

# **West Kootenay Airport and Hospitality Shuttle Service Feasibility Study**

## **Final Report**

**October. 30th, 2024**

**Castlegar and District Chamber of Commerce and  
Economic Development Program**



## 1 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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**CASTLEGAR & DISTRICT  
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

"AT THE CENTRE OF IT ALL"



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### 3 INTRODUCTION

The Feasibility Study for a West Kootenay Inter-Community Shuttle Service addresses a longstanding interest in efficient transportation services that serve the West Kootenay Regional Airport and the Trail Regional Airport, as well as the hospitality and entertainment (H&E) sectors. Presently, existing transportation options such as BC Transit or commercial transport services do not adequately meet these specific needs and interests.

This initiative stems from widespread interest expressed by various stakeholders, including businesses, local and regional governments, economic development entities, and the public.

The study focuses on the geographic area bordered by Nakusp, Rossland, and Salmo, which includes thirteen municipalities and ten electoral areas.

The key objective of this feasibility study is to assess the viability of an inter-community shuttle service tailored to the airports, restaurants, hospitality businesses, and entertainment venues.

It is important to note that while this study addresses specific transportation needs related to airports and the H&E sectors, it does not encompass broader transportation requirements such as healthcare transport or access to educational institutions like Selkirk College, which fall outside the scope of this project.

### 4 METHODOLOGY

#### 4.1 INTERVIEWS

26 interviews were conducted with people from:

- Airport managers
- Taxi and shuttle service providers
- Hospitality sector businesses – restaurants, breweries
- Entertainment sector – Theaters (live and movie)
- Hotels
- Destination Marketing Organizations (DMOs)

#### 4.2 PUBLIC SURVEY

The “West Kootenay Airport, Hospitality and Entertainment Shuttle Service - Interest Survey” public survey received 922 responses.

#### 4.3 SELKIRK COLLEGE SURVEY

A survey of Selkirk College students and staff had 44 responses

#### 4.4 RESEARCH AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Research investigated the current, regional transportation context regulatory requirements, operational considerations, case studies, a business case etc. Recommendations for potential next steps have been developed.

## 5 AIRPORTS AND AIRPORT GROUND TRANSPORTATION

The region is served by two airports. The West Kootenay Regional Airport (WKRA) is in Castlegar, and the Trail Regional Airport (TRA) is in Trail.

### 5.1 WEST KOOTENAY REGIONAL AIRPORT - YCG

The West Kootenay Regional Airport (WKRA), located in Castlegar, serves as a vital transportation hub for the West Kootenay region, connecting communities like Trail, Nelson, and Rossland. The airport has a single asphalt runway measuring 1,414 meters, with basic amenities such as car rentals, food, and parking. Due to geographic challenges posed by the surrounding mountains, Air Canada only operates daytime flights.

Air Canada offers one flight daily between Castlegar and Vancouver. However, the airport is often subject to weather-related delays and cancellations, especially during the winter months, due to poor visibility and wind conditions.

Upgrading the airport’s navigational systems to improve reliability is a key goal for the future.

Air Canada has a flight cancellation shuttle bus service. The shuttle runs when there is a last-minute weather-related landing or takeoff issue. The airline transports passengers via bus between Castlegar and Kelowna to connect with flights to or from Vancouver. The initiative is directed and financed by Air Canada.

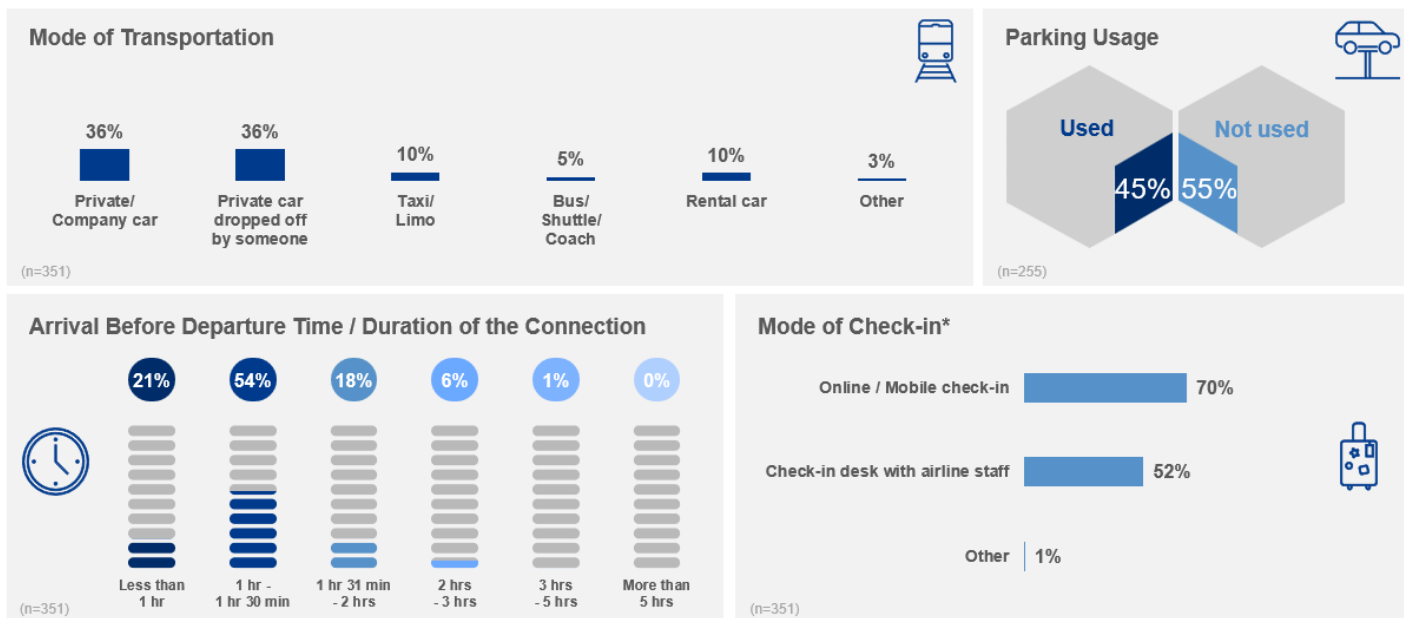
Passenger volumes have been recovering post-pandemic, with over 32,000 passengers in 2023 and growth continuing into 2024.

Longer term plans include exploring runway expansion, enhancing weather mitigation technology, and attracting additional airlines to boost service reliability and passenger volumes. Airport staff anticipate that the Required Navigation Performance (RNP) will be approved and implemented within two years. RNP will dramatically improve the WKRA reliability, especially in winter. They expect this will lead to increased number of flights and passenger volumes which, in turn will increase the need for suitable ground transportation.

#### WKRA Ground Transportation:

Ground transport options include private vehicles (most passengers use this mode), taxis, and charter shuttles. Over 70% of passengers use private cars.

### YCG – Passenger Profile Travel Behavior – Q2 2024



## 5.2 TRAIL REGIONAL AIRPORT - YZZ

The Trail Regional Airport (TRA) has seen fluctuations in passenger volumes from 2007 to 2024, with a peak in 2012 at 26,118 passengers. This spike was driven by regional infrastructure projects and higher demand for air travel. However, the COVID-19 pandemic led to a significant decline in 2020, with only 6,740 passengers. Recovery started in 2021, and passenger numbers have been steadily climbing, with a projected volume of 19,000 passengers for 2024.

The airport operates two daily flights to Vancouver via Pacific Coastal Airlines.

### **TRA Ground Transportation:**

- Airport staff estimate more than 90% of passengers either are given rides to the airport or drive their own cars. The airport provides both short-term and long-term parking at affordable rates.
- The Trail Regional Airport ground transportation options for travelers include car rentals (Practicar) and Trail Taxi offers 24-hour service.
- There is no BC Transit service to the airport.
- It is anticipated ground transportation services will improve along with growing passenger numbers and future infrastructure improvements.

**Demand for shuttle service, at 10% of passenger volume, would only be 5 to 10 people per day. However, if a shuttle were available at a reasonable price (see public survey data) some people who use private vehicles would likely choose to use a shuttle service.**

## 6 REGIONAL GROUND TRANSPORTATION

There are limited public transit or shuttle options in the Columbia Kootenay Region especially in the rural and remote communities as access to the region is dominated by private vehicles.

Regional ground transportation services available include:

- BC Transit - West Kootenay Transit System, Paratransit and HandyDART (door-to-door, shared-ride service for people with disabilities who are unable to use regular transit).
- Private inter-city bus services - Mountain Man Mike's Bus Service and Silver City Stagelines (offering regular scheduled routes Nelson - Vancouver and Nelson-Kelowna)
- Taxicab companies
- Charter bus and shuttle businesses
- Tourist shuttle services in resort communities
- Kootenay Carshare Co-op
- Car Rentals - Budget and Practicar

### 6.1 BC TRANSIT OVERVIEW

The West Kootenay Transit system, operated by BC Transit, serves the region with a system that includes routes that link the major centers of Nelson, Castlegar and Trail, as well as surrounding towns and villages. However, despite this coverage, there are notable gaps and challenges including:

- Several routes only run a few times a day or only on certain days of the week, which limits flexibility for riders.
- Many routes have reduced or no service on Saturday.

**With regards to serving the hospitality and entertainment sectors, a significant issue is that even for the most regular routes, there is limited service in the evening. Most routes stop running by 7 PM and many stop earlier. As well, there is no transit service on Sundays.**

This is especially challenging for people in smaller towns or rural areas who need to travel to the larger centers for services, work, or recreation.

One exception to this is Route 1: Nelson Uphill which serves upper Nelson, approximately once/hour until 10 P.M. weekdays. Saturday it only runs until 7 PM.

**BC Transit services include:**

- **Conventional Transit**
  - Nelson and Area, Slocan, and Area, Castlegar and Area, Trail, and Area
  - These conventional routes serve approximately 913,200 annually with about 39,000 annual in-service hours.
- **Paratransit** - flexible local service to smaller communities around Nakusp and The Arrow Lakes, and Kaslo and North Kootenay Lake
  - Paratransit routes serve about 3600 passengers annually with about 880 annual in-service hours

**Health Connections** - transit service providing communities with accessible transportation options to access non-emergency medical appointments

- Salmo – Nelson, Nakusp – Nelson, Kaslo – Nelson, Nelson - Trail
- These routes serve approximately 14,000 Passengers per month with about 1900 annual in-service hours.

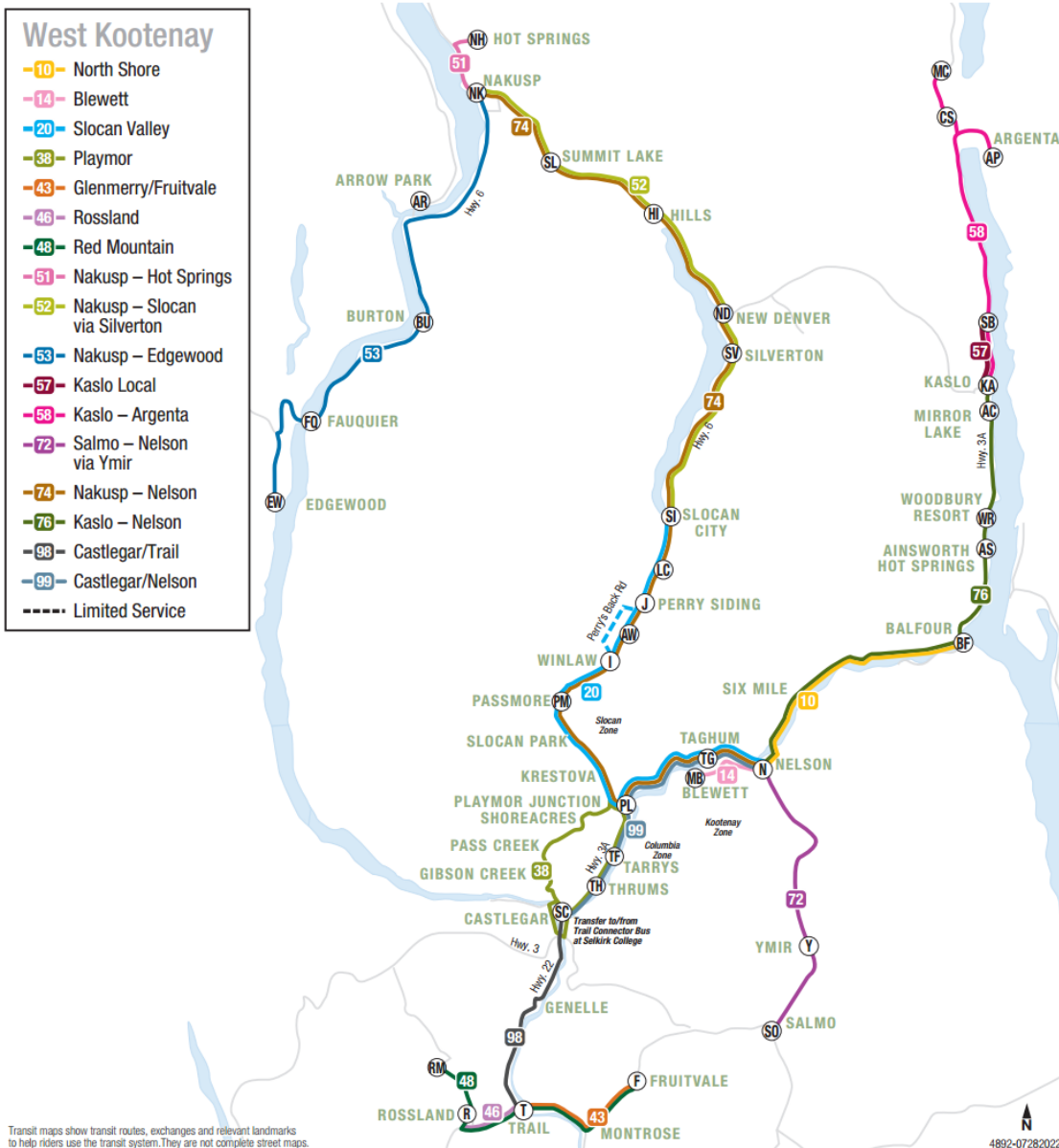


6.2 KEY BC TRANSIT ISSUES FOR SERVICE TO THE AIRPORTS, AND HOSPITALITY AND ENTERTAINMENT SECTORS ARE:

- **West Kootenay Regional Airport** – the primary transit connector routes, #98 and #99, do not stop at the WKRA and their schedules do not synchronize with Air Canada flights
- **Trail Regional Airport** – there is no transit service to the airport or the nearby Waneta Industrial Park
- **Hospitality and entertainment sectors** - even for the most regular routes, there is limited service in the evening. Most routes stop running by 7 PM and many stop earlier. As well, there is no transit service on Sundays.

6.3 BC TRANSIT/WEST KOOTENAY TRANSIT REGIONAL SERVICE MAP

Regional Service Map



## 6.4 TAXI COMPANY (INTERVIEWS)

There are two taxicab companies serving the region. Glacier Cabs is based in Nelson. Creston Cabs operates Castlegar Taxi and Trail Taxi, which serve their respective communities.

### Key Points:

- Both businesses have reservations about shuttle services, particularly the cost to customers and the impact on their own business models.
- Both companies are skeptical of the viability of a shuttle service due to cost concerns unless it is a partially subsidized shuttle system.
- Engaging both Glacier and Creston Cabs in future shuttle service discussions could help identify a model that works without significantly impacting their existing operations.
- Airport, hospitality, and entertainment business managers consistently expressed frustrations with taxicab services in the region. During peak demand, wait times can be very long and cabs may not be available at all. These issues are particularly acute in Castlegar and Trail because there is only once cab available at any given time. Both taxicab companies acknowledge these issues, which are exacerbated by challenges outlined below, and are working to improve their services.

### 6.4.1 GLACIER CABS

- **Overview:** Glacier Cabs has been operating in Nelson for over 20 years, providing taxi, delivery, express courier, wheelchair accessible vans, and long-distance taxi services. The company also supports customers needing transportation for ICBC appointments.

Glacier Cabs primarily serves Nelson and the CGR airport. They conduct 5-10 trips per week from the West Kootenay Regional Airport. Additional services to other areas like Trail restricted by PTB (Passenger Transportation Board) regulations.

**Fleet and Staffing:** They operate nine vehicles (all AWD) including a wheelchair van and two minivans, with a mix of full-time and part-time staff. The business struggled post-COVID due to staffing shortages, going from twenty-eight drivers pre-COVID to only 7, though the situation is improving.

- **Challenges:** The biggest challenges faced are staffing issues and road/weather conditions. Terry also notes that driver pay is much better than minimum wage, as they work on a commission basis. COVID significantly impacted the business, but they are recovering.
- **Shuttle service perspective:** Glacier Cabs sees potential barriers to shuttle services including cost to customers, impact on their own business, and the fact that in their view current customers seem content with their transportation options. However, the owner expressed willingness to engage in future discussions regarding shuttle service implementation.

### 6.4.2 CRESTON CABS

- **Overview:** Creston Cabs operates in Castlegar, Trail, and Creston with a service history of 10 years. The company operates taxis and has wheelchair-accessible vans, which are scheduled for specific customers, group tours, and events like weddings. They charge a flat hourly rate of \$55, including wait time.
- **Fleet and staffing:** The company has one taxi in each community with three drivers for each town. Creston Cabs is struggling to attract drivers willing to manage the challenges of night shifts.
- **Service Areas:** Creston Cabs serves local airports, Selkirk College, and the broader community through pre-booked rides and on-demand services. They have a strong focus on customer service, including tracking flight cancellations proactively to manage bookings.
- **Challenges:** They face difficulties operating night shifts, particularly dealing with intoxicated or homeless individuals who may not pay for services, presenting a safety concern. The company is looking for grants to increase electric vehicle (EV) usage and aims to improve their Google reviews.
- **Shuttle service perspective:** Creston Cabs is neutral about shuttle services but could consider the model used in Fernie (with long-term contracts). Like Glacier Cabs, they see cost as a potential barrier to shuttle service but express interest in discussing further.

## 6.5 CHARTER TRANSPORTATION BUSINESS INTERVIEWS

### 6.5.1 KOOTENAY GATEWAY SHUTTLES (INTERVIEW)

Kootenay Gateway Shuttles provided regular shuttle services for both airports and hospitality and entertainment venues for a few years, but significant business challenges were faced. The company no longer provides these services, except on a charter basis .

**Key points:** from an extensive interview with the owner include:

- **Airport Shuttle Challenges:**
  - Pre-COVID, a \$34 shuttle service based on Castlegar airport flight schedules faced low demand (often just one passenger per trip).
  - Flight cancellations caused significant operational and logistical issues, including waiting times, rescheduling, and extended drives (e.g., to Kelowna).
  - Last-minute bookings created unpredictability and administrative burdens, making it hard to schedule.
  - Raising the price to \$69 did not improve profitability.
- **Airport Shuttle Service Success Factors:**
  - Reliable, consistent flight schedules are crucial for shuttle viability.
  - There was more success with corporate and group bookings, particularly during on-time flights.
  - Tiered pricing could help – e.g. Rossland priced higher than Castlegar or Trail.
  - Airport, airline, and tourism business partnerships are essential for marketing and integrating shuttle services into travel plans.
- **Hospitality Shuttle Insights:**
  - Red Resort's "safe ride home" shuttle worked well with subsidies and a free ski bus model.
  - Challenges included low demand during non-peak times, late-night staffing issues, and unpredictable passenger numbers.
  - Attempts to provide shuttle service to hockey games and theaters showed minimal success, due to low ridership and high operational costs.
  - The \$2 (toonie) fee turned out to be a deterrent to riders and created some logistical hassles.
- **Future of Shuttle Services:**
  - A more interconnected system, with airport and destination collaboration, could increase usage.
  - A flexible booking system with last-minute options, but not entirely on-demand, could help balance efficiency and customer needs.
  - Hospitality shuttles could succeed with a scheduled, predictable, and subsidized service, but would need strong marketing and consistent availability.

## 6.5.2 KOOTENAY CHARTERS (INTERVIEW)

### Business Overview

Kootenay Charters, owned by Andy Roberts, offers corporate and private chartered shuttles and operates regular shuttle contracts. The latter includes the West Kootenay Spokane International Airport (GEG) Winter Shuttle, the Red Mountain Freeride bus, and specific charters for Air Canada. The business operates both within the Kootenay region and across the USA border.

The owner's insights into the potential for both airport and hospitality shuttles in the region reflect the complexities and business challenges in balancing consumer behavior, frequency of service and community needs. While a shuttle service might alleviate some issues, reliance on personal vehicles and car rentals continues to pose a barrier to broader shuttle use.

### Kootenay Charters Shuttle Services

- **Corporate and private chartered shuttles**
- **West Kootenay Spokane International Airport (GEG) Winter Shuttle**
  - Kootenay Charters operates a shuttle between the Spokane Airport and various Kootenay locations (Nelson, Castlegar) during the winter season.
- **Queen City Shuttles (Historical)**
  - Andy mentioned that Queen City Shuttles used to service the West Kootenay Regional Airport (WKRA) when there were more daily flights (3-4/day).
- **Air Canada Charters**
  - Kootenay Charters provides charter services for Air Canada between Kelowna and WKRA when there are WKRA flight cancellations.
- **Red Mountain Freeride Bus**
  - Kootenay Charters is contracted to operate the shuttle service for Red Mountain's Freeride Buses (reported on in detail under the Case Study section of this report).
- **Licensing Specifics**
  - If passengers are offered a free ride, only a general charter license from the Passenger Transportation Board (PTB) is required.
  - If passengers are charged a fee, a different PTB license is needed to comply with regulations.

### Hospitality Shuttle Considerations

- **Challenges:**
  - Difficulty in scheduling frequent enough runs to ensure passengers can reach their destinations at their desired times.
  - Maximizing shuttle utilization efficiently.
  - Assessing changes in dining habits post-COVID-19.
  - Costs of running a regular service when demand will fluctuate on a daily and seasonal basis.
  - Building trust and demand for a new hospitality shuttle service.
  - Assessing post-pandemic travel patterns and transportation needs.
- **Ideas for Service:**
  - Combining shuttle services to support dinner and entertainment outings, like pairing a shuttle with a dinner and show or hockey game.
  - Targeting specific events to encourage usage, like running shuttles for a few key hockey games per year.
- **Concerns with Impaired Driving:**
  - While the shuttle could reduce impaired driving, passengers would still need to get home after reaching a central drop-off location. Therefore, shuttles may not fully solve the problem of impaired driving.

### Airport Shuttle Considerations

- **Flight Schedules**

- Andy mentioned the similarity in arrival times for morning flights into both Trail Regional Airport (YCG) and Castlegar (WKRA), which could be helpful when scheduling shuttle services.
- **Taxis**
  - Taxis in the region are licensed by the PTB, with rates published by the board.
  - Local taxi companies, like Castlegar and Trail Taxi, are owned by individuals from the coast, while Glacier Taxi was praised for their service.
- **Car Rentals**
  - A key challenge for shuttles serving the airport is the tendency for passengers to rent cars upon arrival. Without a car, visitors struggle with local transportation, making a shuttle service less appealing.
- **Regulatory Compliance and Licensing**
  - Obtaining the right licenses is critical for operating a shuttle business legally. A clear understanding of the regulatory environment is essential, especially in regions where multiple licenses and permits are required. Staying compliant helps avoid legal issues and enables expansion of services like airport or hospitality shuttles.

### **Insurance and Vehicle Costs**

- **Insurance**
  - Kootenay Charters benefits from affordable insurance rates with ICBC compared to Alberta.
  - The company has a National Safety Code number for operations.
  - Insurance costs vary depending on vehicle size and route distance, with additional general liability and collision insurance required.

## 7 MARKET ANALYSIS:

In assessing the market for this shuttle service the feasibility study considers:

- Identification of customer segments
- Assessment of potential demand for shuttle services
- Price sensitivity
- Insight about challenges (based on public survey data and interviews with businesses and airports)

### 7.1 CUSTOMER SEGMENTS DATA SOURCES

Potential customers (fee paying) for a shuttle service include:

- Fare paying customers – the public and Selkirk College surveys provided most of the data
- Hospitality, entertainment, and hotel businesses – data was gathered through interviews and secondary research
- Airports - data was gathered through interviews and document reviews and secondary research

### 7.2 PASSENGER CUSTOMER SURVEYS

Two surveys were conducted to gather data on why and when people would use a shuttle service, and what they would be willing to pay. The first, was a public survey which received 922 responses.

The second was targeted specifically at Selkirk College students and staff.

### 7.3 PUBLIC SURVEY DATA HIGHLIGHTS (SEE APPENDIX 1 FOR COMPLETE RESULTS)

#### Key Points from Public Survey:

- **Demographics of respondents** – the respondents ages are distributed quite evenly from 25 years to older than 65 years. 52% are employed full-time and 24% are retired.
- **Airport use:** 68% only use the airport once/year or less. 18% once/month
- **Transportation mode:** 90% of people use personal vehicles for airport, hospitality, and entertainment travel
- **Hospitality and entertainment frequency:** 40% go to a restaurant, bar, or theater once a week and nearly 30% once a month
- **Willingness to pay for a shuttle service within their community:** 41% would be willing to pay \$2-\$4 per ride. 38% would be willing to pay \$5-\$9 per ride. (Note – while this is promising feedback, the Red Mt/Rossland winter shuttle experience was that a \$2/ride fee proved to be significant detriment to ridership. When the shuttle became free in 2023/2024 season, ridership more than doubled).

#### Question and Response Highlights from Public Survey:

- Question: Have you ever used a shuttle service anywhere to travel between airports, hotels, restaurants, bars, or theatres?
  - **>87% have used a shuttle service elsewhere – this implies they are used to the idea of using a shuttle service**
- Question: How often do you travel to the following destinations in the West Kootenays?
  - **>40% (> 370 people) go to a restaurant, bar, or theater once a week and nearly 30% (> 275 people) once a month. – this is a significant share of the respondents that regularly patronize hospitality and entertainment businesses**
- Question: What mode of transportation do you currently use for these trips?
  - **> 90% drive a personal vehicle to go to a restaurant, bar, or theater – interviewed shuttle service providers said that one of the biggest challenges in creating a viable shuttle service is changing people's habit of driving their own cars.**

- How often do you travel to West Kootenay communities, other than your own, for entertainment (e.g. restaurants, bars, performances etc.)
  - **>70% of patrons travel to another community for entertainment purposes twice a month or less – this implies the market for inter-community travel is quite limited but special events may be an exception.**
- Question: What would be your primary reasons for using a shuttle service (Please rank them in order of importance by moving them with the arrows)?
  - **43% rated their number 1 reason to use a shuttle would be to avoid drinking and driving**
  - **24% rated their number 2 reason to use a shuttle would be to avoid parking costs and hassles**
- Question: How often would you use a shuttle service if it were available?
  - **45% (396 people) said they would use it monthly and 22% (202 people) said they would use it weekly.**
- Question: What day(s) of the week would you likely use the shuttles service?
  - **> 85% would use the shuttle on Fridays and Saturdays. 52% on Sundays and 45% on Thursdays.**
- Question: What day(s) of the week would you likely use the shuttles service?
  - **Nearly 80% would use it from 5 PM - 9 PM. Nearly 60% would use it late at night, after 9 PM.**
- Question: What would you be willing to pay for a one-way shuttle service trip within a single community (e.g. from your neighborhood to downtown?)
  - **41% would be willing to pay \$2-\$4 per ride. 38% would be willing to pay \$5-\$9 per ride.**
- Question: Would you prefer a fixed fee per trip or a monthly pass model for frequent use?
  - **79% would prefer a fixed fee per trip.**
- Question: What community do you live in or live closest to?
  - **29% Trail, Nelson's**
  - **24% Castlegar**
  - **13% Nelson**
  - **10% Rossland**
  - **10% Fruitvale, Montrose**
  - **14% other rural areas**

## 8 HOSPITALITY AND ENTERTAINMENT SECTOR INTERVIEWS

16 interviews were completed with hospitality, entertainment and hotel business managers and/or owners. This is a second customer segment for a shuttle service. The feedback and comments were remarkably consistent with a few variations specific to the community they are in.

### 8.1 HOSPITALITY SECTOR INTERVIEW SUMMARY

Interviews were conducted with hotels, restaurants, bars, and breweries.

There is interest in a shuttle service within the hospitality sector, especially for customer convenience and safety. However, financial support from the businesses will depend on demonstrated return on investment (ROI) and collaboration from all stakeholders (e.g. airports, airlines, DMOs, Chambers of Commerce, businesses, local and regional governments etc.). A regularly scheduled, user-paid shuttle service, focused on evenings and peak travel times, may be successful if implemented thoughtfully.

#### Overview and Common Themes

- **Mode of Arrival:** All the businesses report that most (90%+) of their customers arrive by personal vehicle. Hotels report that customers arriving from the airports most often rent cars. There is very limited use of taxis or public transit to get to restaurants and bars due to unreliable or nonexistent services, especially during peak or late-night hours.
- **Current Transportation Gaps:** Many businesses express frustration over poor public transit, insufficient taxi availability, and limited car rental services. Businesses highlight the impact of the high number of winter flight cancellations at the West Kootenay Regional Airport (WKRA) and Trail Regional Airport (TRA) on customer arrivals and how the unreliability of air travel deters conference business.
- **Safety Concerns:** Several businesses are concerned about guests driving after drinking, emphasizing the need for safer, more reliable transportation options, particularly late at night.
- **Convenience:** Most businesses believe that a shuttle service would improve customer convenience, particularly for those who fly into WKRA or are unable to access other transportation (transit, taxis, or private vehicles). Kootenay Car Share was never mentioned by any business.
- **Safety:** Several establishments are particularly interested in the safety benefits of a shuttle service to avoid drunk driving incidents, as current taxi services are unreliable.
- **Financial Contribution:** Businesses are hesitant to contribute financially unless they can see a clear return on investment (ROI). Some suggest that a shuttle service should be user-funded, with hospitality businesses offering nominal support. Others suggest DMOs or local governments might subsidize a shuttle service.
- **Shuttle Schedule:** Regular and reliable scheduling is a top priority for all businesses. Synchronizing shuttle services with flight times and evening dining hours would be the most beneficial.
- **Specific Days/Times:** Evenings, weekends, and event days (concerts, sports events) are highlighted as the most advantageous times for hospitality and entertainment sector shuttle operations.
- **Regulatory Concerns:** Some business owners expressed concerns over regulatory challenges, particularly regarding competition with taxi services.
- **Competition:** Some fear a shuttle could direct guests to competitors if not carefully planned.



## 8.2 ENTERTAINMENT SECTOR INTERVIEW SUMMARY

Interviews were conducted with the Charles Bailey Theatre, Royal Theatre, and Kootenay Cinemas.

### Key Insights:

- **Transportation is a barrier:** Older patrons and those from surrounding towns need better options, especially at night.
- **Event-based shuttles show higher demand:** Special events see more ridership than regular shows.
- **Financial viability is a challenge:** Shuttle costs are high, and prior services have not been sustainable without external funding.
- **Shuttle must be reliable:** Consistent scheduling and a 3-year commitment are needed to build ridership.
- **Partnerships can enhance the service:** Collaboration with local businesses can increase value for customers and help fund the shuttle.

### Venue-Specific Insights:

- **Charles Bailey Theatre:** A prior pilot shuttle had low ridership except for some special events. The Music In The Park/Night Market event shuttle, from downtown Trail to the event site was quite successful.
- **Royal Theatre:** Interest in a shuttle for evening and weekend shows, especially with concerns about downtown safety. A punch card or app-based payment system is recommended.
- **Kootenay Cinemas:** Shuttle would be a benefit from peak times like evenings and weekends, but financial support hinges on high ridership. Shuttle hubs near local attractions could help boost usage.

### Recommendations:

1. **Focus on Event-Based Shuttles:** Target special events and high-traffic times rather than regular shows.
2. **Smaller Buses and Hubs for Regular Service:** Use smaller, more affordable buses for regular events. Shuttle hubs near popular local attractions, like the Confluence, could boost demand.
3. **Create Partnerships:** Collaborate with local businesses to offset costs and create a complete experience for patrons.
4. **Long-Term Commitment:** A three-year pilot period with regular marketing is essential to grow ridership.
5. **Enhance Experience:** Make the shuttle part of the overall experience with entertainment and social elements.
6. **Financial Support:** As with other sector businesses, these businesses are cautious about offering financial support for a shuttle service. One said they would support the service if it could attract at least 200 passengers per month.

## 9 SHUTTLE SERVICE CASE STUDIES: FERNIE AND ROSSLAND/RED MOUNTAIN

### 9.1 FERNIE HOP ON/HOP OFF SUMMER AND WINTER SHUTTLE

The Fernie Shuttle operates during both the summer and winter seasons, offering unique transportation schedules and features for each. The shuttle provides a transportation option for locals, tourists, and resort visitors. The summer shuttle is currently in a pilot phase, with services operating on a first-come, first-served basis, and no ticketing required.

#### Summer Shuttle Service

Service Period: June 28 – September 1, 2024

Operating Days: Wednesday to Sunday

Operating Hours:

Day: 9:00 AM – 5:00 PM

Evening: 5:30 PM – 11:00 PM

Cost to Passengers: Free (as part of a pilot project)

Seating Capacity: Limited, first-come, first-served

Year: Currently in its second year, as a pilot project, with future continuation dependent on ridership growth.

Ownership & Operations:

Vehicles are owned by the City of Fernie, acquired through funding from the Resort Municipality Initiative (RMI).

Operations are contracted to Tunnel 49, which manages scheduling, data collection, and drivers.

#### Winter Shuttle Service

- Service Period: December 15 – mid-April
  - Operating Hours:
    - Day: 7:45 AM – 4:30 PM
    - Evening: 5:30 PM – 10:30 PM
  - Cost to Passengers:
    - \$4 per ticket (each way)
    - Complementary Rides: Half of the tickets are complementary for hotel guests.
- \$35 for a book of 10 tickets

#### Fleet

12-passenger vans (3 in total: 2 in regular use, 1 as backup or for increased demand)

#### Ridership and Popularity

- Summer Ridership: 1,000 total rides
- Winter Ridership: 11,000 total rides
- Winter ridership is higher, particularly during both daytime and evening, as resort visitors and locals use the service extensively.

#### Key Partnerships

- Tunnel 49: Operates the shuttle service and manages charters. They also hold a taxi license and were previously managed by a rafting company.
- City of Fernie: Owns the vehicles, manages the contract with Tunnel 49, and oversees the Tourism Fund (TF).

#### Funding Sources

- Primary Funding: Tourism Fernie Subsidy
- Advertising revenue (vehicle wraps, ads on windows and sides of the shuttle).

- Ticket revenue (winter season only).
- Contributions from Fernie Alpine Resort and local business partners.
- Grants (including those used for the development of a shuttle operations app).
- Municipal and Regional District Tax (MRDT).

### Operational Costs

- Winter Operating Cost: \$140,000
- Summer Operating Cost: \$50,000
- Expenses: Wages, marketing, permitting, and insurance.
- **Note: Capital costs** -The City of Fernie purchased, with MRDT funds, and is responsible for fleet renewal, offsetting substantial and normal costs to the shuttle operation.

### Airport Shuttle

A previous airport shuttle connecting Fernie to Calgary was discontinued due to COVID-19. A new provider is currently under consideration to restart the service.



## 9.2 RED MOUNTAIN RESORT SHUTTLE SERVICES

Red Mountain Resort has three shuttle services that it supported for the winter season, December 2023 – March 2024.

- Red/Rosland Ski Bus and Night Service
- Kelowna Airport Shuttle
- Spokane Airport Shuttle

The 2023/2024 season had several significant improvements and expansions over previous years for Red Mountain's transportation options.

### Rosland Ski Night Service Bus

The Rosland Ski Bus is a free service offering transportation between Red Mountain Resort and the town of Rosland. This season, the service was enhanced with a new, larger bus capable of transporting up to 44

passengers at a time. The ski bus is available to everyone, with no need for bus passes, tokens, or punch cards, making it easier for both visitors and the local community to travel between the resort and town.

Ridership doubled compared to the 2022-2023 season when the service charged \$2 per ride. The \$2 per ride revenue did not offset the administrative costs and caused a great deal of inefficiency. The switch to free service has resulted in a significant increase in ridership and operational efficiency.

- Service Period: December 2023 – March 2024 (4 months)
- Cost to Passengers: Free for everyone
- Ridership: Average of 200+ one-way rides per day, surpassing expectations
- Night Service Ridership: Averaging 30 riders per night
- Estimated Total Ridership for the Season: 17,000 rides
- (Complete data for December and January unavailable, with modeled estimates filling the gaps)
- Operating Day Schedule: 7 days a week, from 7 AM to 6:30 PM
- Night Shuttle Service: Limited service with fewer stops in the evening
- Capacity: Up to 44 passengers per trip between Rossland and Red Mountain
- Total Estimated Cost for the season: \$100,000
- Funding Sources: Red Resort, Tourism Rossland, Resort Municipality Initiative (via Tourism Rossland) and contributions from local tourism businesses

## Morning Schedule

Bus Stop		Departure Time					
	Red Mountain Resort Day Lodge		7:30	8:10	9:00	10:00	10:45
<b>A</b>	Cooke Ave Bus Loop (Cooke Ave & Davis St)	7:00	7:40	8:20	9:10	10:10	10:55
<b>B</b>	Thompson Ave & Spokane St	7:01	7:41	8:21	9:11	10:11	10:56
<b>C</b>	Thompson Ave & St Paul St	7:02	7:42	8:22	9:12	10:12	10:57
<b>D</b>	Thompson Ave & Schofield Hwy	7:04	7:44	8:24	9:14	10:14	10:59
<b>E</b>	Washington St & 2nd Ave (Flying Steamshovel)	7:08	7:48	8:28	9:18	10:18	11:03
<b>F</b>	Jubilee St & St. Paul St	7:09	7:49	8:29	9:19	10:19	11:04
<b>G</b>	2nd Ave & St Paul St (MacLean School)	7:11	7:51	8:31	9:21	10:21	11:06
<b>H</b>	Butte St & Columbia Ave	7:13	7:53	8:33	9:23	10:23	11:08
<b>I</b>	Alpine Grind	7:14	7:54	8:34	9:24	10:24	11:09
<b>J</b>	Columbia Ave & Spokane St (Across from Prestige)	7:15	7:55	8:35	9:25	10:25	11:10
<b>K</b>	Columbia Ave	7:16	7:56	8:36	9:26	10:26	11:11
<b>L</b>	Lone Star Motel	7:20	8:00	8:40	9:30	10:30	11:15
<b>M</b>	Centennial Trail Parking Lot	7:23	8:03	8:43	9:33	10:33	11:18
	Red Mountain Resort Day Lodge (Arrival)	7:28	8:08	8:48	9:38	10:38	11:23



# Afternoon Schedule

Bus Stop	Departure Time							
Red Mountain Resort Day Lodge	13:30	14:15	15:00	15:45	16:45	17:30	18:30	
<b>M</b> Centennial Trail Parking Lot	13:35	14:20	15:05	15:50	16:50	17:35	18:35	
<b>L</b> Lone Star Motel	13:38	14:23	15:08	15:53	16:53	17:38	18:38	
<b>K</b> Columbia Ave	13:41	14:26	15:11	15:56	16:56	17:41	18:41	
<b>J</b> Prestige Mountain Resort	13:42	14:27	15:12	15:57	16:57	17:42	18:42	
<b>A</b> Cooke Ave Bus Loop (Cooke Ave & Davis St)	13:45	14:30	15:15	16:00	17:00	17:45	18:45	
<b>B</b> Thompson Ave & Spokane St	13:46	14:31	15:16	16:01	17:01	17:46	18:46	
<b>C</b> Thompson Ave & St Paul St	13:47	14:32	15:17	16:02	17:02	17:47	18:47	
<b>D</b> Thompson Ave & Schofield Hwy	13:49	14:34	15:19	16:04	17:04	17:49	18:49	
<b>I</b> Alpine Grind	13:51	14:36	15:21	16:06	17:06	17:51	18:51	
<b>E</b> Washington St & 2nd Ave (Flying Steamshovel)	13:54	14:39	15:24	16:09	17:09	17:54	18:54	
<b>F</b> Jubilee St & St Paul St	13:55	14:40	15:25	16:10	17:10	17:55	18:55	
<b>G</b> 2nd Ave & St. Paul St (MacLean School)	13:57	14:42	15:27	16:12	17:12	17:57	18:57	
<b>H</b> Butte St & Columbia Ave	13:59	14:44	15:29	16:14	17:14	17:59	18:59	
<b>J</b> Columbia Ave & Spokane St (Across from Prestige)	14:01	14:46	15:31	16:16	17:16	18:01		
Red Mountain Resort Day Lodge (Arrival)	14:10	14:55	15:40	16:25	17:25	18:10		

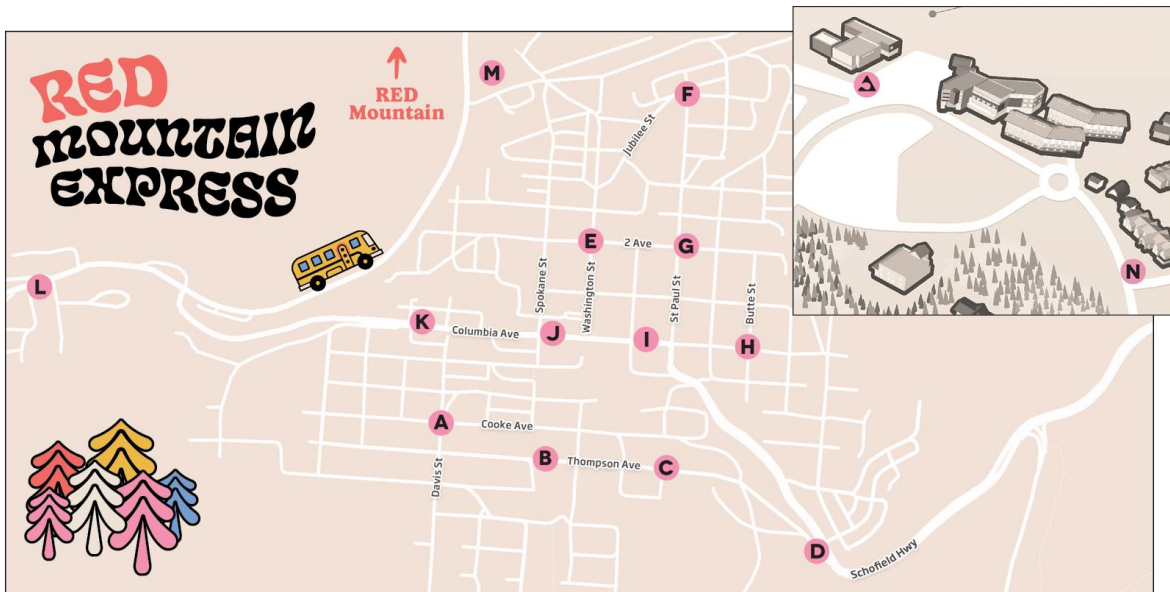


# Evening Schedule

Thursday • Friday • Saturday



Bus Stop	Departure Time							
<b>Δ</b> Red Mountain Resort Day Lodge	19:30	20:00	20:30	21:00	21:30	22:00	22:30	23:00
<b>N</b> Donnie's Bistro	19:35	20:05	20:35	21:05	21:35	22:05	22:35	
<b>L</b> Lone Star Motel	19:40	20:10	20:40	21:10	21:40	22:10	22:40	Last Return to RED
<b>J</b> Prestige Mountain Resort	19:43	20:13	20:43	21:13	21:43	22:13	22:43	
<b>E</b> Washington St & 2nd Ave (Flying Steamshovel)	19:45	20:15	20:45	21:15	21:45	22:15	22:45	



### 9.3 RED MOUNTAIN - KELOWNA AIRPORT SHUTTLE SERVICE

- Service Period: January 2024 – March 2024 (3 days a week)
- The Kelowna Airport Shuttle offers guests traveling from the Kelowna International Airport (YLW) direct access to the Red Mountain Resort, serving an important regional hub. Detailed ridership data for this service is not yet available.
- Cost and Funding Subsidy: \$8,000
- Funding Sources: Tourism Rossland, Red Resort

### 9.4 SPOKANE/RED MT/WHITEWATER AIRPORT SHUTTLE SERVICE

- Service Period: December 2023 – March 2024 (5 days a week)
- The Spokane Airport Shuttle serves international and U.S. guests, providing transportation between Spokane International Airport (GEG), Red Resort, Rossland, Castlegar and Nelson. Ridership data was not unavailable
- Driving from Spokane airport to Nelson takes approximately 3.5 to 4.5 hrs depending on driving conditions, route, and border crossing times.
- Shuttle one way fare is \$150 + GST Canadian
- Cost and Funding Subsidy: \$14,000
- Funding Sources: Tourism Rossland, Red Resort, Nelson Kootenay Lake Tourism, Whitewater Ski Resort
- <https://www.kootenaycharters.com/spokanewintershuttle>

## 10 VEHICLE OPTIONS

There are numerous vehicle options available for operating a shuttle service including:

#### **Ford Transit, Ram Promaster and Chevrolet Express/GMC Savana (13-20 passengers)**

- Pros: Fuel-efficient, customizable, widely available, and easy to drive.
- Cons: Limited capacity.

#### **Ford E-Series, or similar cutaway van (13-30 passengers)**

- Pros: Highly customizable, larger capacity.
- Cons: Larger size, less fuel-efficient.

#### **Thomas Built Buses Minotour and Blue Bird Micro Bird (13-30 passengers)**

- Pros: Safe, reliable, customizable.
- Cons: Larger size, less maneuverable. Can be expensive, larger size.

## 11 LEGAL AND REGULATORY CONSIDERATIONS: PASSENGER TRANSPORTATION BRANCH (PTB)

In British Columbia, taxi and shuttle services are regulated primarily by the Passenger Transportation Branch (PTB), which falls under the provincial Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure.

Taxi, ride-hail, limousine, shuttle, and inter-city bus operators must meet the terms and conditions of their licences once the application is approved by the Passenger Transportation Board (Board).

### 11.1 LICENSING AND PERMITS

Passenger Transportation Licences: Shuttle and taxi companies must hold a valid Passenger Transportation Licence. This licence is required for vehicles transporting passengers for compensation. The PTB reviews applications to ensure companies meet safety, service, and economic standards.

Inter-city bus services operate between cities on a schedule, over regular routes, and charge per person fares. Inter-city bus operators must have a passenger transportation licence with special authorization, which means they must prove there is a public need for the service and that they can operate safely and reliably.

## 11.2 SAFETY REQUIREMENTS

Vehicles used in taxi and shuttle services must meet specific safety standards, including regular vehicle inspections by a designated inspection facility.

Drivers need to have the appropriate class of driver's licence (typically a Class 4 licence for small passenger vehicles) and meet specific driver training and health standards.

## 11.3 RATES, SURCHARGES, AND TOLLS

Taxis, limousines, shuttles, and other passenger directed vehicle operators must charge rates that are approved by the Board. Rules about rates ensure passengers are charged reasonable and predictable prices for transportation services.

## 11.4 PASSENGER RIGHTS

The PTB also ensures that passengers are protected through rules on driver conduct, service standards, and fare transparency. This includes clear guidelines on what to do if passengers have complaints.

## 12 INSURANCE CONSIDERATIONS

To operate a transportation shuttle service in British Columbia, you will need specific types of insurance to comply with provincial regulations and ensure adequate protection. Consulting with an insurance broker is recommended.

- **Basic Vehicle Insurance (ICBC)** - In British Columbia, all commercial vehicles, including those used for shuttle services, must be insured through the Insurance Corporation of British Columbia (ICBC). Basic Autoplan coverage is the mandatory minimum insurance coverage provides protection for third-party liability, accident benefits, underinsured motorist protection and liability coverage.
- **Collision and Comprehensive Coverage** (Optional but Recommended)
- **Extended Third-Party Liability** - Many operators of commercial shuttles purchase liability coverage up to \$5 million, particularly if operating in high-risk environments like highways or transporting larger groups of people.
- **Commercial Passenger Vehicle Insurance** - required additional insurance for vehicles used to transport paying passengers available through ICBC or another private insurer.
- **Cargo or Equipment Coverage** (if applicable) - available in case of loss or damage for shuttle services involved in transporting luggage, equipment, or goods along with passengers.
- **Business Interruption Insurance**
- **General Liability Insurance** - covers incidents that occur outside of vehicle accidents, such as slip-and-fall accidents involving customers entering or exiting the vehicle.
- **WorkSafeBC Coverage** – transportation businesses are also required to register with WorkSafeBC and provide workers' compensation insurance.



## 13 SHUTTLE SERVICE SCENARIOS

Two scenarios were modeled, first, a Nelson Hospitality Shuttle and second, a Nelson – WKRA Airport Shuttle. Estimates are based on information gathered from interviews. The shuttle could be operated by an entity such as a DMO or a Chamber of Commerce or contracted out (an estimated rate of \$500/half-day is assumed). **These scenarios project substantial operating losses and would need substantial funding support to operate.**

### 13.1 NELSON HOSPITALITY SHUTTLE

		<b>Charter Option @ \$500/1/2 day</b>
<b>Nelson - YCG Airport Shuttle, 7 days/week (32,000 passengers 2023)</b>		
<b>Revenue</b>		
Fee/ride one way	\$ 20	
one way rides/day (about 10% of flight passenger volumes)	8	
days/week	7	
Revenue/week	1120	
<b>Annual rider revenue</b>	<b>\$ 58,240</b>	
<b>Category</b>		
	Amount	
Vehicle Monthly Lease	1,000	
Driver Staffing Cost per Hour (CAD)	35	
Total Driver Time per Week (hours)	21	
Total Driver Staffing Cost per Week (CAD)	735	
Vehicle Operating Cost per km (CAD)	1	
Number of Kilometers per Week	674	
Total Operating Cost per Week (CAD)	438	
Insurance Cost per Week (CAD)	115	
Subtotal Weekly Expenses (Operating + Driver + Insurance)	1,289	
Admin & marketing 25%	1,611	
Subtotal Weekly Expenses	2,899	\$ 3,500
<b>Total Monthly Expenses</b>	<b>\$ 12,597</b>	<b>\$ 14,000</b>
<b>Total Annual Expenses</b>	<b>\$ 151,163</b>	<b>\$168,000</b>
<b>Net Annual Revenue Nelson - YCG Shuttle</b>	<b>-\$ 92,923</b>	<b>-\$109,760</b>

#### Nelson - YCG Shuttle Schedule Plan

Flight lands 10:11am - Departs at 10:50am

Flight Departs 10:50am

#### Shuttle Arrives Airport 9:40am

Stops:

8:50 am - Prestige (650m - 2 mins)

8:54 am - Hume (43.9km - 34 mins)

9:25 am - Sandman (800m - 3mins)

9:30 am - Best Western (2.8km - 5 mins)

Shuttle Departs Airport 10:45am

Stops:

10:50 am - Best Western (2.8km - 5 mins)

10:55 am - Sandman Hotel (800m - 3 mins)

11:31 am - Hume (43.9km - 34 mins)

11:35 am - Prestige (650m - 2 mins)

## 13.2 NELSON – WEST KOOTENAY REGIONAL AIRPORT SHUTTLE

		Charter Option @ \$500/1/2 day
<b>Nelson Hospitality Shuttle, 7 &amp; 3 days, 5 PM to 12 Midnight, 5 circuits</b>		
<b>Revenue</b>		
Fee/ride	\$ 2	
one way rides/route/schedule	8	
# of scheduled route/day	5	
revenue/day	80	
revenue/week (3 days/week)	240	
<b>Annual rider revenue</b>	<b>\$ 12,480</b>	
<b>Category</b>		
	Amount	
Vehicle Monthly Lease	1,000	
Driver Staffing Cost per Hour	35	
Total Driver Time per Week (hours)	46	
Total Driver Staffing Cost per Week	1,619	
Vehicle Operating Cost per km	1	
Number of Kilometers per Week	347	
Total Operating Cost per Week	226	
Insurance Cost per Week	115	
Subtotal Weekly Expenses (Operating + Driver + Insurance)	1,960	
Admin & marketing 25%	2,450	
Subtotal Weekly Expenses	4,410	
<b>Monthly Operating Expenses 7 days/week</b>	<b>\$ 18,638</b>	
<b>Monthly Operating Expenses 3 days/week (Thur/Fri/Sat)</b>	<b>\$ 8,688</b>	
<b>Combined Hospitality 3 day/week plus Airport Shuttles monthly operating cost</b>	<b>\$ 20,285</b>	<b>20000</b>
<b>Combined Hospitality 3 day/week plus Airport Shuttles annual operating cost</b>	<b>\$ 243,417</b>	<b>\$ 240,000</b>
<b>Net Annual Revenue (Hospitality 3 days/week)</b>	<b>-\$ 230,937</b>	<b>-\$ 227,520</b>
<b>Net Annual Revenue (Hospitality 3 days/week+Airport)</b>	<b>-\$ 323,861</b>	<b>-\$ 337,280</b>

**Nelson Hospitality Shuttle schedule repeats at 5pm, 6pm, 7:30pm, 9:30pm, 11:30pm**

- 5pm Depart Baker Street
- 5:05pm Selkirk Silver King Campus - 5 min (2.3 km)
- 5:06pm Depart
- 5:09 pm Alpine Inn & Suites - 3 min (1.3 km)
- 5:10pm Depart
- 5:12 pm Nelson Brewing Company - 2 min (550 m)
- 5:13 pm Depart
- 5:15 pm Baker Street - 2 min (650 m)
- 5:16 pm Depart
- 5:22 pm 10 St Campus - 6 min (3.1 km)
- 5:23 pm Depart
- 5:26 pm Dairy Queen - 3 min (900 m)
- 5:27 pm Depart
- 5:28 pm Safeway - 1 min (800 m)

- 5:29 pm Depart
- 5:32pm Baker Street - 3 min (1.6 km)

## 14 RURAL AND REMOTE COMMUNITY CONSTRAINTS (E.G. SALMO, NAKUSP)

Providing either a hospitality or airport shuttle service to the more rural areas of the West Kootenays, which includes the communities of Salmo, Slocan, Kaslo, New Denver and Nakusp, presents some big challenges. The combined factors of distance, small populations and low passenger volumes make shuttle service plans costly and unrealistic.

The distances to airports from these communities would nearly triple the costs of providing a shuttle to either the WKRA or the TRA. With the small populations and low number of passengers, the cost per seat would be enormous.

For a hospitality shuttle to be feasible there need to be both enough destinations (restaurants, bars, theatres and hotels) and a large enough population to create the scale where the service can be realistic to operate. Neither of these factors of destination and population are sufficiently large enough for a sustainable shuttle service to be feasible for these communities.

In terms of improving service options, alternative rural solutions might be more feasible:

- **Community-based Ridesharing:** a community-based ride-share service could offer a flexible solution without the fixed costs of a dedicated shuttle.
- **Community Transport Network:** Community-based volunteer or subsidized transport networks, with regular or semi-regular transport to key hubs like airports, could help mitigate costs by pooling resources across communities.
- **Seasonal or Event-Based Shuttle Services:** A shuttle service tied to peak tourism seasons, events, or specific destinations (like festivals or popular ski seasons) might work but would need support from local and regional governments and economic development actors.

## 15 CONCLUSIONS

### 15.1 DEMAND AND VIABILITY

- **Airport Transportation:** Both the West Kootenay Regional Airport (WKRA) and Trail Regional Airport (TRA) experience seasonal passenger fluctuations with limited public transit and private transportation options. Private vehicles dominate travel, but interviews and survey data suggest there is interest and demand for shuttle services to improve access.
- **Hospitality and Entertainment Shuttle:** Public survey data indicate strong interest in evening and weekend shuttle services to local hospitality and entertainment venues, especially among patrons who frequent these destinations for dining, theaters, and events. The need is pronounced among patrons who prioritize avoiding impaired driving or parking issues.
- **Price Sensitivity:** The study shows price sensitivity among users, with a preferred price range of \$2-\$9 for local community shuttles. However, Red Mountain's success with a free shuttle program, after removing the \$2/ride fee, suggests that cost remains a barrier to ridership and that user-funded shuttles may see limited uptake.

### 15.2 CHALLENGES OF SHUTTLE OPERATIONS

The business case for a shuttle service is weak and there are specific challenges that raise questions about viability.

- **Airports:** flight delays and cancellations are frequent in winter creating costly logistical challenges for a shuttle service. Airport passenger volumes are still recovering from Covid impacts and nowhere near what peak volumes were in the past.
- Improvements to airports, particularly the implementation of RNP at WKRA, will lead to higher passenger volumes. This will lead to increased demand for regular shuttle services, making a shuttle service more viable.
- **Costs, Revenues and Subsidies:**
- Interviews with current and past shuttle operators underscore that sustainable shuttle services are hard to maintain without subsidies, particularly due to unpredictable flight schedules, last-minute cancellations, and fluctuating demand.
- Hospitality shuttle success depends on having enough destinations (restaurants, bars, breweries, theatres) and a large enough population to generate enough ridership. Even in the larger communities of Trail, Nelson and Castlegar the number of destinations and populations are relatively small.
- As noted, customers are price sensitive. Both the Red mt and Fernie Hop ON/Hop Off shuttle services are provided for free. This requires significant subsidies from the respective DMOs and businesses. However, businesses interviewed for this study are wary of committing to any kind of financial support unless they can see a clear return on investment (ROI).
- **Taxi Company Concerns:** Taxi companies express concerns about competition and suggest that shuttle services could lead to challenges in their operating models. Subsidized shuttle services would exacerbate this concern.
- **Operational Logistics:** Issues such as driver shortages, demand for late-night services, and regulatory challenges, including PTB licensing requirements, add complexity to implementing regular shuttle services.

### 15.3 COMMUNITY-SPECIFIC INSIGHTS

- **Nelson, Castlegar, and Trail:** These communities, and areas within a few kilometres of them, represent the highest ridership potential based on public and business feedback. Local businesses are interested in shuttle solutions that enhance safety and convenience for patrons.
- **Rural Areas:** Smaller communities like Salmo, Slocan, and Kaslo face high per-seat costs and low passenger volume, making traditional shuttle services less viable. Alternative solutions, like seasonal or event-based services, would better match demand.

### 15.4 CASE STUDIES AND COMPARATIVE INSIGHTS

- **Fernie and Red Mountain:** These models show that seasonality, strategic partnerships, and subsidies are critical for shuttle viability. Free or subsidized models have significantly higher ridership, suggesting a need for government and business support if similar models are pursued elsewhere in West Kootenay region.

## 16 RECOMMENDATIONS

### 16.1 PILOT PROGRAM

- **Airport Shuttle:** Launch a pilot shuttle between WKRA or TRA, and major hospitality hubs (e.g., Nelson, Castlegar, Trail) during peak winter and summer seasons to gauge demand. Schedule shuttles around known flight times allowing for flexible adjustments as ridership data is collected.
- **Hospitality Shuttle:** Establish a scheduled evening and weekend hospitality shuttle, focusing on high-demand times and routes linking restaurants, theaters, and hotels. Emphasize safety and convenience to encourage ridership, potentially using a "safe ride" messaging campaign to increase community buy-in.
- Offering online booking for airport shuttles and user-friendly services, such as multiple pickup points, enhances customer convenience and streamlines operations.

### 16.2 SUBSIDY AND PARTNERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

- **Public and Private Support:** Strategic partnerships and cooperation with hotels, airports, and airlines can go a long way to supporting the shuttle service viability. Pursue funding from local governments, Destination Marketing Organizations (DMOs), and hospitality businesses to subsidize the initial operating costs. Form partnerships with key stakeholders including local governments, large employers, and local chambers of commerce, to support and promote the service.
- **Advertising and Sponsorships:** Explore revenue through advertisements or partnerships (e.g., vehicle wraps, in-shuttle displays).

### 16.3 DEMAND-BASED SERVICE MODELS

- **Intermittent Event Shuttles:** Use a hub-based model for shuttle services during special events (e.g., festivals, ski seasons, sports tournaments). The Charles Bailey theatre has had success doing this for their Music In The Park/Night Market events.
- **Flexible Pricing:** While the surveys showed that most people prefer a pay-per-ride ticket, consider offering discounted monthly passes for frequent travelers or full-day-pass options for tourists

### 16.4 VEHICLE CHOICES

- **Electric or Hybrid Vehicles:** In line with regional sustainability goals, prioritize acquiring or leasing electric or hybrid shuttles. Grants for green vehicle investments may be available and help to minimize emissions and operational costs. Positioning the shuttle as a green initiative in line with community values could be a good marketing strategy.
- **Vehicle Size and Flexibility:** Choose vehicles suited to passenger demand and to the West Kootenay's often weather-impacted roads. Smaller 12-13 passenger vans may accommodate demand without excessive capital investment.

### 16.5 MARKETING AND ENGAGEMENT

- **Awareness Campaigns:** Raise awareness through social media, local tourism boards, and partnerships with hospitality and entertainment venues. Highlight safety, convenience, and environmental benefits, targeting locals and tourists.
- **Feedback Mechanisms:** Regularly engage with stakeholders and incorporate user feedback to refine routes, pricing, and schedules, and meet emerging needs. Collect and review ridership, operational costs, and community feedback regularly to evaluate service sustainability and make data-informed adjustments.

### 16.6 REGULATORY COMPLIANCE AND PTB COORDINATION

- **Licensing and Insurance:** Ensure thorough compliance with PTB licensing, safety standards, and insurance requirements.

## 16.7 MULTI-YEAR COMMITMENT:

- A three-year commitment with phased expansions and adjustments can build ridership and allow time for sustainable models to develop. Regular review points should assess community needs, adjusting based on seasonal ridership and stakeholder input.

Building trust and a loyal customer base takes time. The hospitality shuttle, for instance, may require time to gain traction, but offering consistent, reliable services can help establish customer trust and use over time.

17 APPENDIX #1 WEST KOOTENAY AIRPORT, AND ENTERTAINMENT SHUTTLE SERVICE INTEREST SURVEY

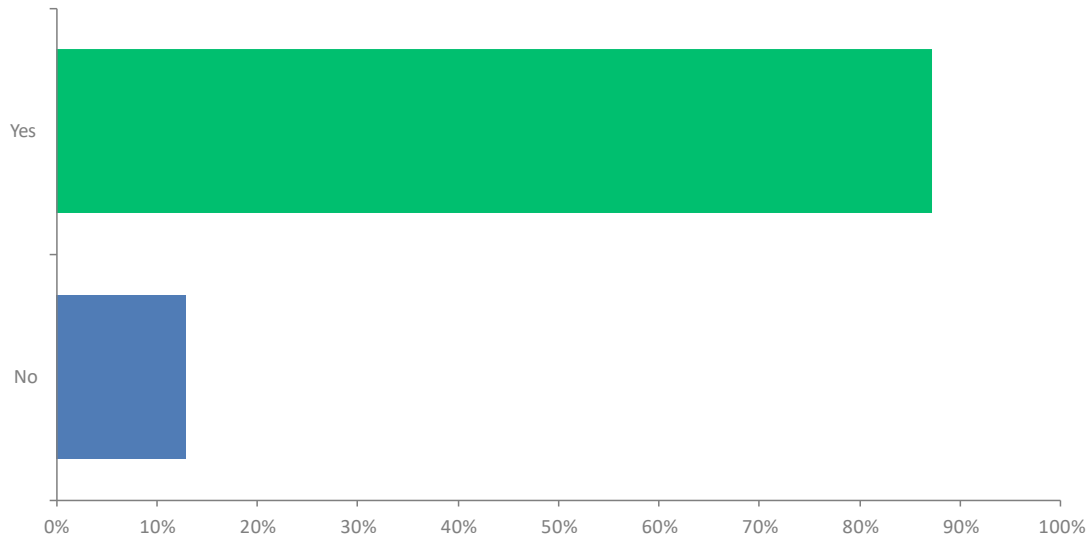
# West Kootenay Airport, Hospitality and Entertainment Shuttle Service - Interest Survey

Friday, October 18, 2024

Powered by  SurveyMonkey

### Q1: Have you ever used a shuttle service anywhere to travel between airports, hotels, restaurants, bars, or theatres?

Answered: 915 Skipped: 7



Powered by SurveyMonkey

### Q1: Have you ever used a shuttle service anywhere to travel between airports, hotels, restaurants, bars, or theatres?

Answered: 915 Skipped: 7

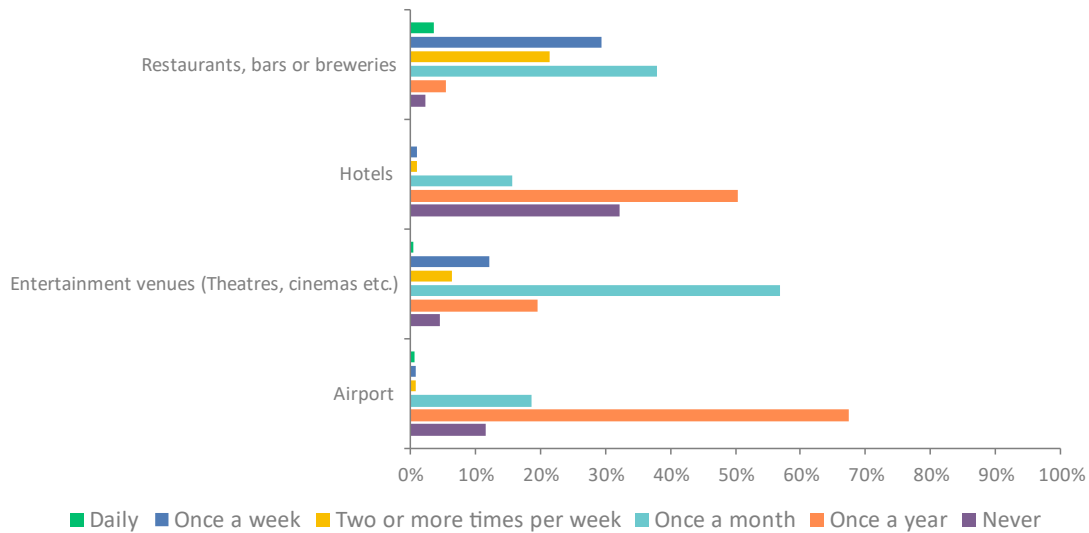
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	87.21%	798
No	12.79%	117
TOTAL		915

Powered by SurveyMonkey



## Q2: How often do you travel to the following destinations in the West Kootenays?

Answered: 918 Skipped: 4



Powered by SurveyMonkey

## Q2: How often do you travel to the following destinations in the West Kootenays?

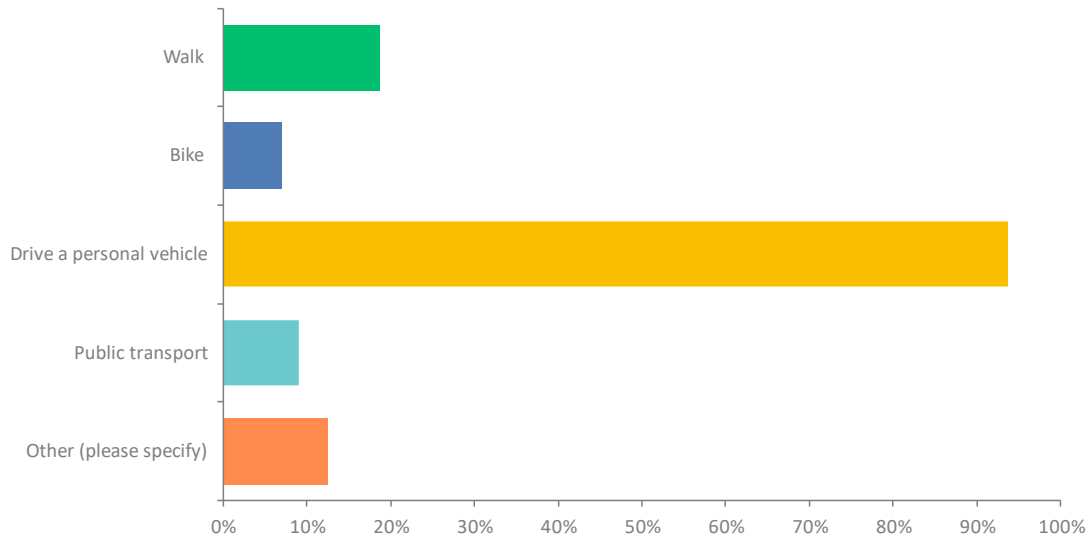
Answered: 918 Skipped: 4

	DAILY	ONCE A WEEK	TWO OR MORE TIMES PER WEEK	ONCE A MONTH	ONCE A YEAR	NEVER	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
Restaurants, bars or breweries	3.58% 32	29.31% 262	21.48% 192	37.92% 339	5.48% 49	2.24% 20	894	3.19
Hotels	0.00% 0	0.93% 8	0.93% 8	15.68% 135	50.29% 433	32.17% 277	861	5.12
Entertainment venues (Theatres, cinemas etc.)	0.45% 4	12.18% 108	6.43% 57	56.93% 505	19.50% 173	4.51% 40	887	3.96

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### Q3: What mode of transportation do you currently use for these trips? (Select all that apply)

Answered: 916 Skipped: 6



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### Q3: What mode of transportation do you currently use for these trips? (Select all that apply)

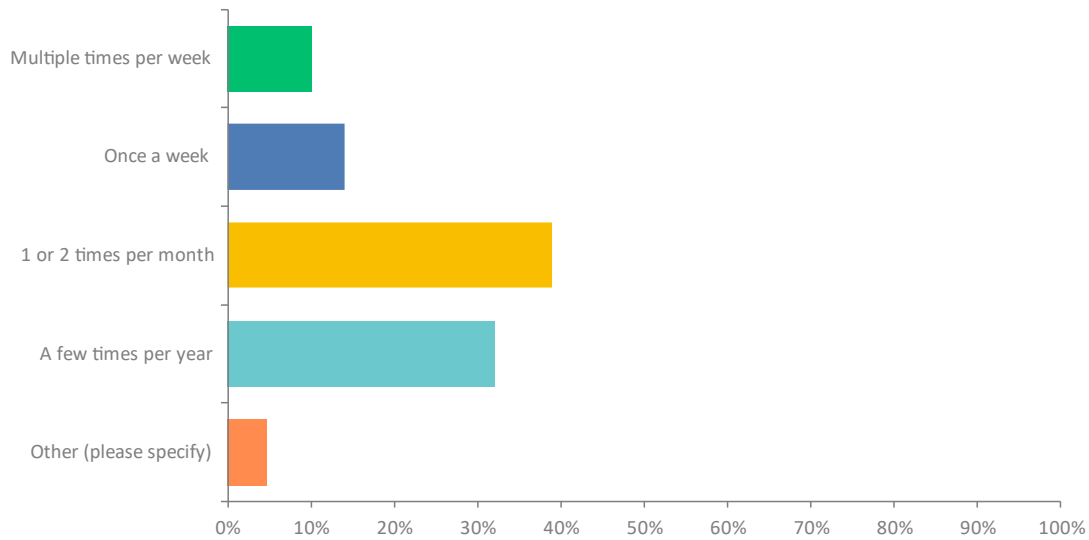
Answered: 916 Skipped: 6

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Walk	18.67%	171
Bike	6.99%	64
Drive a personal vehicle	93.67%	858
Public transport	9.06%	83
Other (please specify)	12.45%	114
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>1290</b>

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**Q4: How often do you travel to West Kootenay communities, other than your own, for entertainment (e.g. restaurants, bars, performances etc.)**

Answered: 914 Skipped: 8



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**Q4: How often do you travel to West Kootenay communities, other than your own, for entertainment (e.g. restaurants, bars, performances etc.)**

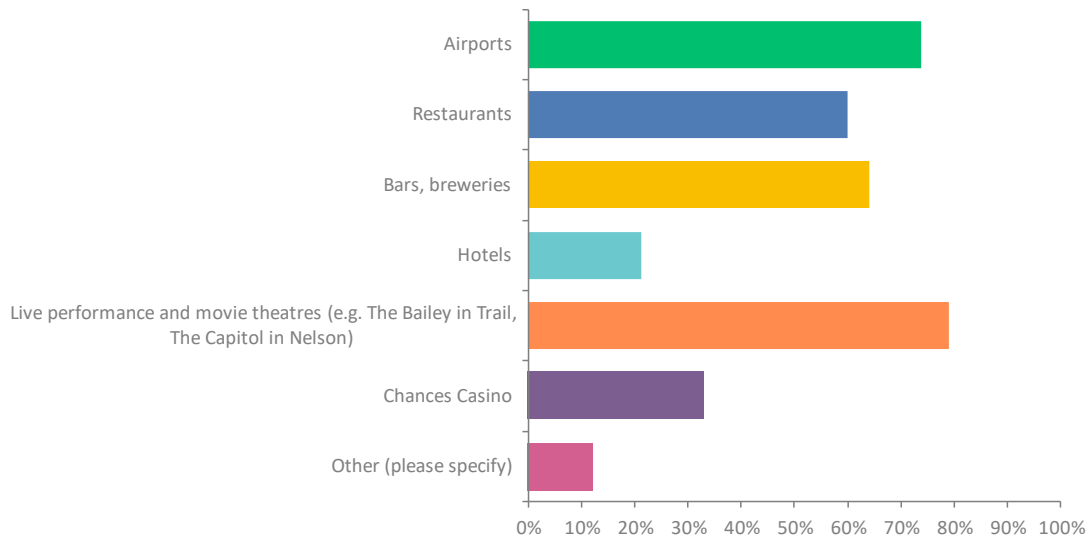
Answered: 914 Skipped: 8

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Multiple times per week	10.18% 93
Once a week	14.00% 128
1 or 2 times per month	38.95% 356
A few times per year	32.17% 294
Other (please specify)	4.70% 43
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>914</b>

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**Q5: Which of the following West Kootenay destinations would you potentially use a shuttle service for? (Select all that apply).**

Answered: 911 Skipped: 11



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**Q5: Which of the following West Kootenay destinations would you potentially use a shuttle service for? (Select all that apply).**

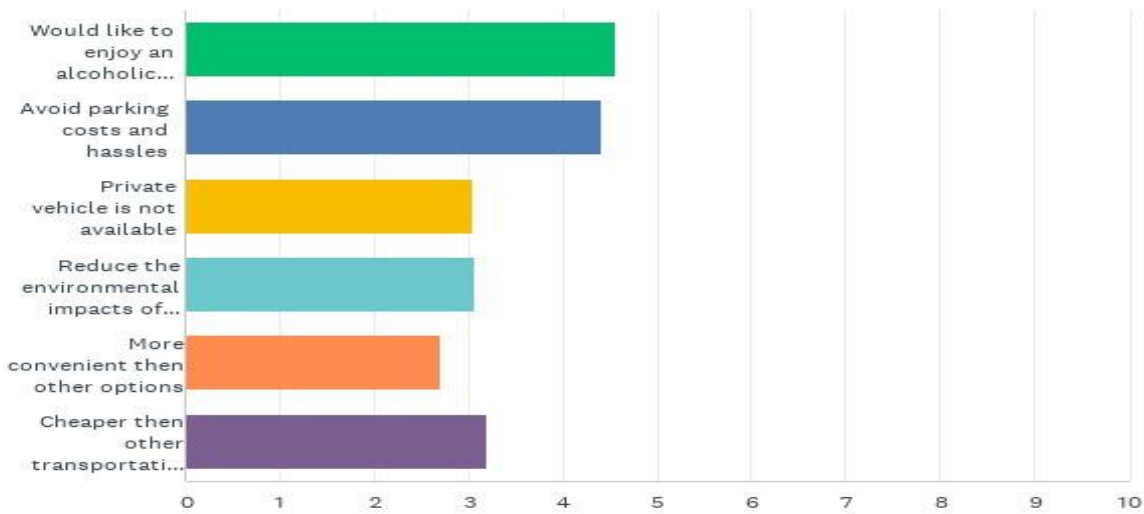
Answered: 911 Skipped: 11

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Airports	73.77%	672
Restaurants	60.04%	547
Bars, breweries	64.11%	584
Hotels	21.19%	193
Live performance and movie theatres (e.g. The Bailey in Trail, The Capitol in Nelson)	78.92%	719
Chances Casino	32.93%	300
Other (please specify)	12.07%	110
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>3125</b>

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**Q6: What would be your primary reasons for using a shuttle service (Please rank them in order of importance by moving them with the arrows)?**

Answered: 906 Skipped: 16



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**Q6: What would be your primary reasons for using a shuttle service (Please rank them in order of importance by moving them with the arrows)?**

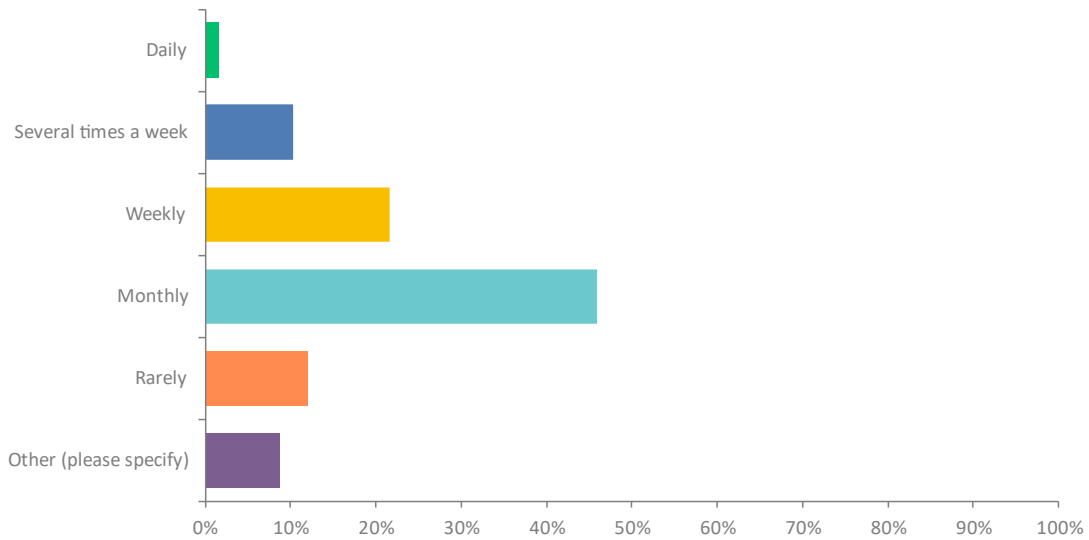
Answered: 906 Skipped: 16

	1	2	3	4	5	6	TOTAL	SCORE
Would like to enjoy an alcoholic beverage and not drive	43.05% 390	21.30% 193	12.03% 109	6.29% 57	7.40% 67	9.93% 90	906	4.57
Avoid parking costs and hassles	24.83% 225	30.57% 277	21.08% 191	12.03% 109	7.28% 66	4.19% 38	906	4.41
Private vehicle is not available	18.54% 168	10.26% 93	11.04% 100	11.48% 104	14.35% 130	34.33% 311	906	3.04
Reduce the environmental impacts of driving my own vehicle	8.17% 74	13.91% 126	15.12% 137	19.21% 174	27.81% 252	15.78% 143	906	3.08
More convenient than other options	3.42% 31	11.48% 104	15.45% 140	19.76% 179	21.63% 196	28.26% 256	906	2.71
Cheaper than other transportation options	1.99% 18	12.47% 113	25.28% 229	31.24% 283	21.52% 195	7.51% 68	906	3.20

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### Q7: How often would you use a shuttle service if it were available?

Answered: 918 Skipped: 4



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### Q7: How often would you use a shuttle service if it were available?

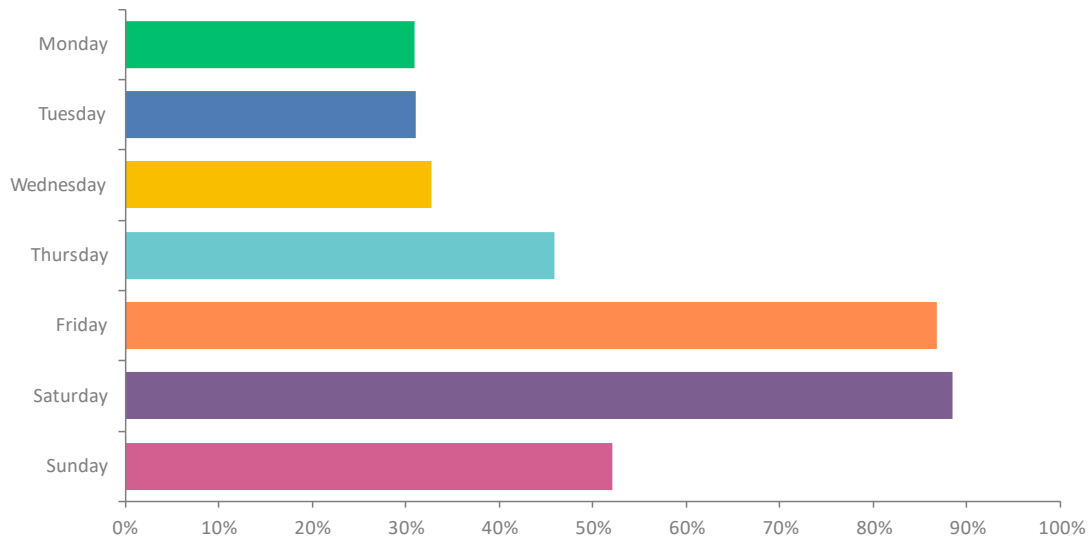
Answered: 918 Skipped: 4

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Daily	1.53%	14
Several times a week	10.35%	95
Weekly	21.57%	198
Monthly	45.86%	421
Rarely	11.98%	110
Other (please specify)	8.71%	80
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>918</b>

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### Q8: What day(s) of the week would you likely use the shuttles service?

Answered: 842 Skipped: 80



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### Q8: What day(s) of the week would you likely use the shuttles service?

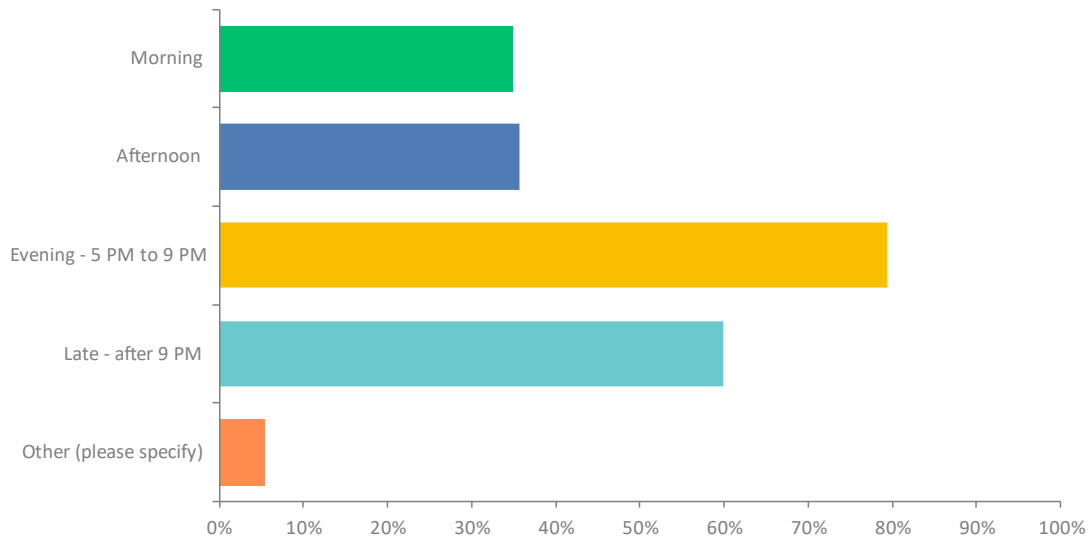
Answered: 842 Skipped: 80

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Monday	31.00%	261
Tuesday	31.12%	262
Wednesday	32.78%	276
Thursday	45.96%	387
Friday	86.82%	731
Saturday	88.48%	745
Sunday	52.14%	439
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>3101</b>

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### Q9: What times of day would you most likely use a shuttle service? .

Answered: 887 Skipped: 35



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### Q9: What times of day would you most likely use a shuttle service? .

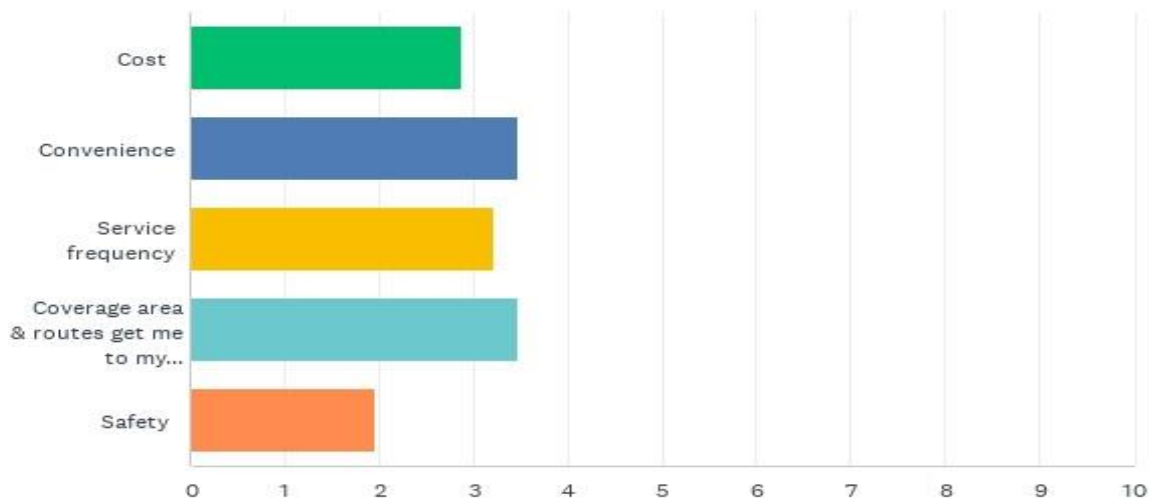
Answered: 887 Skipped: 35

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Morning	34.84%	309
Afternoon	35.63%	316
Evening - 5 PM to 9 PM	79.48%	705
Late - after 9 PM	59.86%	531
Other (please specify)	5.41%	48
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>1909</b>

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**Q10: What are the most important factors for you when choosing a transportation or shuttle service? (Please rank them in order of importance by moving them with the arrows).**



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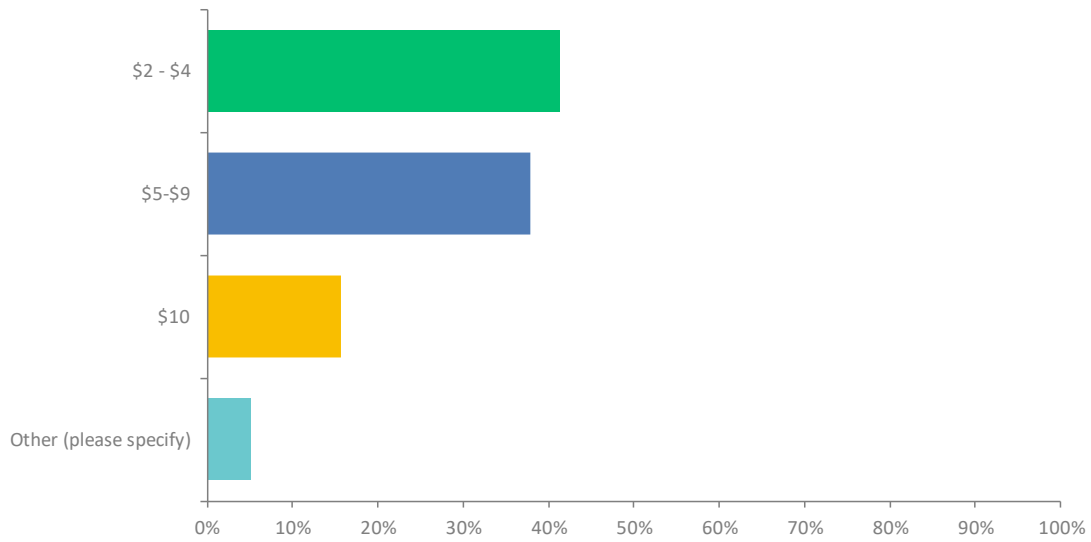
**Q10: What are the most important factors for you when choosing a transportation or shuttle service? (Please rank them in order of importance by moving them with the arrows).**

	1	2	3	4	5	TOTAL	SCORE
Cost	19.81% 171	15.99% 138	17.27% 149	26.65% 230	20.28% 175	863	2.88
Convenience	27.35% 236	24.10% 208	24.33% 210	17.38% 150	6.84% 59	863	3.48
Service frequency	13.56% 117	29.90% 258	29.43% 254	18.31% 158	8.81% 76	863	3.21
Coverage area & routes get me to my destinations	28.04% 242	24.22% 209	20.16% 174	21.67% 187	5.91% 51	863	3.47
Safety	11.24% 97	5.79% 50	8.81% 76	15.99% 138	58.17% 502	863	1.96

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**Q11: What would you be willing to pay for a one-way shuttle service trip within a single community (e.g. from your neighborhood to downtown?)**

Answered: 903 Skipped: 19



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**Q11: What would you be willing to pay for a one-way shuttle service trip within a single community (e.g. from your neighborhood to downtown?)**

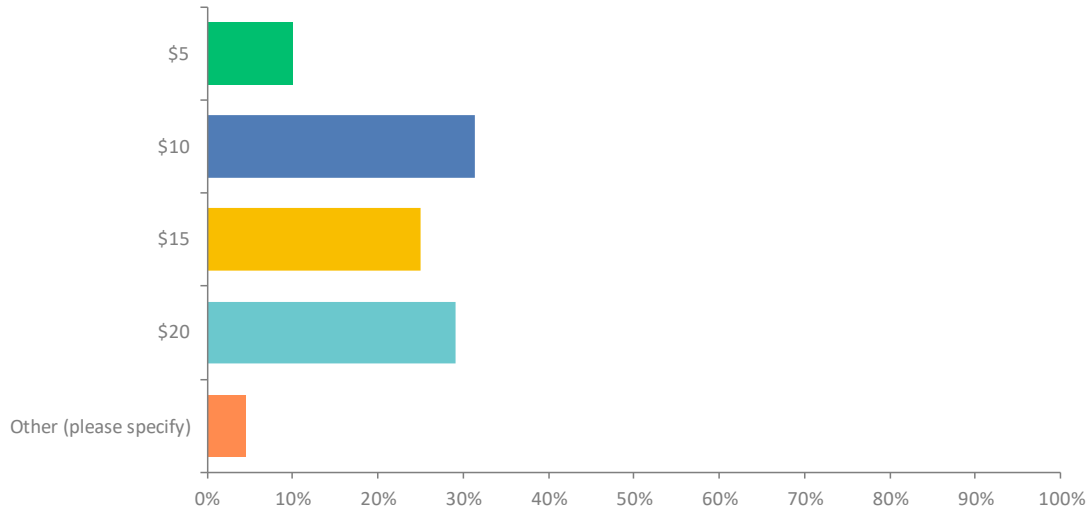
Answered: 903 Skipped: 19

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
\$2 - \$4	41.31%	373
\$5-\$9	37.87%	342
\$10	15.73%	142
Other (please specify)	5.09%	46
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>903</b>

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**Q12: What would you be willing to pay for oneway, inter-community shuttle trips, between two towns (e.g. Nelson to the West Kootenay Regional Airport; New Denver to Nakusp Hot Springs; Castlegar to the Charles Bailey Theatre in Trail; Rossland to the Trail Regional Airport?)**

Answered: 912 Skipped: 10



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**Q12: What would you be willing to pay for oneway, inter-community shuttle trips, between two towns (e.g. Nelson to the West Kootenay Regional Airport; New Denver to Nakusp Hot Springs; Castlegar to the Charles Bailey Theatre in Trail; Rossland to the Trail Regional Airport?)**

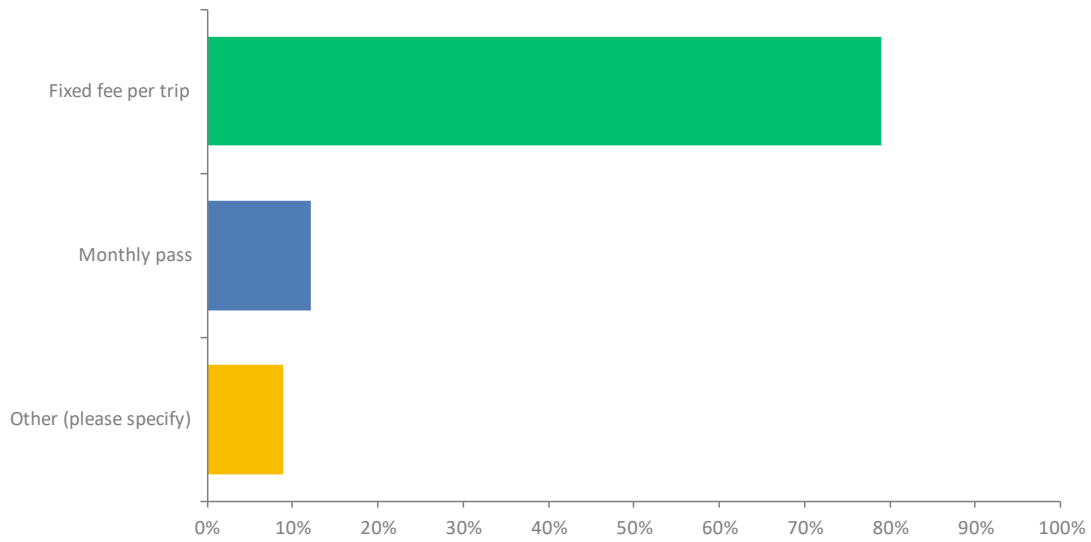
Answered: 912 Skipped: 10

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
\$5	9.98%	91
\$10	31.36%	286
\$15	25.00%	228
\$20	29.17%	266
Other (please specify)	4.50%	41
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>912</b>

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### Q13: Would you prefer a fixed fee per trip or a monthly pass model for frequent use?

Answered: 904 Skipped: 18



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### Q13: Would you prefer a fixed fee per trip or a monthly pass model for frequent use?

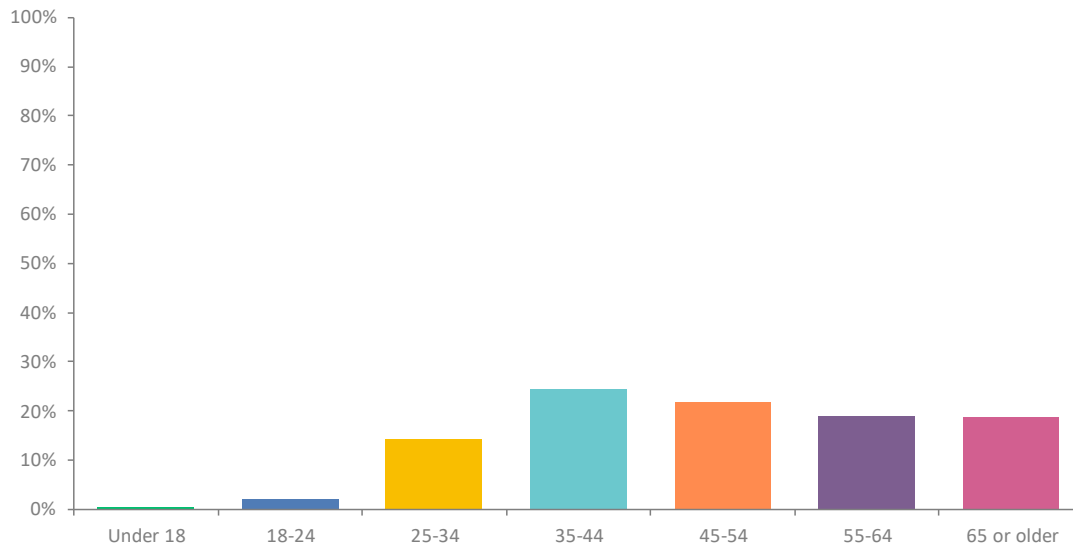
Answered: 904 Skipped: 18

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Fixed fee per trip	78.98%	714
Monthly pass	12.17%	110
Other (please specify)	8.85%	80
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>904</b>

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### Q14: What is your age group?

Answered: 917 Skipped: 5



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### Q14: What is your age group?

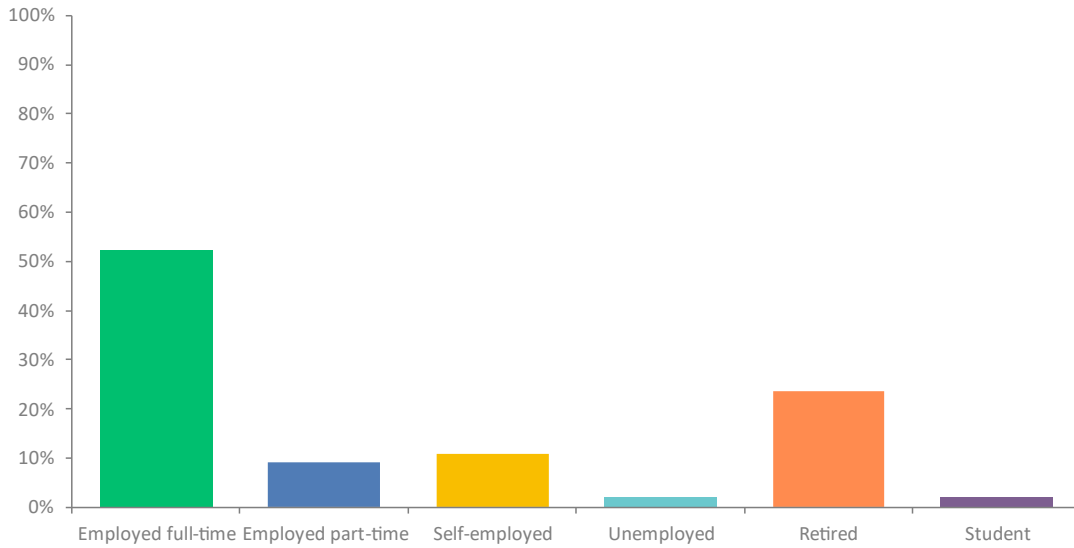
Answered: 917 Skipped: 5

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Under 18	0.11% 1
18-24	2.07% 19
25-34	14.39% 132
35-44	24.32% 223
45-54	21.59% 198
55-64	18.87% 173
65 or older	18.65% 171
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>917</b>

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### Q15: What is your employment status?

Answered: 916 Skipped: 6



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### Q15: What is your employment status?

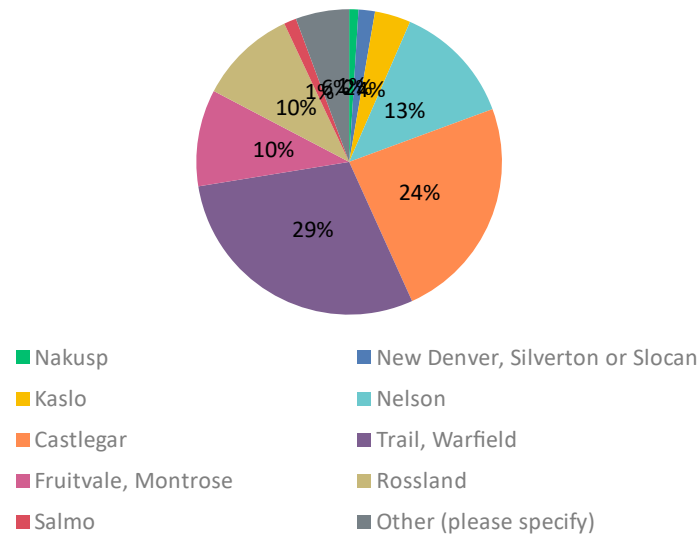
Answered: 916 Skipped: 6

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Employed fulltime	52.40%	480
Employed parttime	9.17%	84
Self-employed	10.81%	99
Unemployed	2.07%	19
Retired	23.58%	216
Student	1.97%	18
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>916</b>

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### Q16: What community do you live in or live closest to?

Answered: 918 Skipped: 4



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### Q16: What community do you live in or live closest to?

Answered: 918 Skipped: 4

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Nakusp	0.98%	9
New Denver, Silvertown or Slocan	1.74%	16
Kaslo	3.81%	35
Nelson	12.85%	118
Castlegar	23.86%	219
Trail, Warfield	29.19%	268
Fruitvale, Montrose	10.24%	94
Rossland	10.35%	95
Salmo	1.31%	12
Other (please specify)	1.74%	16

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## 18 APPENDIX #2 WEST KOOTENAY REGIONAL AIRPORT (WKRA) PASSENGER STATISTICS

Jan 1, 2017 - Dec 31, 2024		Total Airline Passengers	
WKRA	Total Airline Passengers		
<b>2017</b>	<b>74071</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>9366</b>
January	3936	January	2195
February	2996	February	3834
March	3883	March	2616
April	5783	April	
May	7750	May	
June	8112	June	
July	9537	July	
August	10381	August	
September	7787	September	
October	7766	October	337
November	3169	November	247
December	2971	December	137
<b>2018</b>	<b>74397</b>	<b>2021</b>	<b>11345</b>
January	2130	January	118
February	3426	February	235
March	4710	March	151
April	5705	April	129
May	8849	May	188
June	9105	June	452
July	10398	July	1250
August	7257	August	1226
September	7669	September	2055
October	7115	October	2309
November	3659	November	1311
December	4374	December	1921
<b>2019</b>	<b>81380</b>	<b>2022</b>	<b>40299</b>
January	2988	January	682
February	3652	February	1156
March	5748	March	2053
April	7051	April	2877
May	8738	May	3993
June	9386	June	4489
July	10133	July	6979
August	10701	August	6276
September	7638	September	4553



October	7763		October	3606
November	4088		November	1953
December	3494		December	1682
			<b>2023</b>	<b>32104</b>
			January	1631
			February	1689
			March	2161
			April	2591
			May	3108
			June	3477
			July	4057
			August	3467
			September	3600
			October	3305
			November	1853
			December	1165

**19 APPENDIX #3 TRAIL REGIONAL AIRPORT (TRA) PASSENGER STATISTICS**

<b>YEAR</b>	<b>PASSENGER COUNT</b>
<b>2007</b>	14,711
<b>2008</b>	13,810
<b>2009</b>	11,336
<b>2010</b>	15,456
<b>2011</b>	20,495
<b>2012</b>	26,118
<b>2013</b>	24,643
<b>2014</b>	21,589
<b>2015</b>	20,695
<b>2016</b>	20,408
<b>2017</b>	20,534
<b>2018</b>	18,643
<b>2019</b>	18,626
<b>2020</b>	6,740
<b>2021</b>	10,353
<b>2022</b>	15,588
<b>2023</b>	18,482
<b>2024</b>	*19,000

\*projected

## 20 APPENDIX #4 - ENTERTAINMENT SECTOR BUSINESS INTERVIEWS DETAIL - THE CHARLES BAILEY THEATRE, THE ROYAL THEATRE, AND KOOTENAY CINEMAS

### Introduction

This provides more details from interviews conducted with staff of the Charles Bailey Theatre, and owners of the Royal Theatre Kootenay Cinemas. Key insights about transportation challenges, customer behavior, operational considerations, and recommendations for a successful shuttle service are outlined below.

### Key Themes and Insights Across Venues

#### 1. Transportation as a Barrier

All three venues identified transportation limitations as a challenge for patrons, particularly older adults, those without personal vehicles, and individuals coming from surrounding towns. Public transit options are minimal or nonexistent in the evenings, and many patrons expressed concerns about driving at night, particularly in winter or when attending events where alcohol is served.

- **Charles Bailey Theatre:** Older patrons were the primary users of a pilot shuttle service, which ran during 10 shows. The shuttle project, funded by a COVID recovery grant, saw moderate usage but low revenue. A shuttle service during a night market, however, attracted 50 people, indicating higher demand for special events.
- **Royal Theatre:** the owner mentioned that most patrons drive to the theatre, but there is interest in a shuttle service, particularly for late-night shows where safety is a concern.
- **Kootenay Cinemas:** Similarly, most customers drive, but a shuttle would be particularly valuable for younger audiences, such as students from Selkirk, and for safety reasons if the cinema were to serve alcohol in the future.

#### 2. Event-Based Shuttle vs. Regular Service

There was consensus across all venues that a shuttle service for special events (e.g., markets, festivals, premieres) might attract more interest than regular shows or screenings.

- **Charles Bailey Theatre** saw higher ridership during Music In The Park and the Night Market event, indicating demand for event-specific transportation.
- **Kootenay Cinemas and the Royal Theatre** suggested the shuttle could focus on peak times (Tuesdays for discounted nights, Fridays and Saturdays for evening shows, and weekend matinees).

### 3. Financial Viability

All venues highlighted financial concerns about running a shuttle. Costs associated with shuttle services are high, and prior attempts have not been sustainable without external funding or subsidies.

- **Charles Bailey Theatre** reported that a previous shuttle service it piloted cost \$600–\$1,100 per night, which far exceeded the revenue generated from passengers.
- **Kootenay Cinemas** emphasized they would need clear evidence of a positive return on investment. This would likely require significant ridership (200+ passengers per month) to the Cinema justify any financial contributions.
- **Royal Theatre** expressed willingness to contribute to costs but noted that any service would need to be cost-effective and beneficial to ticket sales.

### 4. Operational and Logistical Considerations

The venues agreed on several important operational features for a successful shuttle service:

- **Reliability:** A consistent and dependable schedule is key. Staff suggested that it might take three years of regular service to build ridership at Charles Bailey Theatre.
- **Route and Coverage:** The shuttle should cover surrounding towns such as Castlegar, Rossland, and Nelson. Kootenay Cinemas and Charles Bailey Theatre both noted the need for service across wider distances, ideally covering up to 20 kilometers.
- **Shuttle Size and Customization:** Smaller buses would reduce operating costs for regular events, while larger buses may be necessary for larger-scale events.
- **Comfort and Accessibility:** The shuttle should cater to a broad demographic, including older adults and disabled patrons. Sheltered and safe pickup and drop-off points would enhance the overall experience.

### 5. Enhancing the Customer Experience

Several ideas emerged on how to make the shuttle more than just a transportation service, turning it into part of the overall experience.

- **Charles Bailey Theatre** suggested framing the shuttle as a cultural journey, with elements like entertainment during the ride and partnerships with local businesses (e.g., restaurants and bars) to create a complete night out for patrons.
- **Kootenay Cinemas** highlighted the importance of streamlining the service, with fewer stops and efficient routes to make the shuttle more attractive and convenient for riders.

### Venue-Specific Insights

#### Charles Bailey Theatre

- **Pilot Shuttle Project:** Ran during 10 shows but faced financial losses due to low ridership and high costs. However, a night market event saw significant shuttle use, indicating potential for event-based transportation.
- **Shuttle Features:** recommended a smaller bus and a focus on customer convenience, safety, and accessibility. The shuttle should cover nearby towns (up to 20 kilometers) and integrate marketing to build ridership over time.

#### Royal Theatre

- **Interest in Shuttle:** Strong interest for late-night and weekend shows, especially on Fridays and Saturdays. The theatre highlighted downtown safety concerns and the need for a shuttle stop in a safe area.
- **Financial Contribution:** The theatre is open to contributing financially, potentially through a punch card system or app-based payments for easier customer use.

#### Kootenay Cinemas

- **Shuttle Usage:** Peak times for a shuttle would be during evenings and weekends, especially for first-run movie releases and discount days. The service would be useful for students, families, and out-of-town patrons from Nelson, Castlegar, and Trail.
- **Financial Considerations:** The cinema would support the service if it could attract at least 200 passengers per month. Shuttle hubs near popular local attractions, like the Confluence, could boost demand.

## Recommendations

1. **Long-Term Commitment:** A shuttle service would need sustained marketing and funding over a three-year period to build a steady customer base and become a viable transportation option.
2. **Event-Focused Service:** Rather than focusing solely on regular shows, they might also target special events, festivals, and high-traffic periods to attract higher ridership.
3. **Collaborative Partnerships:** Venues should explore partnerships with local businesses, restaurants, and transportation providers to share costs and cross-promote services.
4. **Smaller, Cost-Effective Buses:** A smaller bus for regular events and a larger one for special occasions could help manage operational costs.
5. **Customer Experience:** Incorporate fun and entertainment into the shuttle ride, making it part of the event experience rather than just a means of transportation.