

TRANSIT *future*

▶ *action* plan

SOUTH OKANAGAN- SIMILKAMEEN TRANSIT SYSTEM

2023

City of Penticton
Regional District of
Okanagan-Similkameen
District of Summerland
Town of Princeton



Territorial Acknowledgement

We would like to acknowledge with respect that BC Transit carries out its work on the traditional territories of Indigenous nations throughout British Columbia.

We would like to further acknowledge that the Regional District of Okanagan-Similkameen is on the traditional territory of the Syilx (Okanagan) First Nations.

We are grateful to live, work and play on their traditional lands.

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01 Transit Vision

Transit is a preferred choice for residents and visitors, attracting riders through comfortable, safe, accessible and convenient service.

The South Okanagan-Similkameen Transit Future Action Plan upholds community goals and objectives contained in the Official Community Plans within the South Okanagan, and works to strengthen the link between transportation and land use in support of sustainable growth. The plan also serves to inform any future local or regional transportation plans.



Emissions and congestion are reduced through increased transit use



Coordinated approach to make transit the preferred choice



Transit-supportive land use policies



Development of transit to integrate with active modes



Transit links to villages, schools, and appropriate facilities at transit stops

02 Shaping Your Transit Future

The role of the Transit Future Action Plan is to:

Build on existing planning work and add service and infrastructure priorities for the community

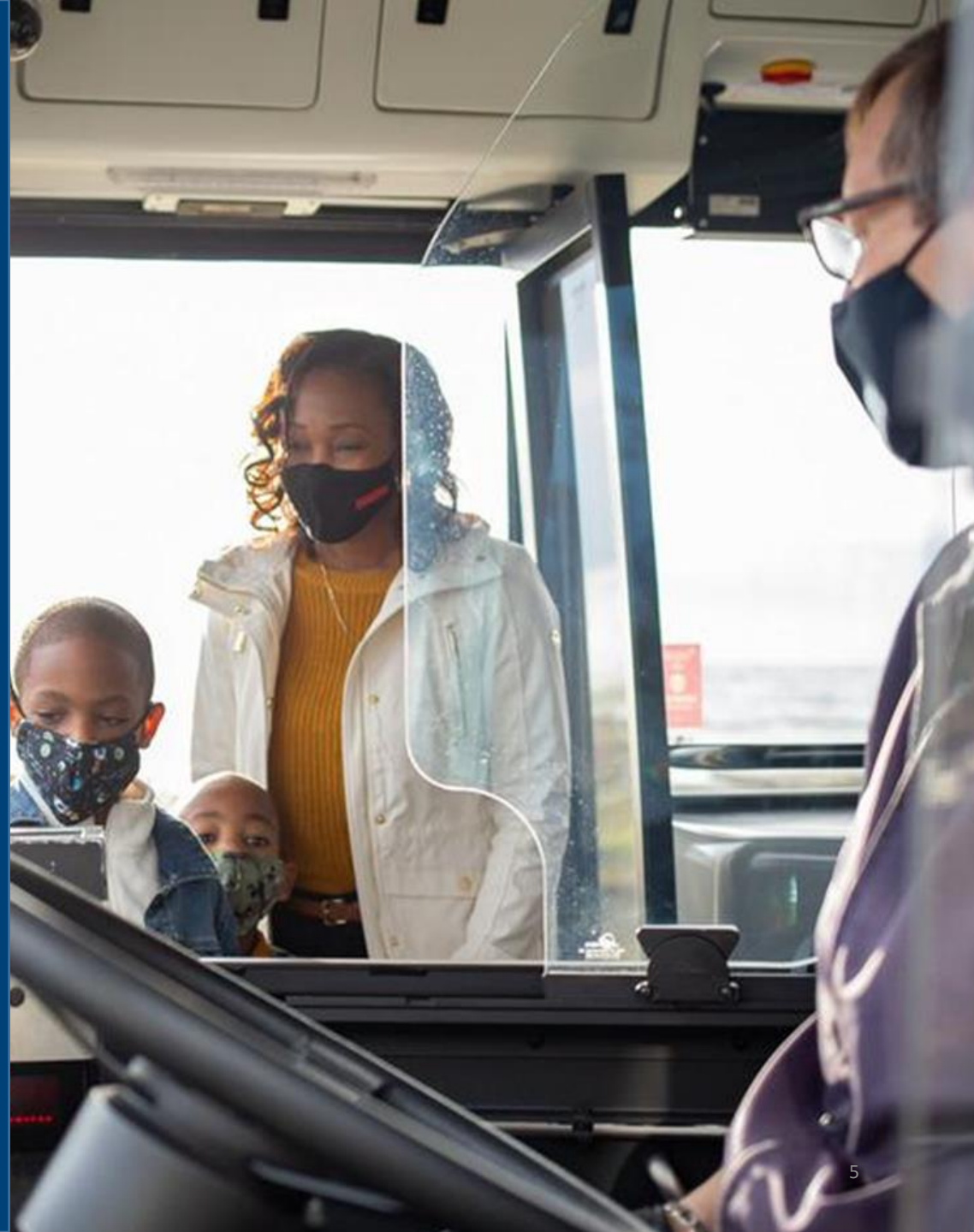
Review what has changed for the community

Inform planning and operational activities

Drive a range of objectives and actions that will create a strong transit network for the community

Guide decision making to create the desired network

Engage with the community



03 BC Transit Corporate Priorities

Equity, Diversity and Inclusion

BC Transit is committed to building an inclusive work environment that reflects the diversity of the communities we serve. Every day, we aim to ensure our communities thrive by providing the safest, highest-quality, most accessible public transit – this means listening to and meeting the transportation needs of British Columbians.

Future plans include furthering engagement with Indigenous communities and using Gender-Based Analysis+ (GBA+) to integrate multiple perspectives in transit planning, and guide decisions that provide the best experience for all riders.

Low Carbon Fleet Program

The first deployment of electric buses will happen in the Victoria Regional Transit System in late 2022.

BC Hydro will help determine the readiness of the electricity infrastructure to support electric fleets across the province.

BC Transit will work with the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure to refine the anticipated funding requirements for buses and new operation and maintenance facilities.

Electronic Fare Strategy – Umo Platform

Smart ticketing providing new ways to pay. BC Transit is working to not only improve rider convenience but also enable mobility partnerships and create new data collection opportunities.

Systems will also accommodate a mix of fare products, including cash fares. The system will also be able to operate in areas with low-cell phone coverage.

Digital On-Demand

Digital on-demand services use technology to dynamically dispatch a bus or fleet of vehicles to locations dictated by customers using an app or phone-in service.

BC Transit has completed a digital on-demand feasibility study transit and plans to roll out this service type in the selected community starting in 2023, with a view to add more communities in future years based on the success of the initial phase.

NextRide

Door-to-door journey planning.

NextRide provides bus location information to customers via transit apps, enhances operations control and route information for the operator.



Development Referral Program

Local governments or developers can send referrals and supporting information to BC Transit for review.

BC Transit will provide comments to the submitter about how the proposal may affect current or future transit service and infrastructure, and how the application could be modified to better support transit use.

04 COVID-19 Response Plan

BC Transit's top priority is the safety of our passengers and operators.

Following the guidance of the Provincial Health Office and WorkSafeBC, and drawing on the best practices of the transit industry worldwide, BC Transit has implemented measures on our buses to respond to COVID-19, and have put a plan together to align with BC's Restart Plan. The key measures are summarized in Figure 1, but the full strategy and details can be found at <https://bctransit.com/COVID19>.

To support ridership return, the Province of British Columbia has provided restart funding to the Local Government sponsors to ensure the continued effective delivery of transit across the South Okanagan-Similkameen transit system.

The **Free Transit for Children 12 and Under Program** was introduced in September 2021 and will be instrumental in boosting ridership and rebuilding confidence in our post-pandemic recovery. This program also aligns with BC Transit's commitment to delivering initiatives to drive new and effective measures to improve the transit experience. The program will help grow young ridership, create life-long transit users and further reduce congestion on our roads.

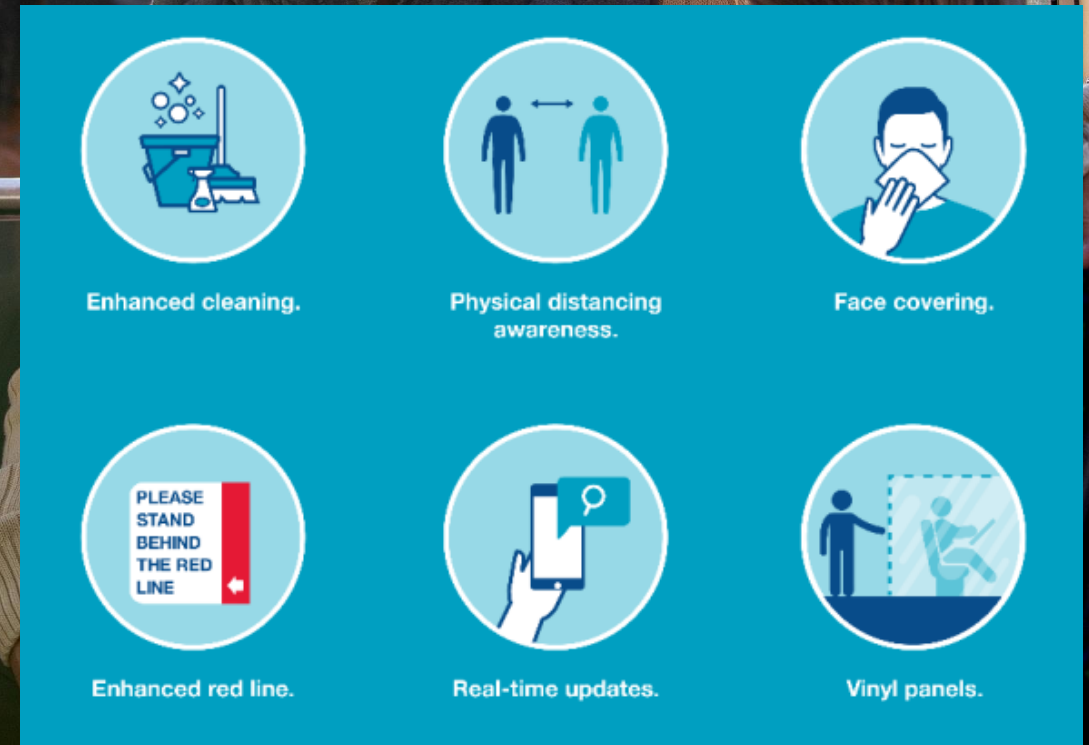
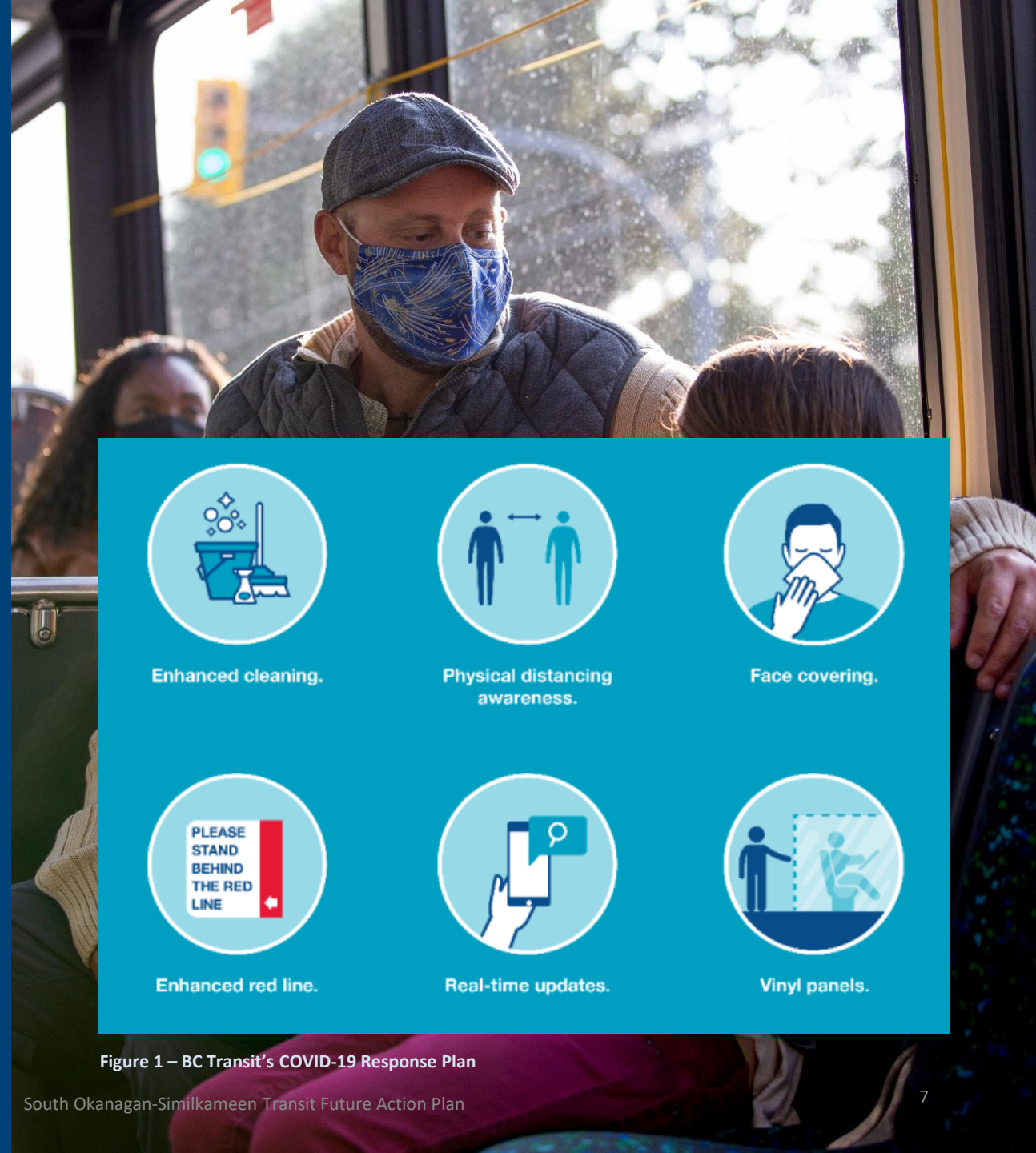


Figure 1 – BC Transit's COVID-19 Response Plan

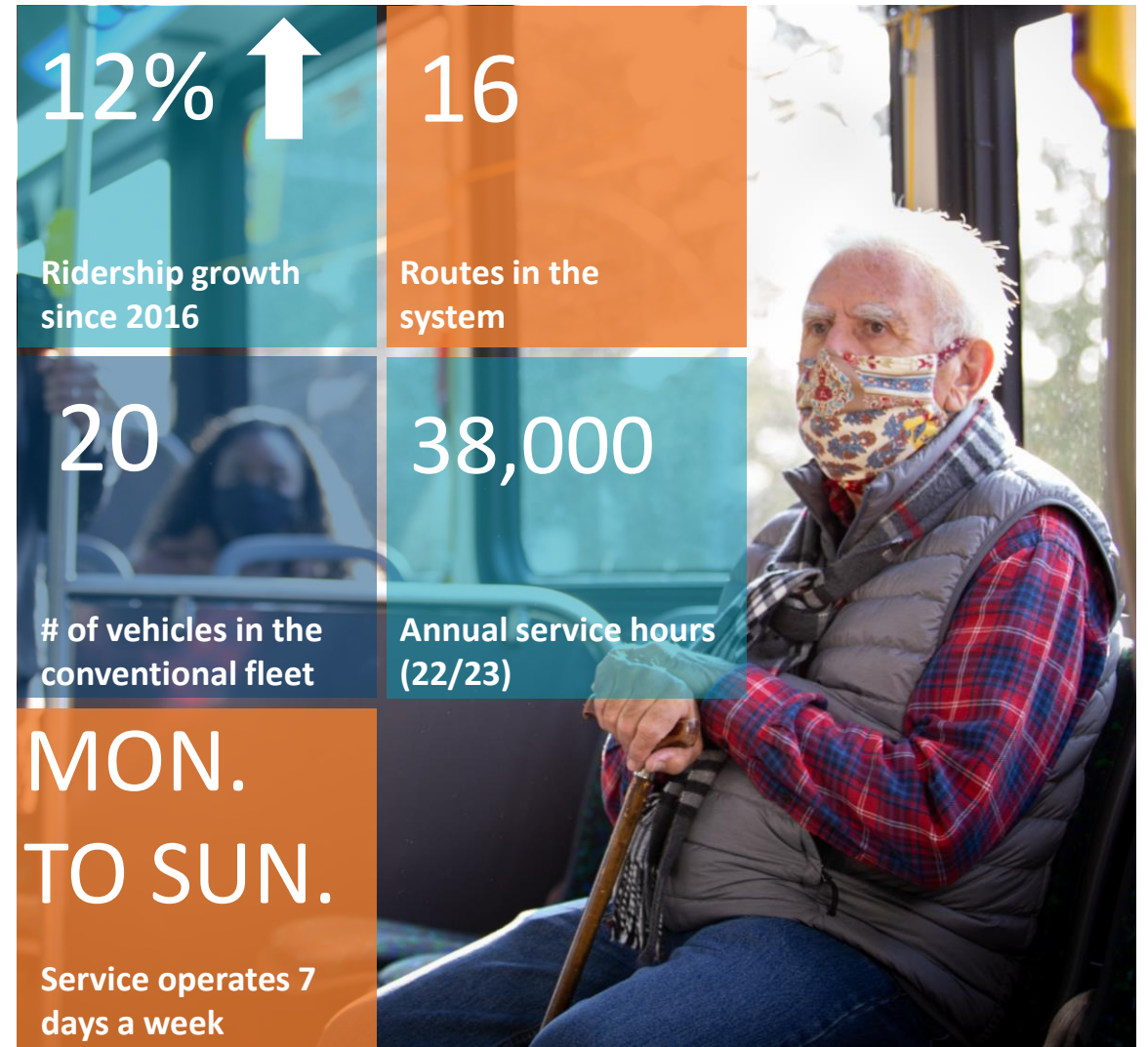
05 Transit Today

South Okanagan-Similkameen Transit Ridership is Growing

The South Okanagan-Similkameen Transit System has seen conventional ridership grow consistently from 474,930 riders in 2016-2017 to 531,753 in 2019-2020. The system is delivered through BC Transit’s innovative cost-sharing model and in coordination with the Regional District of Okanagan-Similkameen, City of Penticton, District of Summerland and Town of Princeton. Final decisions on fares, routes, and service levels are made by the local government partners.

Recent changes to the system include:

- **January 2021:** Addition of Peachland to route 70 Kelowna/Penticton service, and the introduction of two additional midday trips Tuesday to Friday.
- **January 2022:** Introduction of route 11 West Bench, and the introduction of Saturday service and two additional weekday trips on route 30 Summerland/Penticton.



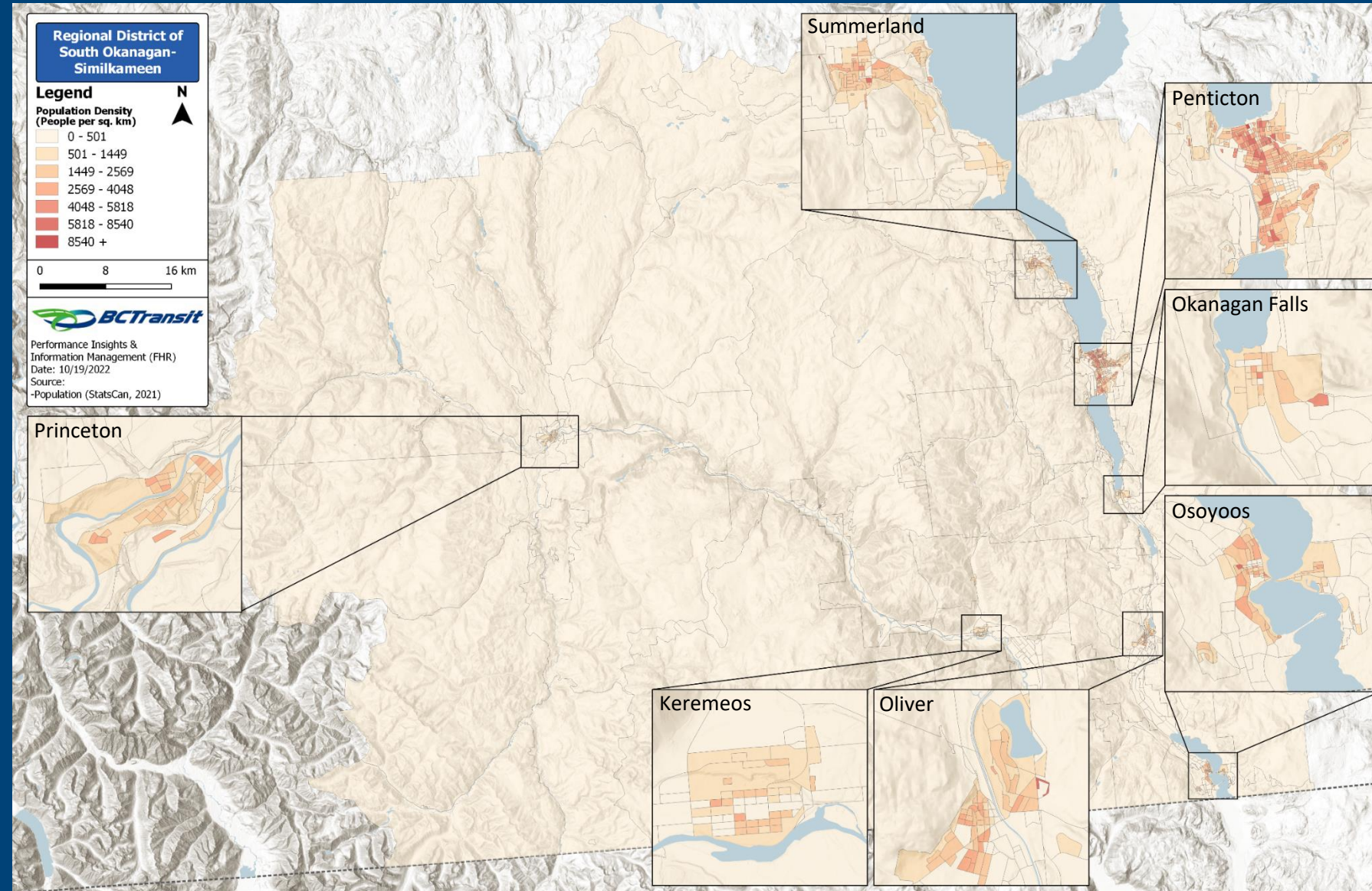
06 Transit Need

Demographics in the South Okanagan

The majority of the South Okanagan's population is concentrated within the City of Penticton.

Key demographic information for the South Okanagan from the 2021 Census includes:

- The population in the South Okanagan grew by 8.6 per cent between 2016 and 2021.
- 15.3 per cent of residents are 19 or younger, and 33 per cent are 65 or older.
- Approximately 54 per cent of commutes in the South Okanagan are less than 15 minutes.



07 System Performance

APC data was available for most routes within the South Okanagan-Similkameen Transit System as of Fall 2019, but reliable data was only available from January 2020 onwards. For the purposes of this review, February 2020 data has been used instead of Fall 2019 to measure pre-COVID performance.

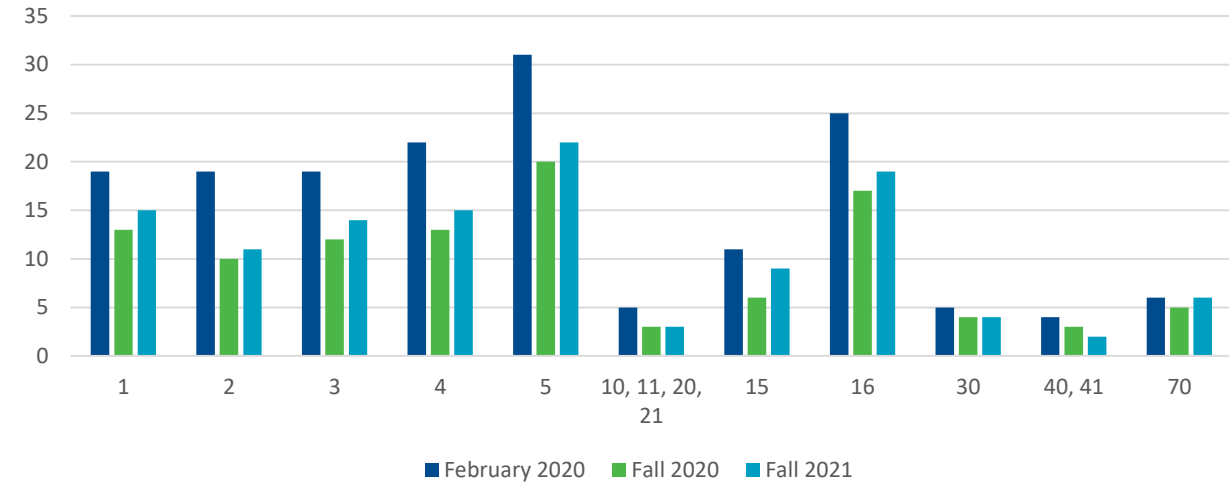
Route 5 Main Street currently has the highest ridership across the South Okanagan-Similkameen Transit System; this route saw an average of 399 daily boardings in Fall 2021. It is also the most productive route, averaging 22 boardings per revenue hour over the same service period.

All routes within the system operate Monday through Friday, with the exception of route 50 Princeton/Penticton, which operates Monday, Wednesday and Friday and functions as a hybrid Health Connections and paratransit route.

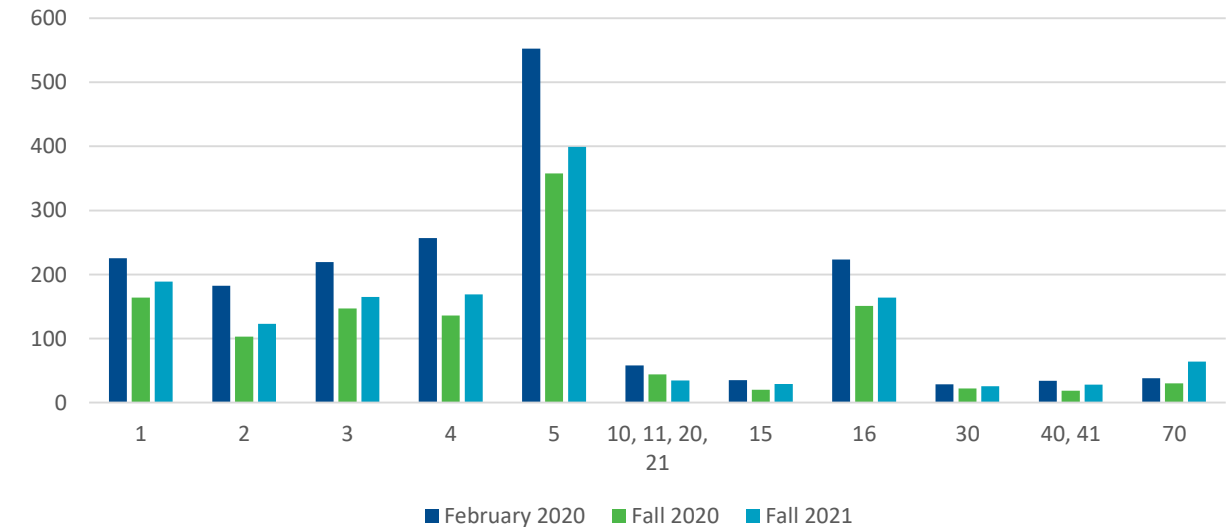
Weekend service varies depending on the route. Sunday-level service is offered on routes 5 Main Street and 16 Lake to Lake on select statutory holidays.

Service spans also vary by route, but generally service operates from approximately 7 a.m. to 6 p.m., Monday through Friday, with some routes operating at a reduced level of service on the weekends.

Boardings per Revenue Hour



Average Daily Boardings



Data source: APC data (routes 1-5, 15, 16, 70), RTS Connect (routes 10, 11*, 20, 21, 30, 40, 41)

*implemented January 2022

South Okanagan-Similkameen Transit Future Action Plan

07 System Performance

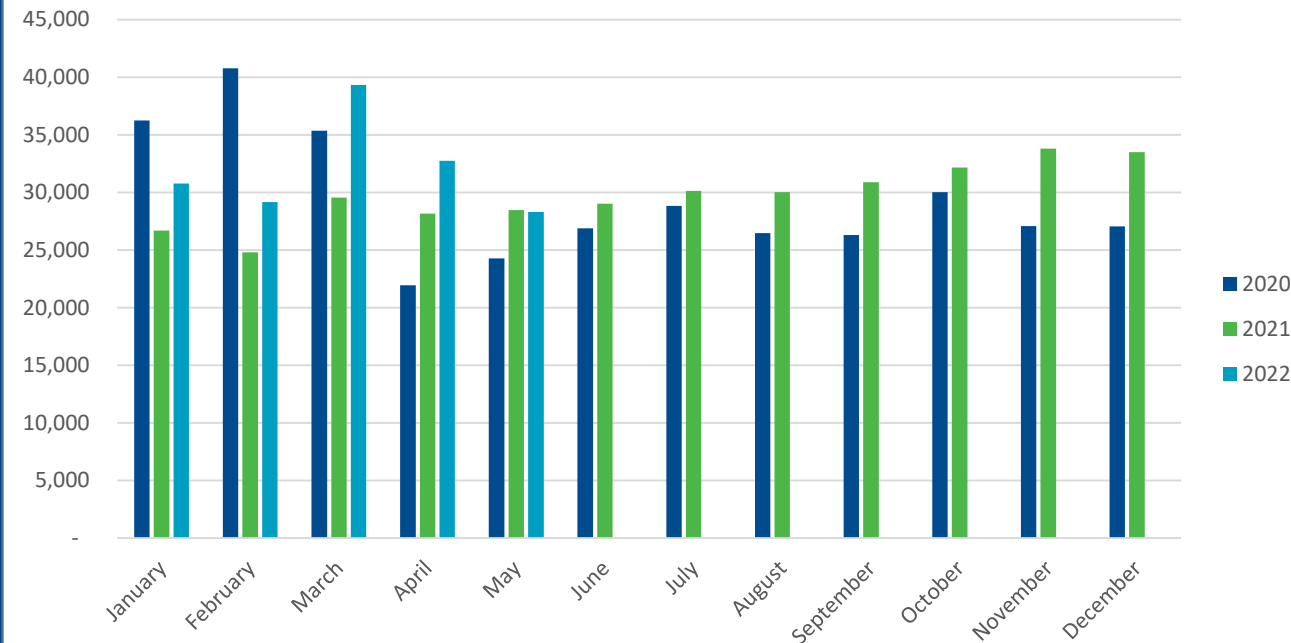
COVID-19 Impacts

As expected, given guidance from British Columbia's Provincial Health Officer to limit non-essential travel, transit ridership in the South Okanagan dropped abruptly in March 2020.

Key Takeaways

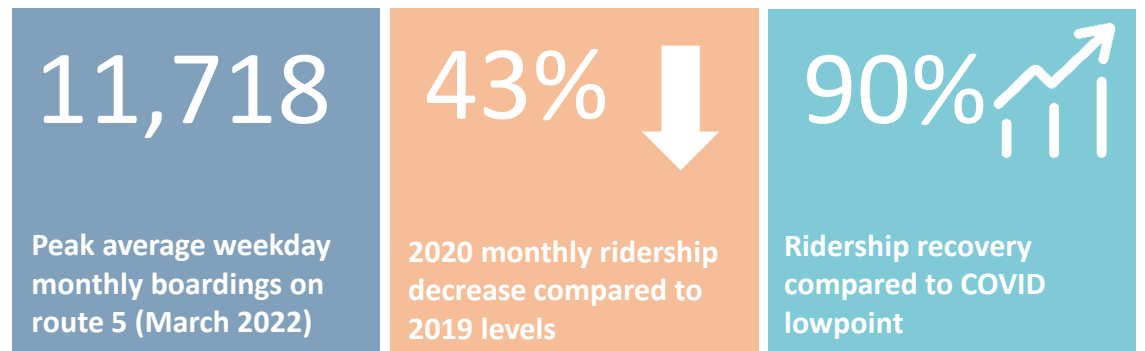
- Ridership dropped to its lowest point in April 2020, where monthly boardings fell by 43 per cent compared to 2019 levels.
- As of April 2022, ridership had recovered to approximately 90 per cent of pre-COVID levels.
- Pre-COVID (March 2020), ridership levels for 2020 were surpassing 2019 levels.
- Ridership continues to recover, and transit continues to provide essential services to the community, including access to Okanagan College, Penticton Regional Hospital and other key destinations across the region.

Total Monthly Boardings (all routes)



Data source: APC data (routes 1-5, 15, 16, 70), RTS Connect (routes 10, 11*, 20, 21, 30, 40, 41)

*implemented January 2022



08 How We Engaged

As part of BC Transit’s commitment to public engagement, outreach was carried out to identify new draft service and infrastructure priorities through workshops, conversations with key stakeholders, and a transit operator survey.

Multiple rounds of engagement were conducted in order to ensure that sufficient feedback was received. Phase 1 of public engagement consisted of key stakeholder workshops and on-board intercept surveys, conducted by Leger Marketing. Additional in-person engagement was planned for this phase, but was postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Phase 2 ran from November 16, 2021 to early January, 2022, and included an online survey and in-person open houses. Phase 3 from to July 8 to 29, 2022, and consisted of more targeted online engagement for specific service proposals.

BC Transit also worked with local partners and the operating company to ensure paper surveys were available for those who needed them. Marketing to the community was facilitated through a variety of tools including: a project website, newspaper ads, targeted mail-outs, internal bus ads, social media, BC Transit’s website and on local municipal websites.



70+ open house attendees



533 online survey responses



75 Phase 3 paper survey responses



Stay engaged!

Check out the Phase 3 engagement summary report:
<https://engage.bctransit.com/southokanagan2022>

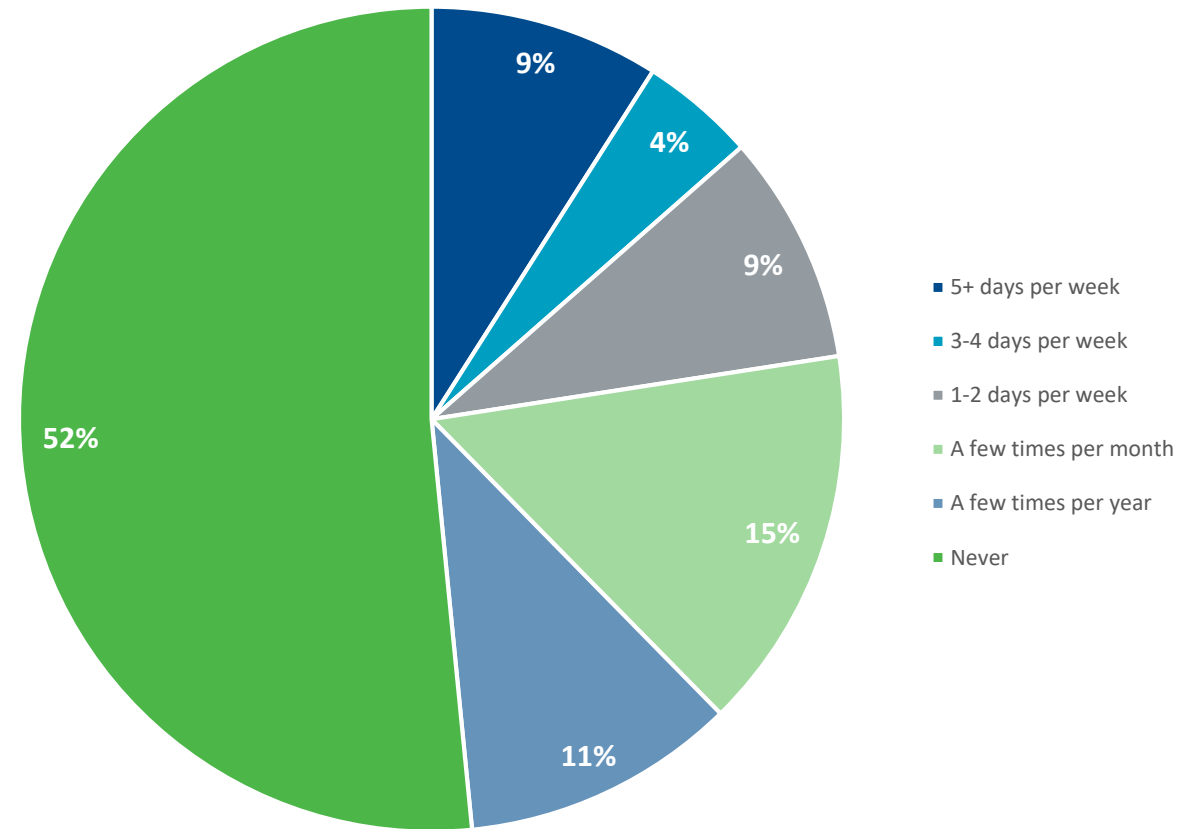
09 Who We Heard From

Over 500 responses were received from the public during engagement, with the majority submitting feedback through the Phase 2 and 3 online surveys.

Key findings:

- 52 per cent of respondents do not take transit, whereas 15 per cent take transit a few times a month. 13 per cent of respondents are regular transit users, taking the bus three or more times a week.
- According to Phase 3 feedback, respondents were the most satisfied with the capacity, condition and cleanliness of the vehicles, as well as the demeanour of bus drivers. They were most dissatisfied with service span and frequency, and the ease of trip planning. It should be noted that this engagement was conducted shortly after the launch of NextRide, and so respondents may not yet be aware of this tool.
- Most respondents lived in Penticton and Summerland, but responses were seen from across the South Okanagan.

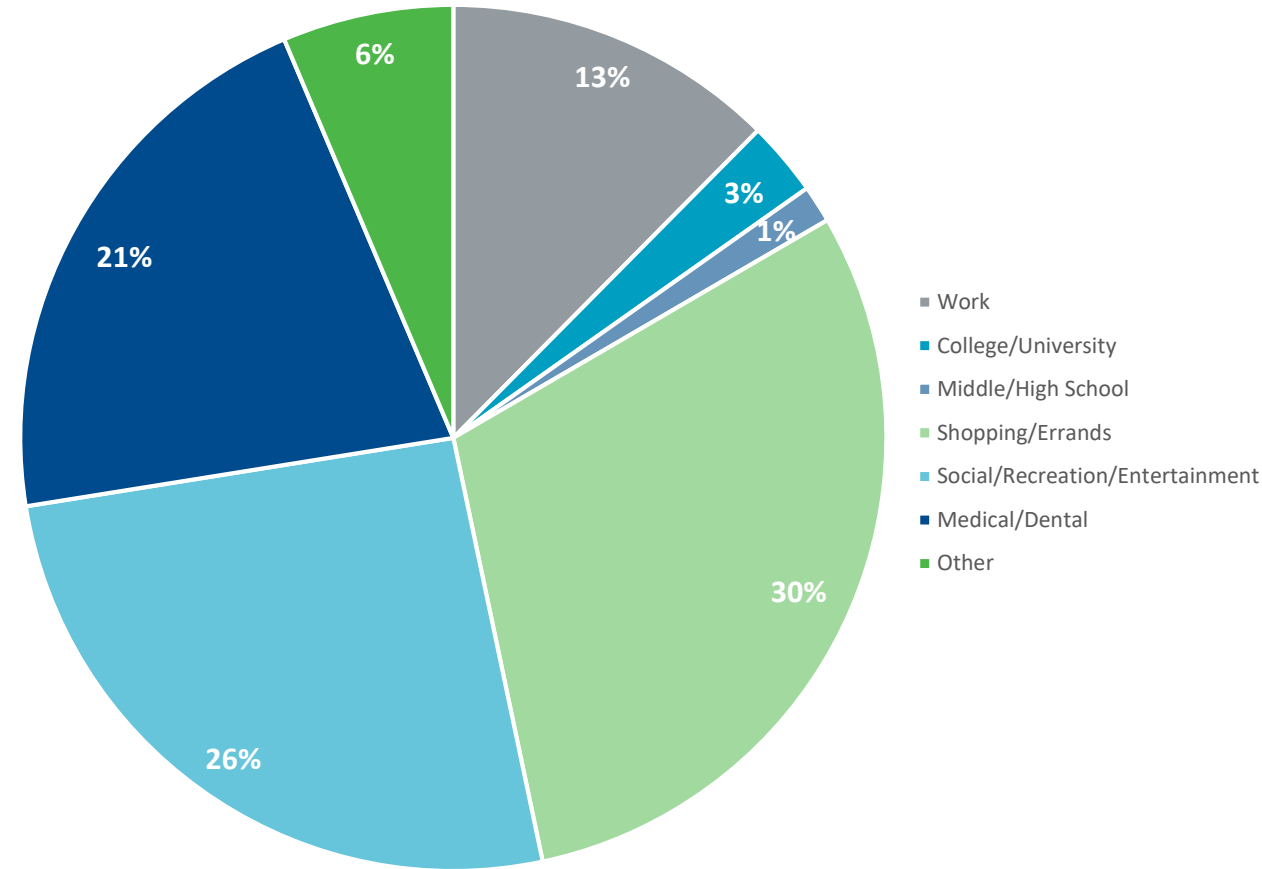
Transit usage amongst survey respondents (all engagement phases)



10 What We Heard

- Respondents ride the bus primarily for shopping, errands or social, recreation or entertainment purposes. Fewer respondents take the bus to work or school.
- Respondents who do not currently take transit avoid using the service because there are no stops near their house, the service is not convenient for them, or they use another mode such as driving or cycling.
- Span and frequency increases were also cited by respondents as a key part of making transit appealing.
- Across all rounds of engagement, respondents expressed interest in seeing improved amenities along bus routes, such as shelters or benches.

Trip purpose amongst survey respondents (Phase 3 only)



PENTICTON Service Priorities

City of Penticton
Regional District of
Okanagan-Similkameen
District of Summerland
Town of Princeton



11 Penticton Service Priorities

Priority	Description	Expansion Resources	Recommended Phasing
Frequency and span improvements on Penticton local routes.	Investigate appropriate frequency and span improvements on Penticton local routes through the Penticton Network Restructure Plan.	To be determined through the Penticton Network Restructure Plan process.	Short-term
Introduce service to new areas in Penticton.	In the short-term, areas in need of transit service will be explored through the Penticton Network Restructure Plan. On an ongoing basis, demand for transit service to new areas will be monitored by BC Transit and the City of Penticton.	To be determined through the Penticton Network Restructure Plan process.	Medium-term

REGIONAL DISTRICT OF OKANAGAN-SIMILKAMEEN

Service Priorities

City of Penticton
Regional District of
Okanagan-Similkameen
District of Summerland
Town of Princeton



12 Regional District of Okanagan-Similkameen

Service Priorities 2023-2026

Priority	Description	Expansion Resources
Route 40 Osoyoos/Penticton: Increase service to four round trips per day Monday to Friday.	Increase route 40 service to four round trips a day Monday to Friday, providing northbound and southbound commuters access to major employers in the Oliver and Penticton areas.	3000 annual service hours 1 vehicle
Route 70 Kelowna/Penticton: Introduce Saturday service.	Introduce Saturday service on route 70, providing four round trips per day.	800 annual service hours
Route 60 Keremeos: Introduce local service two days per week within Keremeos, and to Cawston and Olalla.	Introduce local service within Keremeos via new route 60, with deviations to Cawston and Olalla. This service will enable residents to use transit to access the post office, medical services and other daily needs. Additional engagement will be conducted to determine final routing. Note that additional hours may be required to accommodate out-of-service travel time, also known as deadhead.	500 annual service hours
Route 10 Naramata/Penticton: Introduce Friday and Saturday evening service.	Expand route 10 service to 10:00 p.m. on Fridays and Saturdays, offering two additional round trips each day.	450 annual service hours
Route 20 Okanagan Falls/Penticton: Introduce Friday evening service.	Expand route 20 service to 10:00 p.m. on Fridays, offering two additional round trips.	200 annual service hours

12 Regional District of Okanagan-Similkameen

Service Priorities 2027-2030

Priority	Description	Expansion Resources
Route 40 Osoyoos/Penticton: Introduce three round trips on Saturday.	Introduce three route 40 round trips on Saturday to serve personal and shopping trips.	750 annual service hours
Route 41 Osoyoos Local: Improve daytime service within Osoyoos Monday to Friday.	Expand route 41 service to provide five trips per day, Monday through Friday.	550 annual service hours
Route 42 Oliver Local: Introduce daytime local service within Oliver Monday to Friday.	Expand transit services within Oliver, introducing new route 42 and providing local service via four trips per day. Note that additional hours may be required to accommodate out-of-service travel time, also known as deadhead.	1000 annual service hours 1 vehicle
Route 41 Osoyoos Local, route 42 Oliver Local: Expand local transit service in both Osoyoos and Oliver to Saturdays.	Expand local transit service to Saturdays, shifting the service span to fall later in the day than the Monday to Friday service.	150 annual service hours for route 41 150 annual service hours for route 42
Route 20 Okanagan Falls: Introduce Saturday service.	Expand service within Okanagan Falls to include Saturday. Introduce service at a lower level and build over time as demand grows.	300 annual service hours
Route 60 Keremeos: Introduce Saturday local service in Keremeos.	Expand local service within Keremeos to Saturdays with a service span starting later in the day and ending later in the day than the weekday service.	400 annual service hours

12 Regional District of Okanagan-Similkameen

Service Priorities 2027-2030

Priority	Description	Expansion Resources
Expand local service to Apex.	Introduce year-round service connecting Apex and Penticton. Additional engagement will be conducted to determine final routing.	Exact resources to be determined based on final routing.
Route 11 West Bench: Increase weekday service.	Expand service on route 11, providing more opportunities for travel to and from West Bench via three additional round trips per day.	800 annual service hours
Route 41 Osoyoos Local, route 42 Oliver Local: Introduce evening service on Friday and Saturday.	Expand service hours on Fridays and Saturdays to 10:00 p.m. in Osoyoos and Oliver.	150 annual service hours for route 41 200 annual service hours for route 42
Route 41 Osoyoos Local, route 42 Oliver Local: Introduce Sunday service.	Expand local service within Osoyoos and Oliver to Sundays.	125 annual service hours for route 41 150 annual service hours for route 42
Route 80 Keremeos/Osoyoos: Introduce new regional service between Keremeos and Osoyoos.	Introduce service between Keremeos and Osoyoos, offering timed connections with the route 50 Princeton/Penticton service.	Exact resources to be determined based on final routing.
Introduce local service in Kaleden.	Introduce local service in Kaleden at a base service level, expanding over time as demand grows.	Exact resources to be determined based on final routing.

12 Regional District of Okanagan-Similkameen

Service Priorities 2027-2030

Priority	Description	Expansion Resources
Route 11 West Bench: Introduce Saturday service.	Expand service on route 11 by four round trips every Saturday.	250 annual service hours
Route 21 OK Falls Local: Introduce Saturday service.	Introduce Saturday service on route 21, providing additional local service in Okanagan Falls via four trips a day.	100 annual service hours

SUMMERLAND

Service Priorities



City of Penticton
Regional District of
Okanagan-Similkameen
District of Summerland
Town of Princeton



13 Summerland

Service Priorities 2023-2026

Priority	Description	Expansion Resources
<p>Route 30 Summerland/Penticton: Introduce service on Sunday.</p>	<p>Expand route 30 service between Summerland and Penticton to Sundays, providing three round trips a day. Note that additional hours may be required to accommodate out-of-service travel time, also known as deadhead.</p>	<p>400 annual service hours</p>
<p>Route 32: Introduce dedicated local transit service in Summerland Monday to Saturday.</p>	<p>Introduce local Summerland transit service via new route 32, operating six days a week. Additional engagement will be conducted to determine final routing, but service is expected to operate between Lower Town, Trout Creek and downtown.</p>	<p>Exact resources to be determined based on final routing.</p>

13 Summerland

Service Priorities 2027-2030

Priority	Description	Expansion Resources
Route 32: Introduce local evening service on Friday and Saturday in Summerland.	Expand route 32 local service hours on Fridays and Saturdays to 10:00 p.m. in Summerland.	Exact resources to be determined based on final routing.
Route 32: Introduce Sunday local service in Summerland.	Expand route 32 local service within Summerland to Sundays, offering service at a lower level initially and building over time as demand develops.	Exact resources to be determined based on final routing.
Route 30 Summerland/Penticton: Introduce Friday and Saturday evening service.	Expand route 30 service between Summerland and Penticton to 10:00 p.m. on Fridays and Saturdays.	625 annual service hours

PRINCETON Service Priorities

City of Penticton
Regional District of
Okanagan-Similkameen
District of Summerland
Town of Princeton



14 Princeton Service Priorities

Service Priorities 2023-2026

Priority	Description	Expansion Resources
Route 50 Princeton/Penticton: Adjust the existing route 50 schedule to better align with route 70 Kelowna/Penticton service.	Extend the hours of service for transit service operating between Princeton and Penticton, so that trips are slightly later. This change will allow more time in Penticton to enable connections to the route 70 Kelowna/Penticton midday trips.	250 annual service hours
Route 50 Princeton/Penticton: Increase service on route 50 to five days per week.	Increase service on route 50 to one round trip per day, Monday to Friday, and connect with midday service to Kelowna.	400 annual service hours
Route 51 Princeton Local: Introduce local weekday scheduled service within Princeton, interspersed with periods of on-request service.	Introduce local weekday scheduled service in Princeton via new route 51, operating Monday, Wednesday and Friday and for an hour on both Tuesday and Thursday. A portion of the on-request service hours within Princeton would be re-allocated in combination with new hours in order to offer scheduled fixed-route service. Scheduled local service will be designed to connect with route 50, facilitating regional connections.	1300 annual service hours 2 vehicles

14 Princeton Service Priorities

Service Priorities 2027-2030

Priority	Description	Expansion Resources
Route 51 Princeton Local: Introduce Friday evening local service in Princeton.	Extend route 51 local service until 10 p.m. on Fridays.	200 annual service hours
Route 51 Princeton Local: Introduce Saturday local service in Princeton.	Expand local service within Princeton with a service span starting later in the day and ending later in the day than the Monday to Friday service.	300 annual service hours
Route 50 Princeton/Penticton: Introduce Friday evening service.	Provide one additional route 50 round trip on Friday evenings, to allow for evening travel between Princeton and Penticton.	200 annual service hours

15 Infrastructure Priorities 2023-2026

Priority	Description
<p>Invest in bus stop infrastructure</p>	<p>Improve accessibility, safety and provide additional amenities at bus stops.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seek investment in shelters through the BC Shelter Program • Seek investment through municipal capital planning streams • Minor Betterments funding
<p>Introduce highway-side transit stops at the following locations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manufactured home and Lower Similkameen Indian Band communities along Highway 3, between Princeton and Keremeos • Twin Lakes (Highway 3A) • Agricultural Research Centre (Highway 97) • Gallagher Lake 	<p>Implement safe highway-side stops at strategic points along Highways 3, 3A and 97, improving transit access for Lower Similkameen Indian Band communities and other communities along key transportation corridors.</p> <p>Requires collaboration with the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure, Lower Similkameen Indian Band and the Regional District of Okanagan-Similkameen.</p>



15 Beyond 2026 Infrastructure Priorities

Priority	Description
Design and construct local exchanges.	<p>As the network continues to grow, design and construct local exchanges to facilitate transfers, improve waiting areas and increase vehicle capacity. Cherry Lane in Penticton is of particular priority, pending execution of the Penticton Network Restructure Plan.</p> <p>Additional exchange locations to be explored as the transit network continues to expand.</p>
Construct the Highway 3A/97 transfer and Park and Ride.	<p>Implement a primary exchange, Park and Ride and Kiss and Ride on Highway 97 near the 3A Junction, outside Kaleden. Improve the rider experience by enhancing transfer opportunities at this location.</p> <p>Requires collaboration with the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure and Regional District of Okanagan-Similkameen.</p>

16 Additional Priorities

Priority	Description
Improve rider information.	Continue to improve transit system marketing and communications, growing awareness and leveraging online platforms for sharing information.
Conduct a feasibility study for an employee shuttle between Summerland or Trout Creek to the Agricultural Research Centre.	Examine demand for transportation to the research facility, and explore the costs and feasibility of limited-service routing of either the regional Summerland bus or a local Trout Creek route to the research centre.
Conduct a feasibility study for an employee shuttle between Princeton and Copper Mountain Mine, timed to meet shift changes.	Examine transit demand to Copper Mountain, and explore the costs and feasibility of limited-service routing to meet work shifts.
Work with the Regional District of Okanagan-Similkameen and local Indigenous bands to develop an Indigenous transit service strategy.	Work with the Regional District of Okanagan-Similkameen and local Indigenous bands to develop a strategy for serving band territory in an effective, sustainable way.
Examine and identify opportunities to extend conventional and handyDART transit service to developments located on adjoining Penticton Indian Band lands.	Working in tandem with the Penticton Indian Band and the City of Penticton, conduct a feasibility study to assess possibilities for future expansion to connect residents of and retail locations on Penticton Indian Band lands with the local transit system. Potential sites include Redwing Estates and Green Avenue Channel developments; further sites will be identified using the Penticton Indian Band's Land Use Plan as a guide.

17 Investment Strategy

To achieve the goals of this plan, sustained capital and operating investments in the transit system will be required over the next five years and beyond.

This plan calls for approximately 14,000 additional annual service hours and at least four additional vehicles by 2030. Community-specific investments are detailed in the table to the right. The resources required to fully implement this plan may increase as service proposals are developed for areas of new demand, and to ensure proper vehicle spare ratios are maintained.

In order to achieve the goals laid out in this plan, consistent provincial and local funding is required. BC Transit will continue working with the City of Penticton, Regional District of Okanagan-Similkameen, District of Summerland and Town of Princeton to continue developing the South Okanagan-Similkameen transit system.



Community	Estimated Investment Required
Penticton	Investment level to be determined through the Penticton Network Restructure Plan.
Regional District of Okanagan-Similkameen	10,025 annual service hours 2 vehicles
District of Summerland	1025 annual service hours* *additional hours required pending final routing for Summerland local service
Town of Princeton	2950 annual service hours 2 vehicles

18 Moving Forward

Monitoring

Performance of the transit system is monitored on an annual basis, which is typical for transit systems of this size. Performance may be monitored more closely after a significant service change to evaluate the change and make necessary adjustments.

Implementation

Service improvements will be integrated into the three year Transit Improvement Process (TIPs), which is updated on an annual basis and guides how expansions are implemented across BC Transit systems.

Through TIPs, the priorities outlined in this plan will be costed and presented in a Memorandum of Understanding to local government Boards and Councils for approval. Once approved, BC Transit will proceed with the request to secure Provincial funding required to implement these priorities. Through TIPs, local governments commit financially to their first year of expansions (subject to provincial funding), while items in Years 2 and 3 are presented for budgeting and planning purposes and are re-costed annually.

At the start of the annual TIPs process, BC Transit staff will work with local government staff to identify service improvements for implementation. Additional targeted engagement may be conducted as required to ensure that priorities align with community need at that time.

Service improvements will be informed by an annual route performance review. Infrastructure improvements will be incorporated into BC Transit's Capital Plan.



19 Acknowledgments

Thank you,

The development of this Transit Future Action Plan provides the planning overview for the continued development of the South Okanagan-Similkameen Regional Transit System.

This plan was made possible by participation from local governments, key stakeholders and the public. BC Transit would like to thank all those who participated for their commitment to improving transit in the South Okanagan.

