



Final Report

# Mobility Strategy Business Plan— “*Connecting the County*”

*Prepared for Municipality of Victoria County by*



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# Appendix A

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## Transit Feasibility Study—A Proposed Public Transit Strategy

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## A. Introduction

The assessment of the transportation needs of Victoria County residents as documented in the Public Transit Feasibility study report (Appendix A) confirms that there is a need for some form of transportation or mobility solution that reflects the diverse travel requirements of the different market segments and geographic characteristics of the County. The low population density and dispersed origins, destinations and distances involved in travelling around and outside the County are contributing to an increase in isolation and a reduced ability for residents to travel independently. In the absence of any form of public transit options, many residents are forced to rely on family or friends. These conditions are expected to increase further in the future thereby supporting the need for some form of solution to provide mobility for residents. In response to this situation, the County decided to explore further the transportation strategy outlined in the Transit Feasibility Study which centres on organizing or facilitating the sharing of resources to meet the increasing mobility needs of county residents.

In the referenced Feasibility Study report completed as the first step in the process towards identifying and implementing a transportation solution, the words “public transit” were used. These words reflected the initial concept from residents of a regularly scheduled service using a bus or large van operating within the County. However, as was concluded in the feasibility study, the concept of a “public transit” service was not sustainable in the County. Instead, some alternative approach to meeting the transportation needs of residents was required from the broader perspective of providing “mobility options”. As such, this Business Plan is for the delivery of a “mobility strategy” within the County.

The key users of any mobility service would be seniors, those without cars or who do not wish to or can no longer drive, those on fixed income and people with disabilities. The primary trip purposes would be for shopping, work and to reach education and medical/health services. Given the limited transportation resources existing now in the County as well as limitations in human and financial resources, and lessons learned from other similar areas in the province, the Transit Feasibility Study concluded that an area-specific, locally-based solution should be pursued. The service should be based on demand suited to local conditions and use existing resources. For example, local trips could be served through collaboration amongst residents (“ride sharing”) and supportive use of the taxi services in Baddeck and Ingonish. Longer distance trips could be served on a pre-arranged basis to meet medical and specialized shopping needs. Over time, the services and travel arrangements could be expanded and formalized.

For success, a leader or champion would be needed and, in this regard, the County, as the central and common agency across the county, is best positioned to take the lead role.

The next step in the process of meeting the county’s transportation needs is to prepare a Business Plan to set out how the needs would be met, what the mobility strategy would look like, the resources to be used, the revenue and funding sources needed to support the service, marketing and communications strategies, and identify who would make it all happen—administration/governance addressing roles and responsibilities. The Business Plan includes a multi-year budget, recommendations and an implementation plan with action steps to guide County Council and County staff in implementing the strategy.

In view of the role and importance of the Mobility Strategy for the County, a potential name of the program, “*Connecting The County*”, is suggested.

## B. What is a Business Plan?

A business plan describes all of the elements or steps involved in delivering the services described in the Mobility Strategy developed in the Transit Feasibility Study as well as expectations for success and financial and human resources required. The Plan consists of the following sub-plans:

- **Service Plan:** what the service(s) will look like, where service will be provided, who will it serve, who can use it, how often it will operate and on what days;
- **Operations Plan:** how it will be operated;
- **Resource Plan:** what resources are required;
- **Governance, Management, Staffing Plan:** how it will be administered, planned and managed and what will be the staffing requirements;
- **Performance Guidelines:** how the success of the service will be measured including how decisions regarding its continued operation will be made;
- **Marketing and Communications Plan:** how use of the service will be encouraged;
- **Financial Plan:** what the operating and capital costs will be and how the service will be funded; and
- **Implementation Plan:** how the service will be introduced and schedule with action steps.

The following document presents the various sections of the Business Plan.

## C. The Plan

Each element of the business plan for the County’s mobility strategy is described below and provides the basis for how the strategy will be implemented and how its success will be assessed.

### 3.1 Description of the Service

Based on the experience of Victoria County’s peers and the conclusions set out in the Transit Feasibility Study regarding the need and demand for some form of alternative mobility service, as well as sensitivity to the financial capacity of the County, the mobility strategy for the County has the following key principles:

In the short term:

- Start small and gradually augment the program as demand warrants and resources permit.
- Base the program and services offered initially on collaboration between residents to use private transportation resources (private automobiles) and promote ride-sharing to meet specific trip needs such as shopping, social and medical appointments.
- Support the use of the local taxi services through promotion and incentive programs, such as financial assistance for low income residents.
- Target local trips and longer distance trips to Sydney on pre-arranged dates for specific purposes—medical, shopping—emphasize health needs.
- Identify and source the availability of accessible vehicles within the county to assist with the transportation for persons with disabilities.

The role of the Municipality would be as the lead agency and central resource centre for implementing the Mobility program, promoting ride-sharing amongst residents and promoting the use of the taxi and Maritime Bus transportation services. This approach would be achieved through the establishment of a “mobility, ride-sharing” website and communications network.

The Municipality would hire, or designate an existing employee, to be the “Mobility Coordinator” whose role would be to not only develop the ride-sharing model but also to monitor the program’s success, to develop additional transportation resources as well as to implement a program to support and encourage use of the local taxi services. Included in the ride-sharing model could be use of the Alderwood and Inverary Inn vehicles to assist in meeting trip needs.

Future mobility and transportation service options could include:

- Working with the taxi companies to provide specific trips—health, education, work both locally or to Sydney where the trips cannot be met through ride-sharing amongst residents.
- Working with Maritime Bus to add a trip to/from Sydney to permit return daily trips.

Over time, the mobility program could expand the transportation service options and be formalized with the establishment of a non-profit agency that could acquire vehicles and employ personnel based on demonstrated need and success with the initial “rider-sharing” model. A formalized service and agency could also meet the needs, for example, of Alderwood and the Inverary Inn, through the use of “public” vehicles.

### 3.1.1 General Approach to Implementing a Mobility Resource Centre

In essence, the approach to be taken in the County with regard to establishing the recommended Mobility program and providing transportation services has two phases:

**Phase 1**—Establish a central “Mobility Resource Centre”, a responsibility to be assumed by the County, to promote the use and sharing of transportation resources, both private and public (taxi, inter-city bus), to assist residents with their transportation needs to reach destinations within and outside the county. In essence, the Resource Centre and Transportation Coordinator will act as a broker—matching those requiring transportation with appropriate transportation resources; and

**Phase 2**—Build on the results from Phase 1 with existing public and private resources and collaborative results to organize and augment the private and public resources with additional resources. This Phase could ultimately progress to forming a non-profit agency to provide formal transit services with vehicles and either paid or volunteer employees.

#### Detailed Phase 1 Activities

In this Phase, as noted above, the emphasis is on gathering and sharing information about available transportation resources and helping county residents to increase their mobility options by connecting and collaborating to share resources and to increase awareness of available resources and services. The following are the key elements of the Phase 1 activities:

1. The County to provide funding for the mobility program, *Connecting the County*;
2. The County to establish a central “mobility office” or resource centre with the objective of gathering and sharing information about transportation needs and resources for County residents;
3. Adopt guidelines and a process for assessing the success of the program;
4. The Mobility Resource Centre and mobility strategy program, *Connecting the County*, to be directed and managed by the County for the first **two** years of the program;
5. The County to hire a “Mobility Coordinator” whose role it will be to promote and manage the transportation needs of residents and available resources. A position responsibility and qualifications outline is provided in Section 3.2;
6. The County, through the Mobility Resource Centre and the Mobility Coordinator, to establish a process and methods to link people with transportation needs with those who have transportation resources. This activity also includes a process to solicit and receive information from residents about transportation resources as outlined in Section 3.2.2, below;
7. The County to establish a Mobility Advisory Committee to guide and advise the Mobility Coordinator and the County on the program and to assist in raising awareness of the program;
8. Prepare a branding, marketing and communications plan to promote the program;
9. Identify and assess transportation needs and available resources to supplement, as feasible and appropriate, the funding resources on a cost-recovery basis;
10. Develop a central data source for resident travel needs and available transportation resources as the basis for matching travel needs and identifying and arranging transportation trips; and
11. The Mobility Coordinator would also work with the local transportation providers (taxi and inter-city bus) and other transportation resources (Inverary Inn, Alderwood) to organize and deliver specific transportation services designed to meet residents’ needs.

The two most critical steps in Phase 1 will be to hire a suitable person as the Mobility Coordinator and to adopt guidelines to assess the success of the program on an annual basis.

Once the program is established, the Mobility Coordinator will be the lead person for implementing and ensuring the success of the transportation program. Of critical importance will be the need for the Coordinator to communicate and reach out to the community to determine transportation needs on a daily, weekly and on-going basis and source available transportation resources. In this regard, the establishment of a website will be essential for people to share transportation needs and resources.

### ***Mobility Advisory Committee***

The proposed Mobility Advisory Committee (MAC) should be comprised of representatives of each key area of the County. The number of members should be no more than 10 in total.

### ***Reporting on Program***

As the program unfolds, the Coordinator, with the help of the MAC, will initially report to County Council on the progress and success of the program on a monthly basis for the first six months; less frequently thereafter.

### **Detailed Phase 2 Activities**

It is envisioned that it will take two years for the program to mature. Before the end of Year 2, the program would be evaluated against the “evaluation criteria” (outlined in Section 3.3, below) to determine whether the program has been successful and if it should continue. On the basis of a successful evaluation, the County could then decide to either continue the program as outlined in Phase 1 above for another year, or decide to progress to Phase 2.

In Phase 2, the intent is that the program would progress beyond the “ride-sharing” approach in Phase 1 to a more formal approach to delivering transportation services in the County. Fundamental to this approach would be the formation of a non-profit association with a board of directors similar to the type of organization found in other areas of the province. Alternatively, the transportation service could come under the auspices of an established organization or agency that provides transportation service, such as a health care agency or social service agency. The advantage of Phase 2 is several-fold:

1. An ability to solicit and accept donations which are tax-deductible;
2. An ability to operate a transportation service by acquiring vehicles and using paid staff;
3. Operating a transportation service with user fees (fares); and
4. Qualify for the Provincial Community Transportation Assistance Program (CTAP) and Accessible Transportation Assistance Program (ATAP) funding for community-based accessible transportation services.

The Mobility Coordinator could progress to be the lead staff person of the Association, for example as either the Executive Director or General Manager.

Apart from the formation of a non-profit association, the Phase 2 approach would extend to include both operating public transportation service and negotiating and arranging supplementary transportation services with other transportation providers designed to meet specific needs to assisting with the funding of those services. This could include:

- Negotiating and arranging with the local taxi providers in Baddeck and Ingonish (if re-established) to provide trips on specific days and for specific purposes within the County and outside to Sydney to meet resident needs. As part of this initiative, the Mobility Coordinator could arrange special rates or fares, and coordinate pickups and dropoffs.

The Non-Profit Association could be similar to the organizations that now exist in Clare, Digby, Annapolis and Kings Counties and Port Hawkesbury.



## **3.2 Governance, Management, Staffing**

As noted at the outset, the County is the most appropriate organization to lead the mobility/transportation initiative since it is a single-tier government body.

### **3.2.1 Governance**

For Phase 1, as proposed above, the County would be the lead body and would have overall responsibility for the implementation and evaluation of the mobility program. The County, through its Chief Administrative Officer (CAO), would hire the “Mobility Coordinator” to build, manage and promote the mobility strategy. This person could report either directly to the CAO or to a department director within the County’s established organization structure as an employee or as a contract position. The advantage of the Mobility Coordinator being a “direct report” to the CAO is the higher profile afforded to the position and program especially in the first years. With regard to whether the position is as an employee of the County or as a contracted position, the main objective would be to strive for a degree of permanency or consistency with the position. Ideally, the person should make a long term (multi-year) commitment to the program.

In Phase 2, with the creation of a non-profit association (if the County chooses to proceed in this direction), then the association becomes the governing body. The association would be incorporated and a board of directors would need to be formed. The directors could be paid or unpaid volunteers (in other jurisdictions, they are volunteers) and would be expected to have a role in building up and promoting the transportation service. Appropriate articles of incorporation as well as by-laws would need to be prepared and could be modelled on other similar agencies.

An Executive Director or General Manager would then be the staff person responsible for the performance of the association and delivery of the transportation services to include all financial and legal matters.

The Board members could be selected based on expressions of interest to the Executive Director or appointed by County Council.

### **3.2.2 Management**

In Phase 1, the Mobility Coordinator would be the primary person responsible for all aspects of the transportation program. Initially, for the first six months, this person would need to be full-time but could likely transition to part-time (3 days per week) thereafter.

This person will play a key role in the success of the Mobility Strategy and the Resource Centre. The person selected for this position should have a solid knowledge of the County, its residents and characteristics and a solid understanding of the objectives of the mobility program and how it should be implemented, managed and sustained. The person should have good organizational and communications skills, strong inter-personal skills, be highly motivated, have a strong commitment to the program, and be able to work independently.

The position responsibilities will include:

- Managing the program, establishing and maintaining the communications processes, resources and materials;
- Managing the program budget including sourcing potential funds to augment the funding provided by the County, as necessary. This could include in-kind resources or donations to assist in funding specific transportation needs such as trips to Sydney. It would also include establishing costs for contracted services and rates to be paid for by users;
- Promoting the program;
- Working with the Mobility Advisory Committee to inform and further the success of the program;
- Researching, soliciting and inviting people to share their transportation resources;

- Researching and inviting people to share their needs and linking them with available transportation resources through personal and electronic contact (email) as well as through the Mobility Resource Centre website;
- Liaising with the existing transportation resources to organize and deliver services as needed; and
- Assessing the performance and level of satisfaction with the program.

Should the program progress to Phase 2, the Mobility Coordinator may be a candidate to head up the proposed Non-Profit Association.

In Phase 2 if an Association is formed, then the executive director (or “general manager”) would be the lead person responsible for the program but with broader responsibilities associated with the management of the association as well as the delivery of transportation services. In this regard, the executive director (ED) would be responsible for liaising with various agencies, seeking funding through donations, forming partnerships with appropriate groups and businesses to fund and deliver the transportation service. The ED would also be responsible for developing annual business plans, operating and capital budgets, hiring staff (paid or volunteer) and for the financial performance and integrity of the association.

The key attributes of the ED would be similar to those of the Mobility Coordinator but with demonstrated experience in the management of a non-profit agency.

### 3.3 Service and Performance Guidelines

Implementing the mobility strategy and program will require service and performance guidelines and benchmarks to measure and assess its performance and ensure that the program meets expectations.

In **Phase 1**, these “metrics” will include qualitative, quantitative and financial measures. Phase 1 will focus on building awareness, cataloguing needs and resources and linking needs with resources. Metrics/ evaluation criteria would include, but not be limited to:

1. **Effectiveness:** population served (including program clients or participants, the indigent, elderly and disability communities together with the general public); and in terms of the number of trips generated (ridership, by trip purpose);
2. **Economy:** the total cost of providing the service, savings or cost-avoidance to users;
3. **Efficiency:** the cost per trip; costs to both the user and to the county or any funding partners;
4. **Level of service:** ability to connect needs with resources, reservation constraints, range of trip purposes;
5. **Quality of Service:** to the user measured in terms of convenience, trip times, comfort, dignity, and flexibility (response time, ability to connect with transportation resources);
6. **Socioeconomic factors:** impact on employment and social well-being;
7. **Human rights implications:** delivery of services for persons with disabilities, integration, etc.;
8. **Organizational issues:** operational flexibility, control and accountability, ease of implementation;
9. **Political risk:** the potential for changes in direction of local or provincial policies; and
10. **Financial risk:** ability to fund any cost shortfalls or overages.

As a starting point for evaluating the success of the program, which should initially occur following the first year of operation, the objective would be to achieve fifty percent (50%) of the potential demand identified in the Feasibility study, or, specifically, 12 rides per day. The other evaluation metrics would be assessed at the same time. It is planned that this evaluation would be undertaken through a web survey of the community at large and interviews with those who have utilized the service to determine the level of satisfaction with the program and areas for improvement.

In **Phase 2**, with the establishment of a non-profit association, the evaluation of program effectiveness will build on the matrices/criteria developed for Phase 1, possibly with a greater focus on performance-based measures, reflecting:

- Cost to deliver the program (including fully-loaded administrative costs);
- Number of trips taken and value of those trips to residents;
- Funding sources;
- Cost per trip; and
- Cost to the community (County).

The future program will need to be self-sufficient in terms of maintaining an acceptable net cost to the County to deliver the service.

Overall, the County will need a basis for determining whether to continue the program and to continue to financially invest in the program at regular review periods (annual). In this regard, the “test” will be assessing the value of the funds invested to the community and the “return” on those funds to residents in terms of trips taken and any cost savings or cost avoidance. In other words, has the money invested helped to address the transportation needs of residents? Has there been a demonstrated benefit to residents?

### **3.4 Branding, Marketing and Communications**

A plan to market, communicate and promote the mobility program, *Connecting the County*, will need to be prepared and will serve as the reference source. It should be prepared by the Mobility Coordinator, County Council, County staff and the Mobility Advisory Committee based on the activities of the program. The plan will describe the activities to be undertaken to communicate and promote the program to residents, businesses, and social and health care groups, or agencies, as potential users and transportation resource providers for Phases 1 and 2.

In **Phase 1**, the Plan will include the following activities:

Develop a *link on the County's website, Connecting the County*. It will provide information about the program, instructions on how to use the program, serve as a resource centre and provide a capability for residents and businesses to register their transportation needs and available resources. The site would be designed also with a link capability (ability to communicate) between those requiring service and those offering to provide transportation to be handled through the Transportation Coordinator. There should be no charge for using/accessing the site.

Develop an *email list* for communicating with program users e-blasts.

Place *ads in the local media* (newspapers, cable TV) and posting of information posters in key locations to promote the program.

Create a *central telephone number* for residents to access information and talk to the Transportation Coordinator about needs. A recorded message in the absence of the Coordinator and during off-hours would provide an explanation of the program and key contact information.

Prepare and *distribute communications/information materials* via mail, email available at various locations to promote and inform about the program.

Attend meetings with people, groups and businesses to promote and inform county residents and businesses about the program.

Specific *meetings* with the transportation providers (Taxi operators, intercity bus operator, Inverary Inn and Alderwood) and any other relevant people or businesses to solicit their support for the program. This activity could also include meetings or discussions with businesses, health care providers and education representatives in Sydney to facilitate and organize trips.

In **Phase 2**, the Plan would continue to be prepared annually and broadened to include:

- Preparation of a brochure describing the non-profit Association, its goals, objectives, resources and services.
- Provide information to residents about the services provided and related costs (fees, fares), method of payment of fares and how to register for services.
- Regular presentations to County Council on the performance of the Association and services provided.
- Meet with Provincial CTAP representative to access funding.

The overall objective of the marketing and communications activities will be to promote the program, inform people about the program and facilitate sharing of information and connectivity.

### **3.5 Resource Requirements—Human and Financial**

As noted above, the primary human resources in Phase 1 will take two forms: the Mobility Coordinator, and the Mobility Advisory Committee. The work of the Coordinator will be supported by administrative staff from the County including clerical, financial and IT.

The Coordinator would be full-time for the first 6 months to one year and then transition to part-time (60%) as the program matures. The estimated remuneration for this position would be approximately \$30-35,000 annually. The cost of County support staff could be apportioned to the program although it is not expected that the demand on staff time would be significant except in the first few months. As such, there should be no new costs involved overall.

The program website could be developed locally and should be able to be established relatively efficiently and at low cost.

Communications resources (telephone, cell phone and email) would have a cost. The County should arrange and provide for the communications resources in order to maintain consistency and control throughout the life of the program.

Marketing and communications, including information materials, advertisements and promotional activities and distribution of materials, will have a cost both for the necessary creative work as well as for distribution. An allowance of \$10,000 should be adequate for the first year of the program with creative materials developed locally or through any existing resources of the County.

In Phase 2 of the program, there would be additional costs associated with establishing the Association including an office, potential support staff for receiving trip requests and booking transportation, and for miscellaneous costs related to the operation of the business. These would be defined at the time a decision to establish a non-profit association is made.

### **3.6 Budget—Operating and Capital**

The following budget sets out the projected annual costs to establish and continue the program. Cost items include staff remuneration, communications (telephone, fax), office (depending on office arrangements), travel and marketing and promoting of the program. There are no capital expenditures in Phase 1.

For staff costs in Phase 1, as outlined above, the Coordinator would be full-time for the first six months, then part-time for the remaining period (1,500 hours) for the first year, then 60% (1,200 hours) thereafter. In Phase 2 with the transition to a Non-Profit Association, this person would become full-time in view of the added responsibilities.

In Phase 1, office expenses would be dependent on the arrangements for the Transportation Coordinator. The County could provide an office for the Coordinator along with any associated expense (telephone, computer, printing, secretarial support). Or, if the Coordinator is a contract position (recommended) then the contractor would be responsible for those services but on a charge-back basis as appropriate. Either way, an allowance is included to cover these potential costs.

A travel allowance to attend meetings and visit areas of the County is included at the rate of \$500 per month or 1,000km per month (@\$0.50/km) although this may need to be reviewed pending the number of meetings involved.

For Marketing and Promotion, the budgeted amount of \$15,000 is intended to cover the items noted in the Marketing and Promotion section above such as printing and placement of ads.

*Exhibit : Proposed Program Budget*

	<b>Year 1</b>	<b>Year 2</b>	<b>Year 3</b>
<b>Phase 1</b>			
Staff (Coordinator)	\$40,000	\$24,000	
Communications, Office	\$2,000	\$2,000	
Travel (allowance @ \$0.50/km)	\$6,000	\$4,000	
Marketing and Promotion	\$15,000	\$10,000	
Miscellaneous	\$10,000	\$4,000	
<b>Total Expenses—Phase 1</b>	<b>\$73,000</b>	<b>\$44,000</b>	
<b>Phase 2</b>			
Staff (Manager of Association)			\$50,000
Employees/Volunteers <sup>†</sup>			TBD
Office/general expenses			\$10,000
Communications			\$5,000
Travel			\$6,000
Marketing and Promotion			\$10,000
<b>Total Expenses—Phase 2<sup>†</sup></b>			<b>\$81,000</b>
<b>Funding Sources</b>			
County	\$73,000	\$44,000	\$38,000
Province (CTAP) (@\$1.60/capita)			\$11,250
Fares			TBD
Donations			TBD
<b>Total Funding</b>	<b>\$73,000</b>	<b>\$44,000</b>	<b>\$49,250</b>
<b>Net Cost<sup>†</sup></b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>TBD</b>

<sup>†</sup> Subject to level of service to be provided

### **Funding Sources**

During Phase 1, it is projected that the County would be the primary funding source. However, there may be opportunities for local groups or businesses to make specific contributions to the program to help reduce the cost to the County.

There are no provincial or federal funding sources for transportation services at this level or stage in the development of the County's transportation program. The Province's CTAP and ATAP funding is intended for formal, organized transit services.

In Phase 2, with the establishment of a formal transportation service administered either by a non-profit association or an agency, the organization could solicit donations to help fund the operating and capital needs of the service. As well, and subject to the scope of transportation services offered, the organization/agency could qualify for CTAP funding towards operating expenses, and ATAP funding towards capital costs for the purchase of vehicles. The CTAP funding is currently provided on the basis of \$1.60 per capita which represents approximately \$11,500. ATAP funding amounts to 50% of the cost of vehicles up to a maximum of \$50,000.

In Phase 2, with the provision of a formal transportation service, fares would be charged for each service and it is proposed that the fares generally be structured to reflect the cost of short, medium and long distance trips. For example, local trips in and around Baddeck or Ingonish/Neil's Harbour may have a single trip cost of \$5.00; trips between north and south of Smokey a cost of \$10.00; trips to Sydney, a cost of \$20.00. The most appropriate fares would be developed at the time of the establishment of the various services.

**When setting fares, it should be noted that fares should not be expected to cover the full cost of either individual trips or the overall cost to operate the association or agency.** The reason for this reflects both the limited ability for individuals to pay the required cost of the service as well as the "shared" community aspect of the service wherein it is reasonable to expect that all residents should contribute to the cost of the service as a form of investment in the community. As a result, there will be a continuing need and expectation for County funding as well as the need for donations to meet the on-going costs of delivering the service.

### **3.7 Implementation Plan**

As outlined in the previous sections, the *Connecting the County* mobility program would be broadly implemented in two phases with Phase 1 extending approximately two years.

For Phase 1, the following would be the implementation steps:

1. County Council receives the business plan report and refers to staff for review and for report back to Council regarding implementation and budget implications;
2. Report is submitted to the Province for approval of funding for the report, if necessary;
3. Upon receipt of approval of the funding for the report and subject to review by County staff and a recommendation to approve the report and *Connecting the County* public transportation program, County Council then approves the Business Plan and directs staff to implement the program with a target implementation date. A suggested implementation date would be three months from the time of Council approval to proceed based on the establishment of the Public Transportation Coordinator position;
4. County staff prepares a position description for the Public Transportation Coordinator and advertises for the position; and
5. Upon hiring, the Transportation Coordinator has responsibility for implementing the Program including actioning the Phase 1 activities described within the Business Plan.

The Implementation Plan for Phase 2 would be prepared prior to the end of Phase 1 following the positive completion of the User and Resident satisfaction survey noted in this report and a decision by County Council to proceed to Phase 2.

### **3.8 Implementation Timeline**

The projected timeline for implementing the recommended Mobility Strategy is as follows:

- Council consideration of Mobility Business Plan report—December 2015
- Referral of report to County staff for consideration and report back to Council—December 2014
- Staff report back to Council and Council approval to proceed—February 2015
- Advertise and prepare position description for Mobility Coordinator—March 2015
- Interview and hire Mobility Coordinator—April 2015
- Establish Mobility Advisory Committee—April 2015
- Coordinator organizes Mobility Program implementation plan—May 2015
- Coordinator initiates and communicates the program—May 2015 onward
- First residents benefit from program—June 2015



## D. Stakeholder Consultation

An important step in preparing this Business Plan was to consult with County stakeholders to inform them of the Mobility Strategy and to receive their comments and input. Meetings were held in four key areas of the County during July and October 2014, specifically in Baddeck, Ingonish, Boularderie, North Shore and Iona. In addition, meetings were held with members of the Age-Friendly Committee, the taxi operator in Baddeck (G&W Taxi) and with the Age-Friendly Committee at one of its regular meetings. Meetings were also held with members of County Council including the Warden and Deputy Warden.

At these meetings, the work undertaken and conclusions from the Transit Feasibility Study were reviewed and the proposed Mobility Strategy described and discussed.

All stakeholders again confirmed that transportation was an increasingly challenging issue within the County and reaffirmed their view that some action was needed to address the transportation needs. Stakeholders supported the key conclusion of the Feasibility Study that a formal, scheduled, “public transit” service was not practical within the County for the reasons cited in the Study (low population density, distances involved and dispersed travel needs). At the same time, they supported the proposed mobility strategy and the approach of using existing resources and linking resident transportation/travel needs with available resources. Stakeholders also concurred with the Mobility Strategy program approach that the County should be the central resource and that a Mobility Coordinator position be established to implement and promote the Strategy program.

During the course of the stakeholder discussions and to differentiate from the original study notion of assessing the feasibility of introducing a “public transit” service, it was suggested that the focus of the plan and terminology be changed to refer to “mobility” needs. This word better describes the over-arching needs of residents rather than the more narrow concept of a “transit” service. As such, the title of the Business Plan refers to a “mobility strategy”.

In discussing the Mobility Strategy and how it would work with stakeholders, a number of questions and concerns were raised. These were:

- Confidentiality of information. Will my address and personal information be shared through the proposed website or other electronic processes?
- Will people want to provide transportation for others, particularly strangers?
- What about liability? Would extra car insurance be required?
- What if I don't want to provide transportation to someone else?
- How quickly can somebody respond to a transportation need?
- How would gas costs be covered?
- What if no one offers assistance?

In addition, the concept of having a membership or “subscription fee” in the amount of \$5.00 or \$10.00 was suggested.

With regard to the questions and concerns raised, as the program and initiative is voluntary, no one would be required to provide a ride to anyone they don't wish to. Also, since providing a ride is voluntary and would occur infrequently, there should be no requirement for having extra car insurance although individuals should check with their insurance broker to confirm.

On the matter of sharing costs for gas, this would be between the parties. Common courtesy would suggest that the person being given the ride should offer to help with the cost of gas but this is strictly voluntary.

With regard to a membership or subscription fee, the purpose of having a fee would be to demonstrate a commitment to the program. However, at the same time, a fee could raise expectations that people will receive a service. Since the program is voluntary, no commitment to provide a service can be made. In order to avoid any misconceptions, a membership or subscription fee would not be appropriate at the outset of the program. Instead, it could be considered later in the program as the value of the program becomes evident.

Overall, the mobility strategy is voluntary and subject to the good-will of residents. It is the expectation that people would step forward to assist those who have little or no transportation options and the process offered by the Mobility Strategy program is intended to facilitate the promotion of this cooperation.

Within the context, all stakeholders were supportive of this approach and understanding and felt that Victoria County residents would benefit. There was a strong view that the program was worthwhile and worth trying.

## **E. Recommendations**

To proceed with and implement the mobility strategy and business plan set out within this report, the following recommendations are proposed for Council consideration.

It is recommended that:

- County Council endorse the proposed Mobility Strategy and Business Plan; and
- Council refer the Business Plan to County staff for consideration regarding implementation and budget;
- Subject to the report from County Staff, Council proceed to implement the Mobility Strategy program for a minimum period of two years including establishing the position of Mobility Coordinator based on the responsibilities outlined within the Business Plan, establish a Mobility Advisory Committee with responsibilities as outlined within the Business Plan; and establish criteria for evaluating the program at regular intervals.