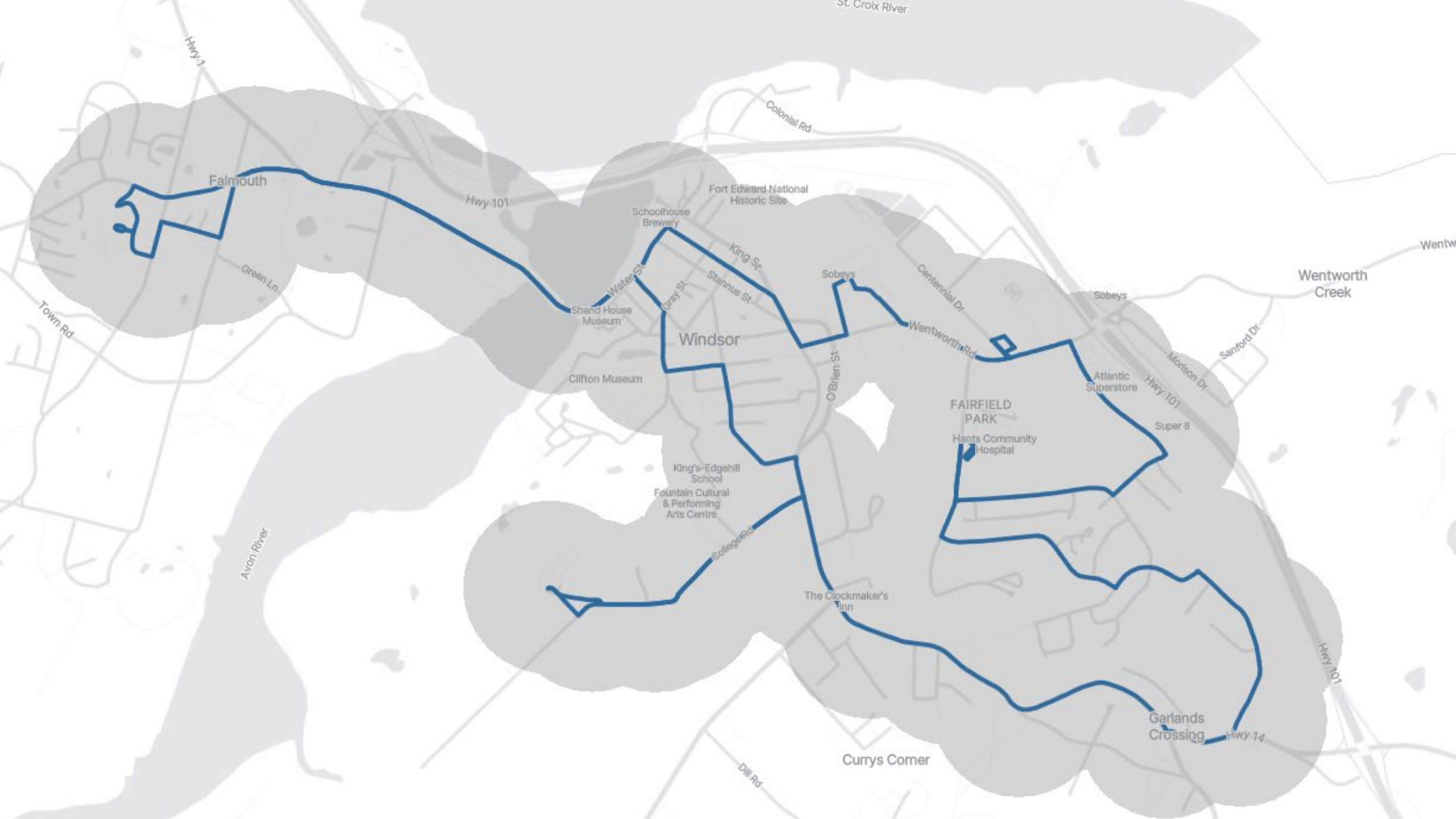


Urban Fixed Route

14 concept layouts produced and compared

- Ability to reach dwelling units and destinations
- Service frequency
- Reliability
- Clarity for customers

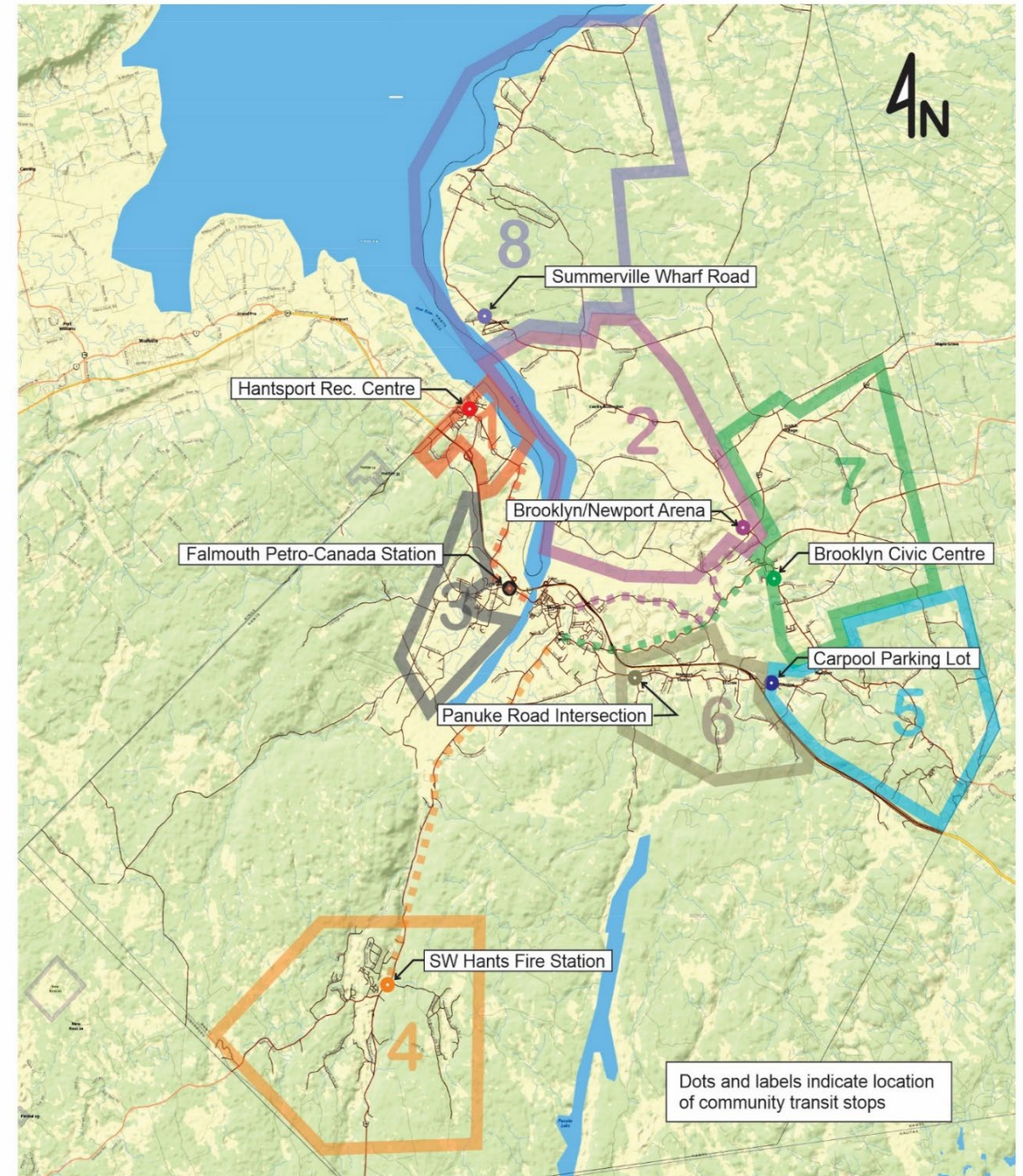






Rural Day-a-Week Service

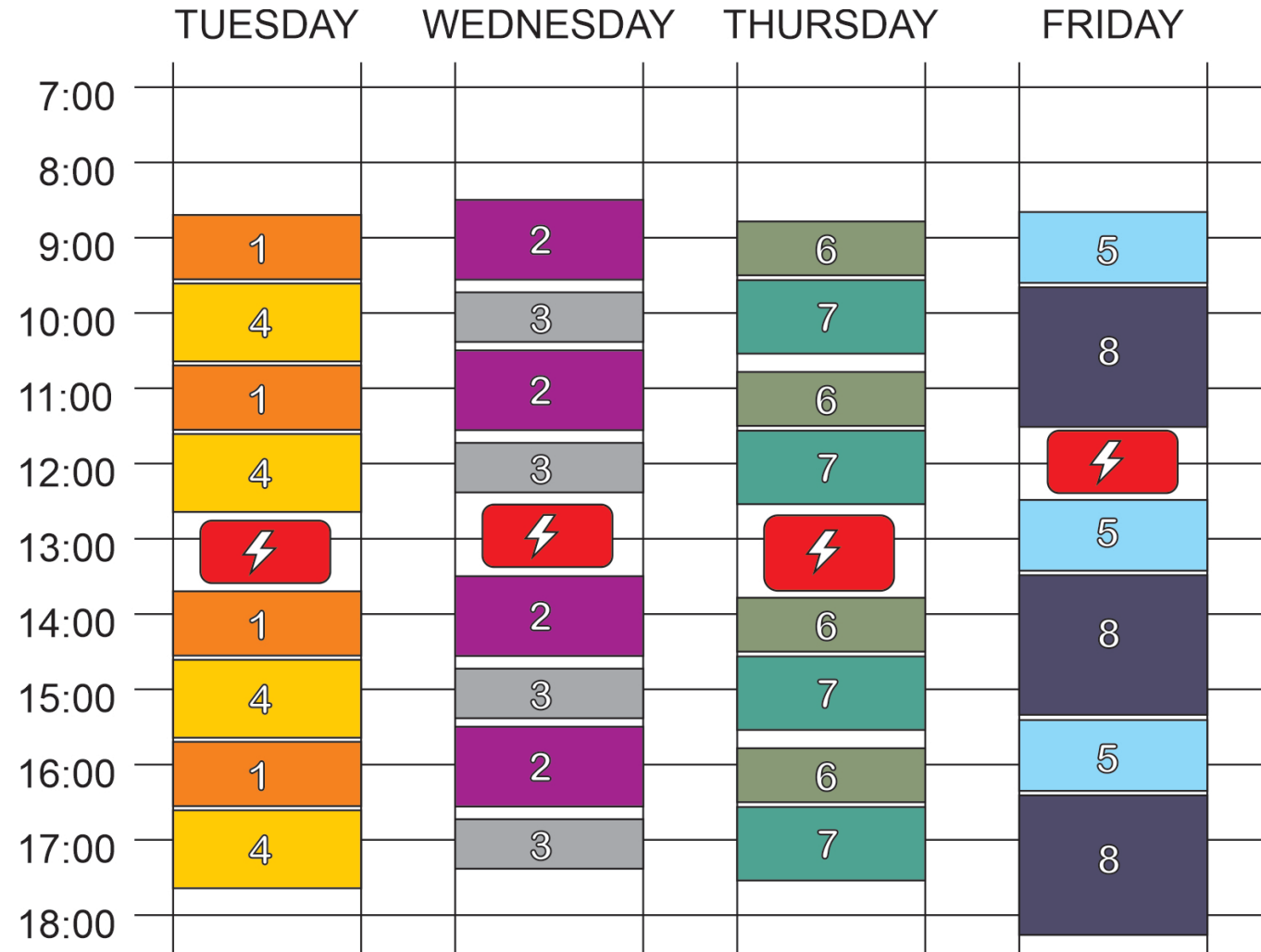
- Eight Pick-up Zones
- Each day of the week (Tue-Fri) one pair of zones will receive service
- Bus travels from Sports Complex to community pickup stop (with parking available) arriving at a scheduled time
- 30-40 minute pick-up/drop-off window for reservations
- Bus leaves community bus stop for Sports Complex departing at a scheduled time



Rural Day-a-Week Service

Options for Rural Residents

- Reserve a pick-up at home on transit day and within the pick-up window
- Travel to the community bus stop for the scheduled departure time
- Flag down the bus as it travels between the community and the Sports Complex
- Reserve a pick-up at home with West Hants Dial-a-Ride



Operating Options

Operator	Description	Examples
Municipality	WHRM would operate the service itself, hiring staff and creating a Transit division within the organization.	Halifax Transit, Transit Cape Breton, Bridgewater Transit, and Yarmouth Transit
Community Not-for-Profit	West Hants Dial-a-Ride would operate the service with funding from the Municipality as well as other sources.	Antigonish Transit CHAD Transit (Pictou County)
Multi-System Operator	Although we are aware of few examples, we believe Nova Scotia would benefit from having a single operator for its multiple smaller non-contiguous transit systems. Kings Transit Authority might be positioned to take on a role like this.	BC Transit
Private Sector Operator	There are some private sector bus charter companies within Nova Scotia who could be procured through a tendering process to operate a fixed route.	Charlottetown Transit

Selection of Vehicle

Urban Transit Bus versus Mini-Bus

- Urban transit bus is double the cost and double the life expectancy
- Urban transit bus has more capacity and is more comfortable



Battery-Electric versus Gas/Diesel

- Battery-electric is double the acquisition cost and half the energy and maintenance cost
- Battery-electric may not operate a full day on a single charge and battery management strategies are needed



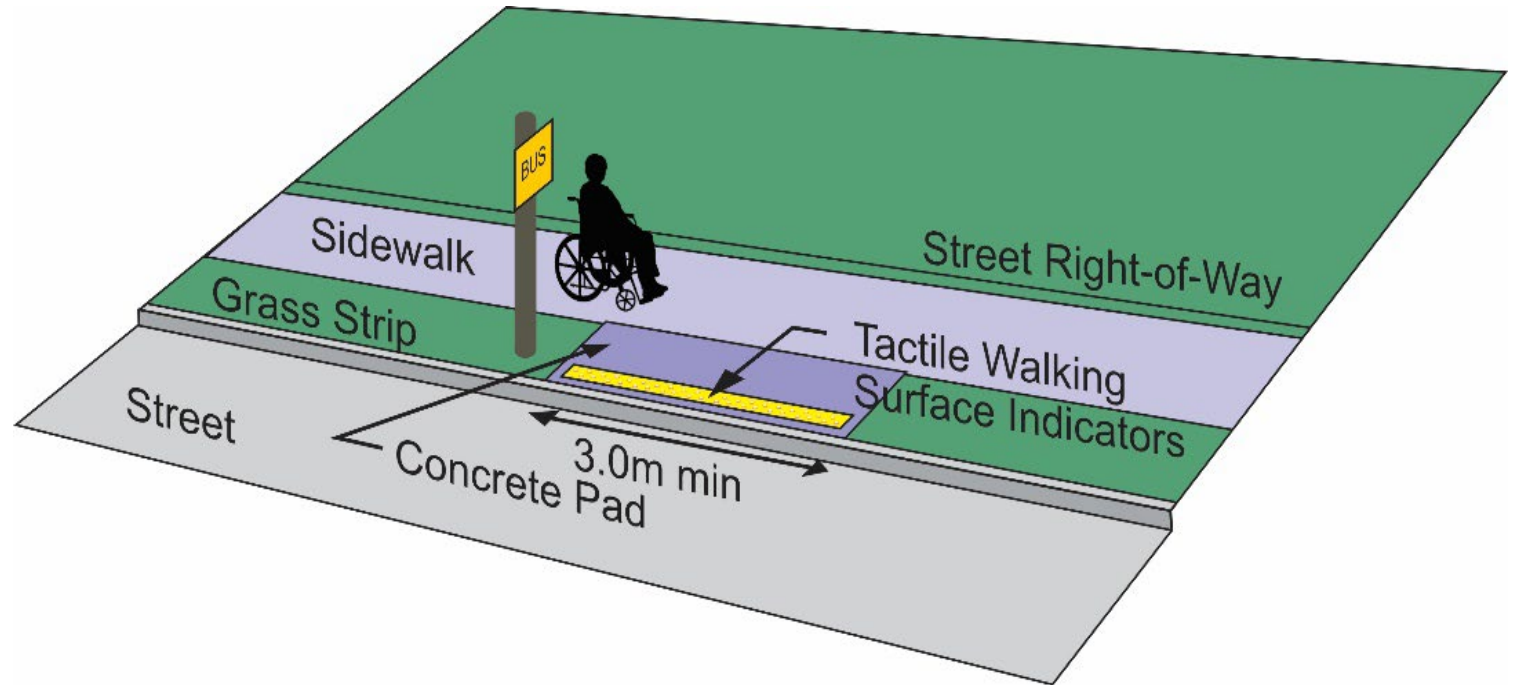
Battery Management Strategies

- Short recharge after every cycle
- Sub in a backup bus for one or two cycles during the day
- Skip off-peak runs for recharging
- Purchase a bus with a bigger battery



Aspects of Fixed Route Service

- Departs Sports Complex every hour 7am to 7pm Monday-Friday
- Recommendations on:
 - Staffing
 - Bus stop location & design
 - Fare collection
 - Bus tracking apps
 - Underwood barrier removal
 - Linkage to active transportation
 - Maintenance and bus storage
 - Marketing and monitoring
 - Financing through taxation





Annual Operating Costs

Urban Fixed Route

Item	Annual Cost
Electricity	\$38,000
Maintenance	\$20,000
Vehicle Replacement Reserve	\$46,000
Salaries and Administration	\$223,000
Miscellaneous	\$17,000
TOTAL	\$344,000

Rural Day-a-Week

Item	Annual Cost
Electricity	\$78,000
Maintenance	\$45,000
Vehicle Replacement Reserve	\$25,000
Salaries and Administration	\$114,000
Miscellaneous	\$3,000
TOTAL	\$265,000



Capital Costs

Urban Fixed Route

Item	Cost
35 ft Urban Transit BEB	\$1,480,000
26 ft Diesel Back-up Mini-Bus	\$220,000
Charging Infrastructure	\$130,000
Bus Stops	\$100,000
TOTAL	\$1,930,000

Rural Day-a-Week

Item	Cost
26 ft BEB Mini-Bus	\$300,000
Charging Infrastructure	\$130,000
TOTAL	\$430,000



THANK YOU

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