

# Age-Friendly Transportation Planning Study

Village of Tahsis  
B.C.

November 17, 2020

How can Life for Tahsis seniors improve?

Transportation within the Village

Service  
Paid coordinator to make people aware of going on

NEW SERVICES  
THE AT HEALTH  
EYES, DENTAL

Heating costs

Transportation  
- Clinic  
- out of town (app)

Subsidies  
Housing  
out of town  
for appointments

## Table of Contents

Introduction .....	2
Methodology .....	5
Scoping Review .....	8
Key Findings .....	16
Recommendations .....	21
STRATEGY 1 Improving the Road .....	21
STRATEGY 2 Trip Reduction .....	22
STRATEGY 3 Trip Provision .....	24
Next Steps .....	29
References .....	31

## Introduction

The Village of Tahsis has undertaken the 2020 Age-Friendly Transportation Planning Study (the Study) as the first step towards addressing the transportation gaps for Tahsis seniors & older adults. This project is funded through the Age-Friendly Communities Grant from the Union of B.C. Municipalities (UBCM).

The high-level objectives of the Study include:

1. Conduct a transportation needs assessment that identifies travel needs, barriers, patterns and demands for Tahsis Seniors.
2. Develop practical and economical transportation options for seniors in Village of Tahsis.

This Study is timely as seniors make up a rapidly growing and important part of our Canadian demographic. Currently, one in six people in Canada is 65 or older and the growth rate of this demographic is higher than any other population subgroup.<sup>1</sup> Many Canadian seniors face transportation deficiencies, leaving numerous without adequate, affordable or accessible options to support and promote healthy active aging.

Seniors who no longer drive, reported that within the last six months they had unmet transportation needs for at least one type of trip (medical, essential services, recreational, social and/or religious) and more than 37% of Canadian seniors report that they experience social isolation on a regular basis due to lack of transportation.<sup>2</sup>

Canadian seniors that live in rural and remote communities face these barriers and more with the additional unique obstacles to transportation that comes with living outside of urban areas. These include increased operational costs, compared to urban and suburban regions, a greater reliance on personal vehicles, longer travel distances for appointments and limited availability to connect to public transit. The low population densities of remote settings also create an inability to reach the economies of scale needed for effective and efficient community transportation.

Older adults residing in the Village of Tahsis are no strangers to these obstacles. The Village of Tahsis is a beautiful municipality situated at the head of a fjord inlet on the west coast of Vancouver Island and has one of the highest median ages (58 years) in the

---

<sup>1</sup> 2017 Council of Canadian Academies: Older Canadians on the Move

<sup>2</sup> 2017 Alberta Provincial Transportation Needs Assessment

Province.<sup>3</sup> Over 44% of the residents of Tahsis are over the age of 60, and 50% of the population is retired.<sup>4</sup> As Tahsis is a premier ecotourism destination, featuring stunning coastal scenery, many of its residents have chosen to retire in Tahsis for its beauty and access to the outdoors. Furthermore, the median home value is \$80,125 and the monthly cost of ownership is \$282, making this an attractive retirement destination where Canadian seniors can significantly stretch their retirement savings in comparison with urban communities<sup>5</sup>.

In 2019 the Village of Tahsis completed the Age-Friendly Community Action Plan (ACAP) to ensure the community is well positioned through its plans, policies and programs to support and sustain active, social and independent lifestyles for its mature adults and seniors.

After rich community consultation, the 2019 ACAP indicated definitive gaps related to:

- **Transportation**
- **Food Security**
- **Social Isolation & Mental Health Supports**
- **Specialized Healthcare**

Not surprisingly, transportation was the highest marker for dissatisfaction among residents. Transportation is one of the eight domains of an age-friendly community as defined by the World Health Organization (WHO). For seniors in Tahsis, transportation is of particularly high importance as it is interconnected with many of the other domains of healthy aging, such as access to healthcare, social participation, community engagement & employment. In fact, transportation is the underlying barrier that drives other areas of dissatisfaction.

This Study further investigates the transportation barriers that were identified for seniors in the 2019 Tahsis ACAP. Focused investigation into these barriers reveals that the challenges can be broadly broken into three categories; distance and proximity to amenities, unsafe road conditions and cost.

---

<sup>3</sup> 2016 Statistics Canada

<sup>4</sup> 2019 Village of Tahsis Official Community Plan Survey

<sup>5</sup> 2018 Strathcona Community Health Network: Social Detriments of Health

## **Distance/proximity to amenities**

The Village of Tahsis truly is one of the Vancouver Island's most rural communities. The closest community, Campbell River, is a three-hour drive away, a total of 153km per trip. This means that Tahsis seniors need to travel a significant distance in order to access the most common and critical amenities required for daily living. For example, a senior living in Tahsis is required to travel a total of six hours and 360km, roundtrip, in order to do their grocery shopping. This distance-related challenge extends also to many other basic needs, such as visiting a dentist, getting an x-ray, banking, and accessing specialized healthcare. Unfortunately, since these types of services are unavailable within Tahsis, seniors are required to travel a significant distance outside of their community to secure access.

## **Unsafe road conditions**

Not only do Tahsis seniors have a long drive to access otherwise common goods and services, it is a challenging drive and one that many report they no longer feel safe to make. The main road connecting Tahsis to Hwy 28 is Head Bay Forest Service Road, which has over 60 km of winding, steep, unpaved gravel and seal coated surfaces. The road has several risk factors. Rain and snow cause significant deterioration of the road base leading to many stretches of almost impassable potholes. Logging traffic and wildlife, often immersed in deep fog, make the blind corners and steep grades of up to 18% especially treacherous.

A lack of cell service on the road between Tahsis and Campbell River means if there is a problem, drivers cannot be warned or call for help. Although 76% of Tahsis residents have a driver's license, many are worried about their ability to drive as they continue to age<sup>6</sup>. The skill required to navigate this difficult terrain in rapidly changing weather conditions, is simply not something they feel safe doing.

## **Cost**

Accessing necessary resources, groceries and specialized healthcare, is not only a long and dangerous trip. It is also expensive. Round-trip travel from Tahsis to Campbell River, including fuel and vehicle maintenance (rate of 0.58/km), costs \$177.48. An additional expense, added to their grocery bills, every trip. Groceries are commonly cited as a difficult expense for the average Canadian senior, but the unique financial reality for

---

<sup>6</sup> 2019 Village of Tahsis Official Community Plan Survey





Tahsis seniors is even more challenging. Many Tahsis seniors are classified as low-income. The median household income in Tahsis is \$34,304 which is \$30,000 less than Gold River and almost \$20,000 less than the Strathcona Regional District median of \$55,487<sup>7</sup>.

This study undertakes a comprehensive understanding of the community and its specific transportation challenges in order to create a customized solution that works for Tahsis residents. As the Village of Tahsis is a small remote community with limited resources, a transportation solution needs to be carefully and thoughtfully developed. Recommendations need to be both feasible and economical, while also achieving an age-inclusive framework.

## Methodology

There is no one size fits all solution when it comes to addressing transportation disadvantaged seniors. The Village of Tahsis, along with its abundant natural settings and beautiful landscapes, has unique barriers to transportation. The methodology used within this Study is a reflection of the community's unique needs.

To successfully execute the Age-Friendly Transportation Planning Study, O'Hara Aging + Accessibility was retained to support the Village. A "nothing for me without me" policy was utilized to ensure a locally-driven and participatory approach.

<sup>7</sup> 2018 Strathcona Community Health Network: Social Detriments of Health

The following tasks were executed across two key project phases.

Phase 1 Needs Assessment	Phase 2 Options Identification
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Task 1 TAAC</b> <i>Establishing the Tahsis Age-Friendly Action Committee</i></li> <li><b>Task 2 Scoping Review</b> <i>Examining how other municipalities address transportation barriers</i></li> <li><b>Task 3 Community Survey</b> <i>Detailed survey &amp; analysis of transportation habits to better understand travel needs</i></li> <li><b>Task 4 Stakeholder Consultation</b> <i>Various workshops with key external stakeholders including neighboring municipalities</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Task 5 World Café's</b> <i>Community consultation to present findings to the Tahsis community and hear direct feedback</i></li> <li><b>Task 6 Options Identification Workshop</b> <i>Facilitated discussion and exploration of transportation options to test viability</i></li> <li><b>Task 7 Final Report</b> <i>Summarizing the transportation Study findings and identifying recommendations for a community transportation solution</i></li> </ul>

### Task 1 Establishing the Tahsis Age-Friendly Action Committee (TAAC)

In order to identify transportation solutions that are community driven, flexible, and based on local priorities for Tahsis seniors. Seniors must be included in the process. This Study was initialized by the formulation of the TAAC which included representation from Council, Village Administration and predominately local seniors.

### Task 2 Scoping Review

Next, a solutions scoping review was conducted, examining how other municipalities, with similar demographics, are responding to seniors' needs in relation to transportation. Data was gathered on ideas and solutions that exist in similar communities which was compared to the available asset resources, such as vehicles, volunteers, drivers, scheduling tools, government supports etc. within Tahsis to determine what options were feasible and transferrable to the Village.

### Task 3 Community Surveys

Detailed community transportation surveys were conducted & analyzed to identify the current travel patterns, needs, barriers, gaps and challenges for seniors' transportation.

#### **Task 4 Stakeholder Consultation**

Stakeholder consultation took place throughout the entirety of this Study to ensure coordination and ongoing communication and dialogue between the Village, older adults & seniors within the community, the Ministry of Transportation & Infrastructure, Strathcona Community Health Network and the neighboring communities of Tsa'Xana, the Mowachaht/Muchalaht First Nation community, and the Village of Gold River.

#### **Task 5 World Cafés Consultation**

Two virtual World Cafés were hosted to engage the community and present findings from the survey, ideas discovered within the scoping review and transportation options for consideration. This allowed the community to voice their ideas, concerns, feedback and suggestions. Feedback from the World Cafés were summarized and included in the recommendations.

#### **Task 6 Options Identification workshop**

To test the viability of potential recommendations an Options Identification Workshop stress tested the short-list of options with the TAAC and other key community stakeholders. Based on workshop feedback, options and recommendations were further refined.

#### **Task 7 Final Report**

This report summarizes the findings of the Study and identify meaningful options for the future of seniors' transportation in the rural/remote community of Tahsis.





## Scoping Review

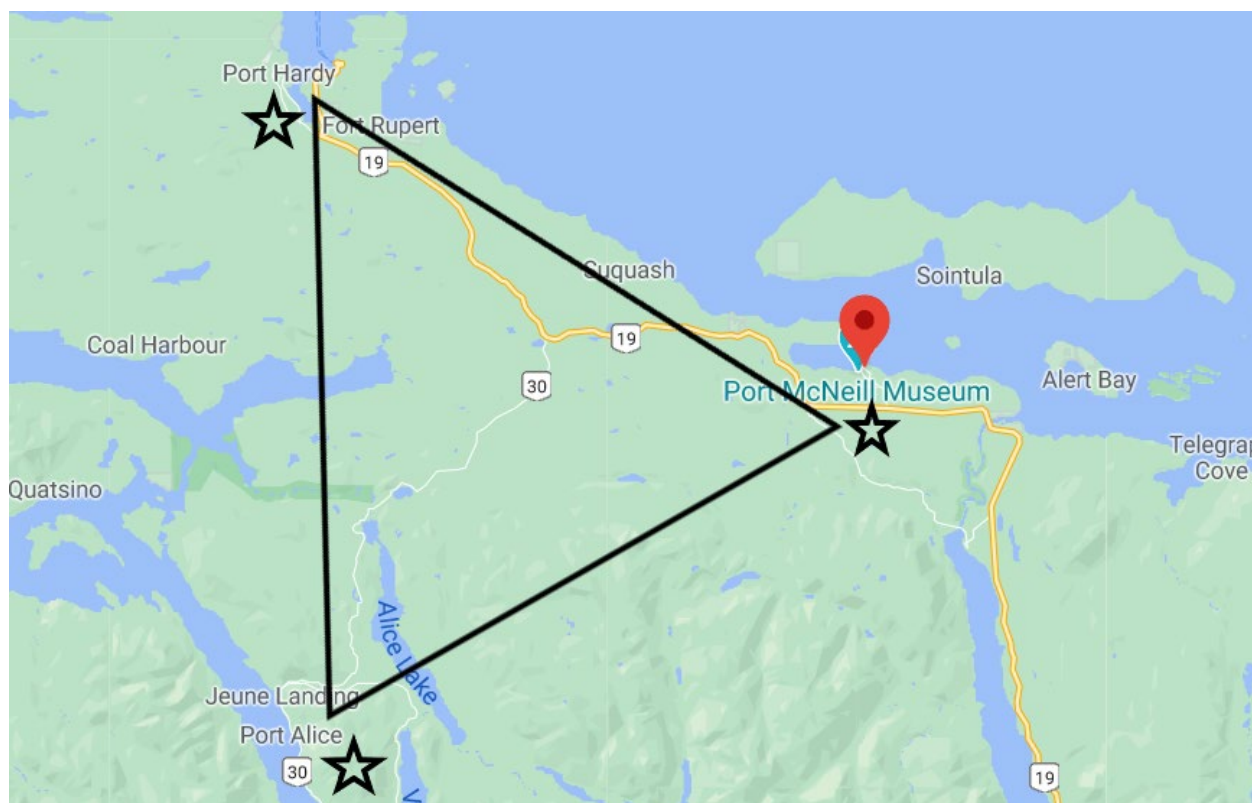
In some ways, the challenges faced by Tahsis seniors are not unique to Vancouver Island, British Columbia or Canada. In fact, a global environmental scan reveals some similarities in transportation challenges for seniors in many parts of the world.

Understanding this situation as one which is faced by many communities in many environments also offers an opportunity to gather different ideas, best practices and novel approaches. After conducting a scan of rural/remote seniors community transportation best practices, the following four communities were selected to be profiled as part of this study.

### Volunteer Transportation Network (VTN)

Name	Volunteer Transportation Network (VTN)
Location	Town of Port McNeill, Vancouver Island BC Population, 2064
Coverage Area	Port McNeill, Port Hardy & Port Alice within the Regional District of Mount Waddington
Proximity to nearest town/goods and services	Port Alice to Port Hardy: 50km Port Alice to Port McNeil: 54km
Vehicles	Personal vehicles + 1 new mobility bus for 7 persons using mobility aids
Drivers	Volunteer only, reimbursed \$0.50/km
Fares	Donation only

Funding	New Horizon for Seniors Grant, sustainability capital funding from the Regional District, local businesses and private donations
---------	--



## Overview of Service

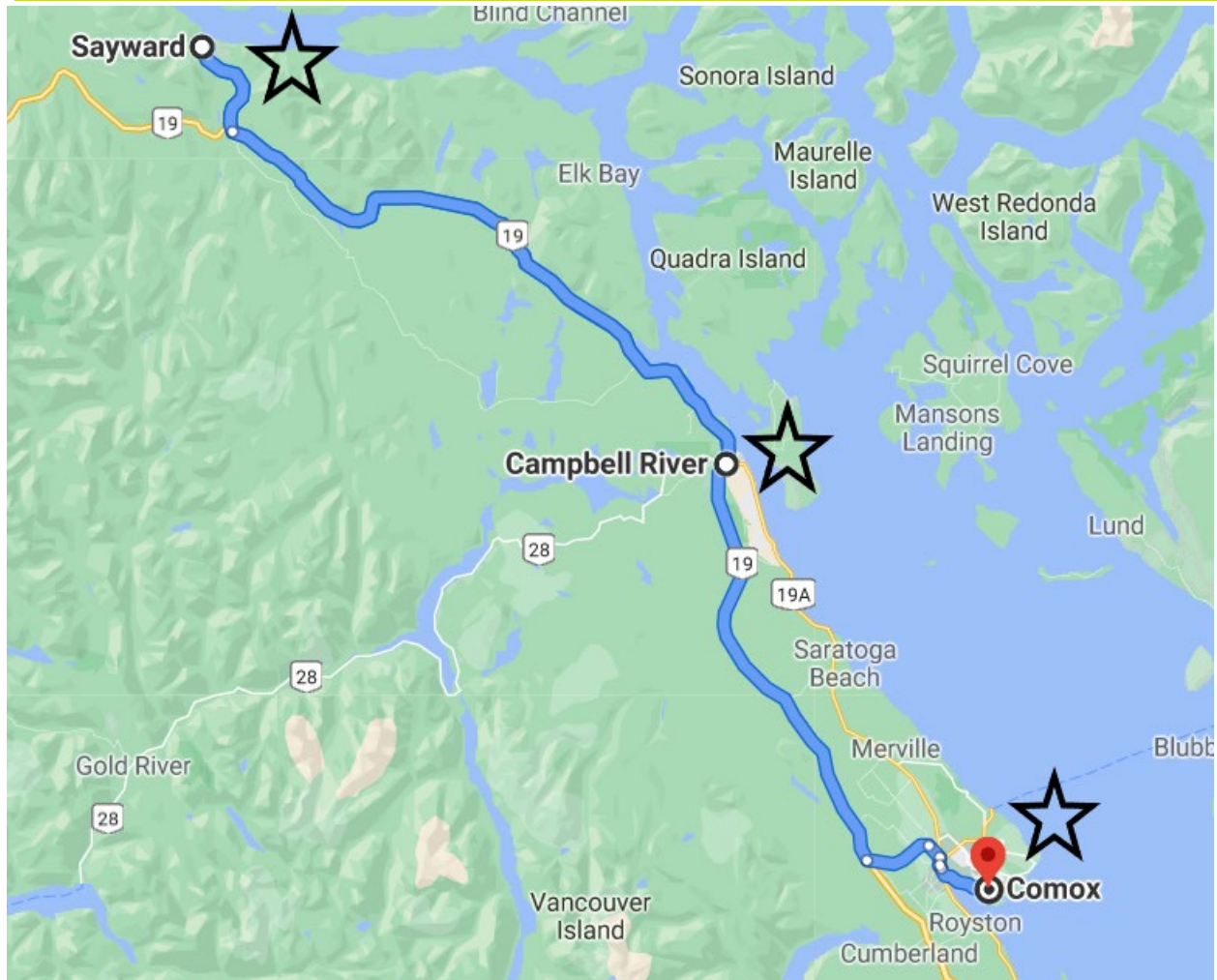
The Volunteer Transportation Network (VTN) is a volunteer based; driver supplied on-demand service. Dispatch and registration are controlled through the non-profit organization; North Island Community Service, which is partner of Mt Waddington Regional District. Residents register with the VTN and define their needed level of service. When they book a trip, they call the North Island Community Service. The dispatch pairs them with active volunteer drivers to schedule the trip, usually coordinating with other riders along a similar route.

Drivers must supply VTN with drivers abstracts, criminal record check, and attend a half-day workshop with the program coordinator and the RCMP. The cost per km is minimal. While it keeps costs down, it may deter drivers. Other services in the region include Wheels for Wellness, Handy Dart, and the municipal transit system of Mt Waddington. VTN will often coordinate with these other agencies to transfer riders. Normally they

only take people to town. In 2019 they had 883 registered riders and did 482 trips, many of which combined multiple riders. During Covid19, volunteers have been collecting peoples' groceries. It has been successful enough that they are now considering continuing that service post-Covid19.

### Village of Sayward Seniors Van

Name	Seniors Van
Location	Village of Sayward, Vancouver Island BC Population, 311
Coverage Area	Sayward, Comox and Campbell River within the Regional District of Strathcona
Proximity to nearest town/goods and services	Sayward to Campbell River: 75km Sayward to Comox: 132km
Vehicles	Village owned 2016 Dodge Caravan
Drivers	Volunteer only
Fares	Donation only, suggestion of \$25 for a return trip to Campbell River and \$50 donation for return trip to Comox
Funding	Age-Friendly Grant (\$8,000 toward purchase of van), Village donation of \$5000, independent fundraising in increments of \$50-\$500



## Overview of Service

The Sayward Seniors Van is a semi-regular, volunteer run service with varying hours to accommodate the needs of the riders. Drivers are volunteer only, and operate the van that is owned by the Village. There are currently three drivers, all of whom registered by providing a driver abstract and a criminal record check. The only vehicle is a 2016 Dodge Caravan, which seats seven, cost \$21,000 and is owned by the Village of Sayward. The insurance for the vehicle is rolled into the fleet insurance for all of their municipal vehicles.

The van started with a focus on seniors, but now it's open to all adults (19+). The scheduling for the van is run through the municipal office. People call the recreation center with their request and the dispatcher schedules the trip. Usually, the van goes

twice a month on every other Wednesday, approximately 24 trips per year. They take people to appointments/shopping around town, then pick everyone up. Each trip is different, adjusting to the needs of the passengers on a given day. Trips during the winter may be less frequent, or shorter. The trip schedules are posted in the Sayward Valley Newsletter.

Space is limited with a full van, so a full vehicle means fewer groceries per person. The capital cost of the startup was a \$25,000. The Age Friendly Grant allowed only \$8,000 as the maximum that could put toward buying a van. The village donated \$5,000, and an individual donated \$5,000.

The remaining cost was raised through independent fundraising. The Village sent a letter to local businesses describing a reward system for a donation. They created a wall of fame in the local recreation centre, on which everyone who donates between \$50-\$200 (not for a ride) is commemorated on a simple plaque. Any entity that donates more than \$200 is recognized with a larger plaque and their logo on the back of the van. This included the Village of Sayward and the Age Friendly Grant program. The Village was even able to reduce the cost of adding decals to the van by including the logo of the auto-body shop that did the work. The van now boasts several donor logos and 'service by donation' is prominently featured.

Since the van is owned by the village, any excess money from fundraising is put in a special account, rather than the general ledgers. The program still receives approximately \$500 per year in independent donations. All donations are kept in that account as a maintenance and operations general fund.

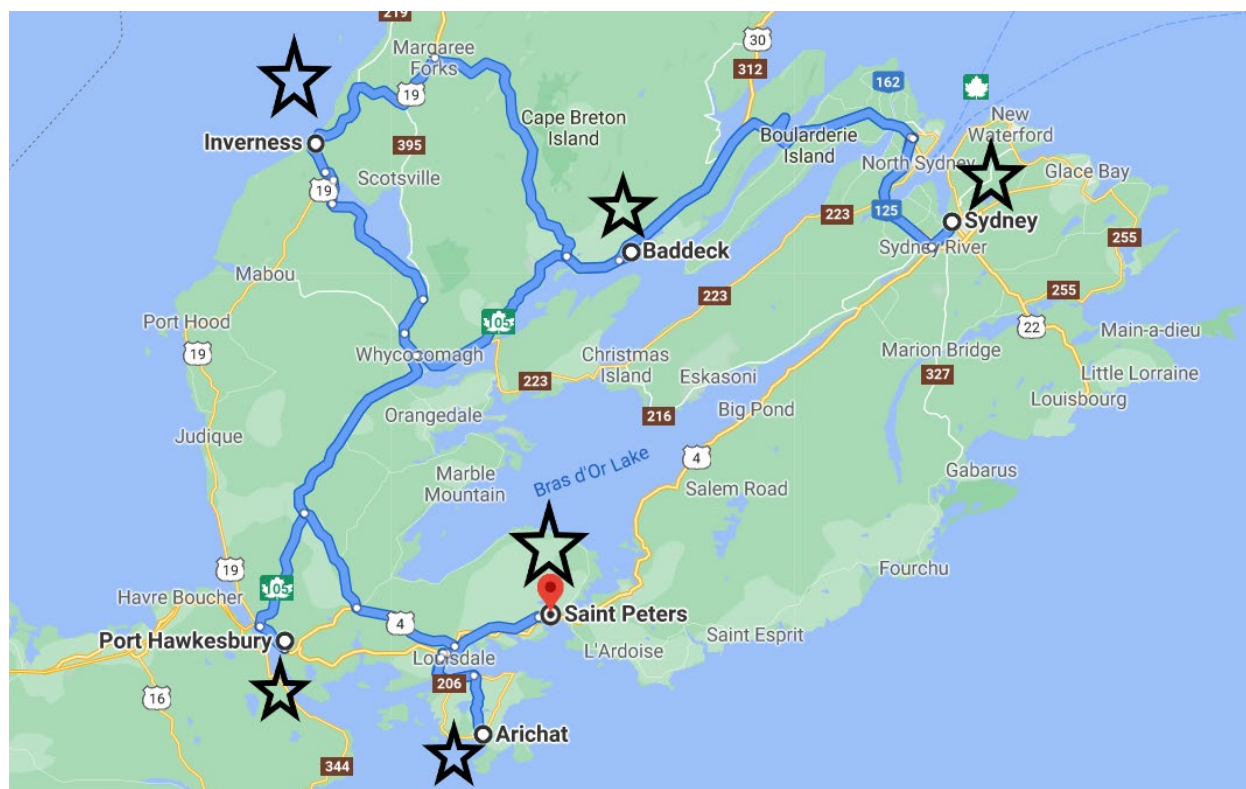
In response to the Covid19 pandemic, the van is now also picking up some online grocery orders in coordination with collecting stock for the recreation centre. It also collects donations from the food bank in Campbell River to bring back to the community.

### **Nova Scotia, Victoria County Transit**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Victoria County Transit (Strait Area Transit)</b>
Location	Village of Baddeck, Victoria County, Cape Breton Island, Nova Scotia Population, 769
Coverage Area	Village of Baddeck, Sydney, Inverness, Saint Peters, Port Hawkesbury and Arichat
Proximity to nearest town/goods and services	Baddeck to Port Hawkesbury: 93km Baddeck to Sydney: 79KM



Vehicles	2 Accessible mini-buses
Drivers	3 Hired Drivers
Fares	Flat rate of \$5.00 per one-way trip anywhere in coverage area. Outside coverage area is \$5.00 + \$0.55/km
Funding	Nova Scotia Provincial Grants & Municipal Transit Funding



## Overview of Service

Strait Area Transit is a non-profit, community-based transit system that connects rural communities across Cape Breton Island, Nova Scotia. It began over 13 years ago with a small grant and two cars and has grown into a nine-vehicle fixed route service with dial-a-ride and charter service options. Successive grants

for new accessible vehicles and operating expenses has led to a still-growing transportation service. Victoria County Transit is a new, independent sister service that





operates for the rural communities in Victoria County. The services overlap slightly, but generally passengers take journeys within their coverage area.

The service is a pre-booked, door-to-door service that is fully accessible for persons with disabilities. The booking, and administration for both services, is centralized in Port Hawkesbury. In 2019 Victoria County Transit completed a total

of 615 one-way trips, using three drivers and two accessible vehicles.

New vehicles are purchased through provincial grants. Fuel costs are very high over a large rural area. Provincial grants include: Accessible Transportation Assistance Program to assist with the purchase of vehicles, the Nova Scotia Transit Research Incentive Program and the Public Transit Assistance Program.

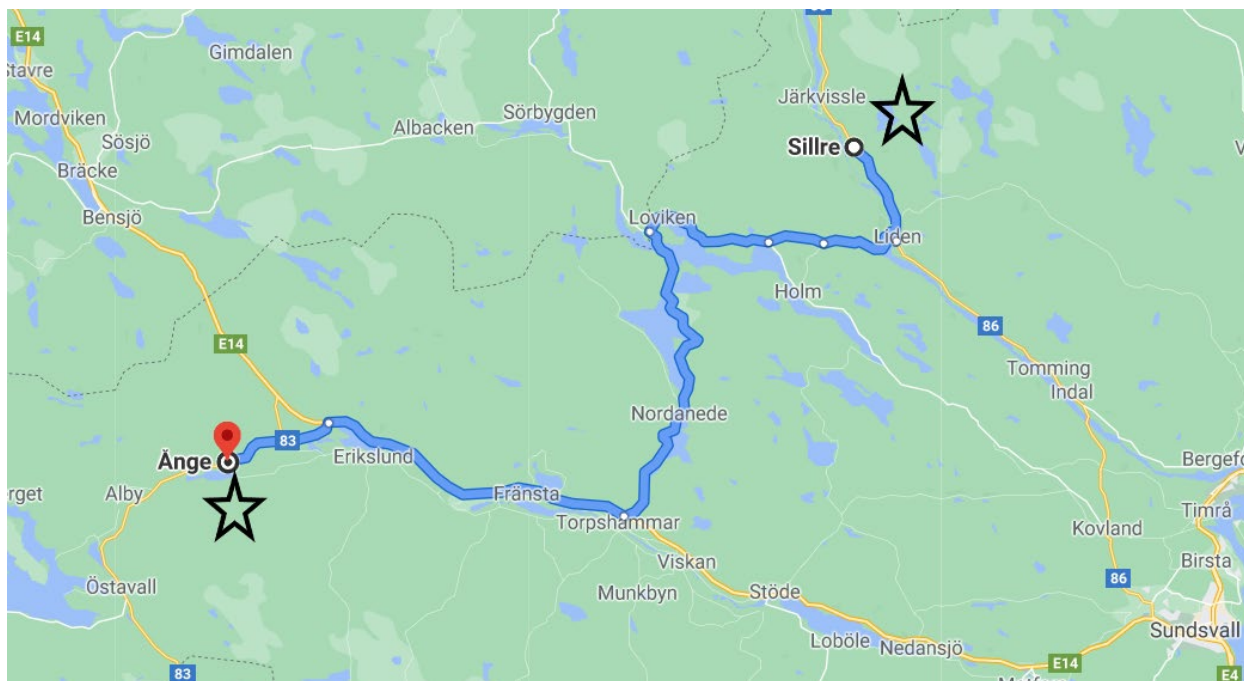
Strait Area Transit and Victoria County Transit are each their own non-profit cooperative governed by their own boards of directors. The director answers to both boards. Strait Area Transit administrates both agencies, meaning the only employees of Victoria County Transit are drivers. Strait Area Transit has a Director, one Dispatcher, one Mechanic, and nine full-time drivers, three of which are Victoria County Transit Drivers.

Photos courtesy of <https://www.vctbus.ca/our-people>

### Village Bus of Kölsillre Sweden

Name	Village Bus of Kölsillre
Location	Village of Kölsillre, Västernorrland County, Northern Sweden Population: 100
Coverage Area	Town of Ånge, Västernorrland County, Northern Sweden Population: 2872
Proximity to nearest town/goods and services	Kölsillre to Ånge: 45km
Vehicles	1 mini-van, rented from private company
Drivers	Various residents
Fares	Free, initial pilot funded the cost and after pilot there is a law in Sweden that you can only charge for transportation if it is a professional driver, it remains free today

Funding	Start-up funding from European Union Regional Development Fund via the Northern Periphery Programme 2007-2013
---------	---



## Overview of Service

The Village Bus of Kölsillre in Northern Sweden began as a pilot funded through the Rural Transport Solutions program funded through the European Unions Regional Development Fund for the Northern Periphery Program. The pilot aimed to help peripheral and remote communities on the northern margins of Finland, Scotland, Sweden and Iceland to overcome the limited availability of public transit in areas with low population density and an aging population.

The Village Bus is administered by the municipality through a nine-seater bus which is rented through a private company. The bus is driven by local residents who have a valid drivers license. The bus is stationed in the Village and mostly drives towards the bigger town of Ånge located 45km away. There are no fixed routes or departure times, instead residents make a trip request through a local website. Seniors have the option of booking a seat on an existing route or to create a new one. The website notifies volunteer drivers when there is a new request and they login to confirm/accept the trip.

During the pilot riders were able to ride free of charge and that continues today, however, the Village is petitioning to have a by-law amended regarding charging fares on "non-professional"

transit vehicles. They hope to begin to be able to charge a fare in order to sustain the cost of the program in the future.

This pilot was considered wildly successful both from an economic perspective and a social benefit. The bus averages about 340 passengers per month, which is approximately 4100 riders per year. This is substantial for a small community with a population of only 100 inhabitants. The operational cost is around 7.26€ per person and 0.61€ per km. Additionally, they have completed several studies that demonstrate residents feel less social isolation, more connected and have the continued ability to live and age within their community.

The Village Bus recently won an award for Best Solutions in Public Transport in Sweden for its outstanding results for socio-economic impact from the Swedish Public Transportation Association.



## Key Findings

The Tahsis age-friendly transportation survey was conducted in the summer of 2020 to understand the travel patterns, needs and barriers of the community and to gain the feedback required to develop transportation options. There were 81 responses to the survey representing an approximate response rate of 33%. For those aged 65 and over, the response rate was nearly 75%.

Below is a graphic summary of the most prominent findings:



#### **How are Tahsis residents currently travelling?**

- 37% are travelling as a passenger in a family car
- 55% of residents own at least one vehicle, 43% own 2 vehicles
- 94% have a valid driver's license

#### **How frequently are Tahsis residents currently travelling?**

- Frequent travel to Campbell River, 40% are travelling to Campbell River several times a month or more
- Six respondents travel per day to Campbell River, extrapolated to entire Tahsis population = 17 trips per day

#### **Why do Tahsis residents travel to Campbell River?**

- 62% report travelling to Campbell River to as a requirement to access groceries and shopping
- 24% report that all or most of the time they are travelling to Campbell River, they are travelling for medical purposes

Desired destinations for out of town travel are predominately located in downtown Campbell River.

Destinations are listed in order of popularity:

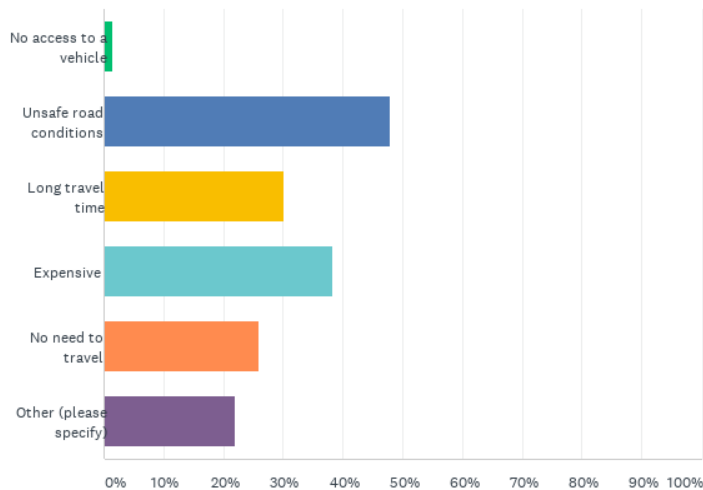
1. Discovery Harbour Centre
2. Walmart Supercentre
3. Shoppers Row (Downtown)
4. North Island Hospital
5. Gold River Medical Centre, Ex-Ray Lab
6. Gold River: Canada Post/Library/Liquor Store/Pharmacy

Meeting essential needs are a main component of the reasons to travel to Campbell River. Shopping, food and health and were the most common reasons for current travel and of unmet demand. 55 respondents indicated that they drive themselves when travelling outside of Tahsis. This, in conjunction with the moderate number of individuals who indicated they travelled as passengers in a car, suggest that many current trips are solo trips. Solo trips and concerns over travel costs increases the likely success of rideshare, or volunteer driver, community transportation options.

***"It would be great if the transportation can connect to other transportation systems in Campbell River with an online/phone call reservation. The availability of this transportation could improve the life of villagers"***

Likely due to shopping being the most common purpose to travel, there is a lot of flexibility reported in travel times. 61% of respondents need four to six hours in Campbell River. Wednesday is the most common day of travel with limited trips on Sunday. On average, six respondents travelled to Campbell River per day; a number that increases to 17 when extrapolated to Tahsis' entire population.

## What are the barriers to transportation for Tahsis residents?



- 47% reported that they are prevented from travelling more because they do not feel safe driving at their age or with a disability due to the length of trip and road conditions
- 17% identify as a person with a disability that affects their ability to travel

Respondents identified key barriers including poor road conditions, costs, and long travel time. **Road improvements** would help to address those barriers and **support for that project is widespread**. A community transportation transit solution would also help to reduce costs and concerns about travel safety. Safety concerns often involved a sense of declining abilities with age including trouble seeing at night. Winter travel was particularly concerning because of slippery conditions at elevations on the 60km stretch of unpaved gravel road and the shorter periods of daylight for the long travel journey.

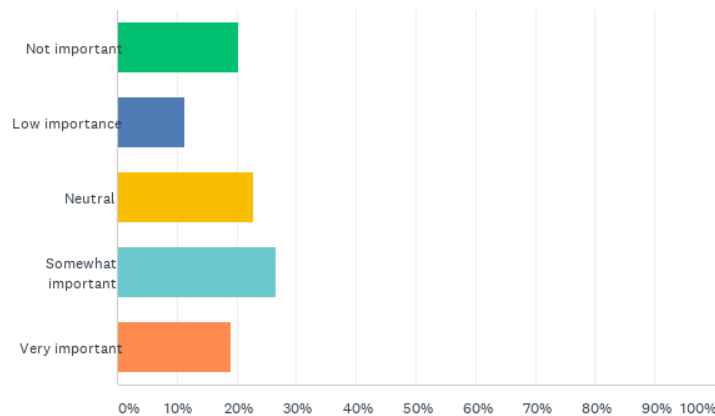
***"The road to Gold River should be paved like the road to Port Alice. Same size community"***



## Are Tahsis seniors interested in a community transportation solution?

The majority of respondents were supportive of a community transit service. 46% of respondents indicated that a service was somewhat or very important to them and 23% were neutral.

Approximately half of respondents were open to using a service depending on the cost.



## How satisfied are Tahsis seniors with the current transportation options within their community?

Most respondents were happy with the transportation situation within the village. Most residents report that they are driving within the town but a sizable portion do walk and bike. There were some concerns regarding long distances, hills and sidewalk conditions, or a lack of sidewalks, for those walking and biking, and road conditions, for those driving. In terms of what could be improved, respondents overwhelmingly supported more benches to help seniors rest and to break up walk lengths. **Specifically, we received over 32 comments about the need for more benches along the main walking routes connecting the town.** There was some support for increased sidewalk/pathway implementation and a bike or golf cart share.

**"I am hoping for transportation to and from Campbell River before I have to give up driving. Otherwise I will have to leave Tahsis. I do not want to leave - Tahsis is my home"**



## Recommendations

The objective of this Study was to settle upon a recommendation that is realistic and achievable for the Village and would have the highest potential for transportation improvement. Additionally, the goal was to generate recommendations that could also be acted upon in a timely way and create realistic change options in the short term.

The course of this work has revealed **three core strategies** that were identified and explored to improve the current transportation environment in Tahsis:

1. **Improving the road**
2. **Trip reduction**
3. **Trip provision**

### **STRATEGY 1 Improving the Road**

The travel experience is highly impacted by the directness and quality of the road network. Improvements to the roadways will decrease the overall travel time and improve the safety and accessibility of the route. This is a longstanding concern for the Village of Tahsis and advocacy initiatives have already been undertaken with the provincial government. It is recommended that this advocacy work continue however, because the success of this initiative is largely outside the immediate influence of Tahsis residents it is recommended that other strategies be explored to ensure the transportation needs of Tahsis seniors are addressed.

**RECOMMENDATION 1.0 Continue to advocate and pursue safety improvements to Head Bay Road**

## STRATEGY 2 Trip Reduction

Another avenue for closing transportation gaps for Tahsis seniors is to decrease the amount of travel that is required of them. Reducing the frequency and need for travel lessens the negative impacts of the travel experience for individuals. There are three ways this could be achieved:

- a) Coordinated Bulk Shopping*
- b) Increased Tahsis Services Days*
- c) Strengthening the Electronic Highway*

### *Coordinated Bulk Shopping*

The survey revealed shopping trips are the primary reason Tahsis residents travel outside of their community (62%). Coordination of shopping needs would reduce the number of trips and may even reduce costs to individuals. Shopping coordination is achieved through both individual orders and larger bulk purchases. Orders could be delivered to residences or to a community site and could be organized as individual orders, as a regular subscription, or in bulk to be redistributed. It was identified in the World Café on October 8<sup>th</sup>, 2020, that several informal services exist to either deliver grocery orders or prepare individual food hampers from bulk purchases. There is an opportunity to increase the efficiency and lower costs of these initiatives through further consolidating and coordinating these services.

**RECOMMENDATION 2.0 Village shall support the community to formalize coordinated bulk shopping services**

### *Tahsis Service Access Days (TSAD)*

There is also an opportunity to further reduce the need for transportation by strengthening partnerships with service providers to increase the type and frequency of services that can be accessed and be offered within the Village. An example of this would be a Dental clinic coming to Tahsis where patient care is coordinated in town. The survey identified that 43% of residents require future travel to Campbell River to access services such as medical, dental and veterinary care. Generating more service days for needed services within Tahsis can be achieved by contacting the local business to determine the threshold or number of appointments needed to generate a service day in the Village.

**RECOMMENDATION 3.0 Village shall designate the Tahsis Seniors Society to launch a campaign to bring more Service Access Days to Tahsis**

### *Strengthening the Electronic Highway*






This strategy is a direct output of the World Café community engagement session where a Tahsis resident demonstrated that after sustaining an injury during the initial stages of the covid-19 pandemic, they were able to access an array of health services virtually, that otherwise would have required them to travel into Campbell River. This included virtual appointments with surgeons, physiotherapy sessions, treatments for arthritis etc. While this was made possible due to the pandemic, it highlighted an opportunity for Tahsis to strengthen the 'electronic highway' in order to reduce the need to travel outside of the community. Tahsis can improve its electronic highway by launching a campaign to get more service providers to offer virtual appointments and to help more Tahsis seniors feel comfortable in accessing the services virtually.

**RECOMMENDATION 4.0 Village shall investigate options to increase virtual services such as establishing a program where volunteers call major service offerings and ask if they can be converted to virtual appointments**

## STRATEGY 3 Trip Provision

There are many variables for the Village of Tahsis to consider when it comes to providing a transportation option for seniors. To highlight these variables, a transportation options matrix has been created to visualize the series of choices.

### Trip Provision - Options Matrix

	Vehicle	Schedule	Drivers	Fares
Village owned Van				
Private Vehicles				
Fixed Schedule				
On-Demand Schedule				
Volunteer Drivers				
Paid/Reimbursed Drivers				
Set Fare				
Donation Only				

The headings across the top row; vehicle, schedule, drivers and fares represent the four categories of choices and the options along the side column represent the decision points.

### Choice 1 – Vehicle

At the highest level there are two main approaches to providing trips: *village owned van* or *private vehicle rideshares*.

A community vehicle would be owned and operated by either the Village or a community group, whereas a private vehicle would operate as a rideshare service like Uber for example.

During community consultation it became clear that a private vehicle operating as a rideshare would not be a viable or realistic option. There were many findings to support this decision, predominantly these include:

- community members did not want to use their own vehicle for this service as they were concerned about the wear and tear/ general maintenance costs that would affect them as well as personal insurance concerns.
- community members were fearful that if the vehicle was not owned and operated by the community, that the standards of safety and cleanliness would be a cause for concern.
- consultation with the Ministry of Transportation & Infrastructure cited that insurance can be costly for private vehicles when operating as a rideshare because it is considered a revenue generating business as opposed to the non-profit community vehicle.

Therefore, it is recommended that a community owned vehicle be explored for the Village of Tahsis. This vehicle could be purchased by the Village through a combination of community grants, donations and fundraising. Alternatively, a new community group such as the Tahsis Transportation Service (TSS) could be established and purchase the vehicle through the same funding means.

**RECOMMENDATION 6.0 Village shall focus transportation efforts towards securing a community owned and operated vehicle**

## Choice 2 – Schedule

Here we compare the options for a *fixed schedule transportation service* versus an *on-demand service*.

*Fixed schedule:* transportation is provided by a regularly scheduled service which is operated in a consistent manner.

Benefits include that once established; very little coordination effort is required. Residents can plan around the scheduled service. The cost of providing this service is also relatively stable and predictable. Drawbacks include that there is potential for inefficiencies as schedules may not align with individual travel needs.



*On-demand:* transportation is requested by individual community members and is then coordinated and grouped with other trips.

Benefits include that the service would be flexible and trip efficiency would be improved as trips are closely aligned with individual transportation needs. Drawbacks include the significant level of coordination it would take to administer a fully on-demand transportation service.

Given the geographical considerations, where transportation is not as simple as a request to travel just a few kilometers down the street, compounded by the survey findings that **62% of Tahsis travelers need at least four to six hours at their destination in Campbell River before a return trip**, it could become highly problematic and expensive to run an on-demand service.

Given the uniqueness of the Tahsis transportation needs, it is recommended that neither an entirely fixed-schedule or on-demand service will prove effective. Rather, it is recommended that a hybrid model be explored whereby the service largely runs on a regular schedule that allows for occasional on-demand services where the need arises. This recommendation is driven by the data which shows the bulk of Tahsis trips, at 68%, are discretionary trips such as shopping, which can be planned and aligned with a regularly scheduled service.

**RECOMMENDATION 5.0 Village shall begin exploring and establishing a hybrid model of transportation that utilizes a regularly scheduled service with the option for on-demand trip requests**

The remaining trips at around **17-32% are trips which the Tahsis resident has limited control over, i.e. a scheduled medical appointment with a specialist**. These trips are very important to the health and well-being of seniors and are vital to seniors being able to successfully age-in-place within their Tahsis community. Such trips can be requested, through the transportation service administration, who will determine the feasibility and look for opportunities to group on-demand trips together where possible. The hybrid model provides the Village of Tahsis with two things that are crucial for seniors' transportation: predictability and flexibility.

---

### Choice 3 – Drivers

Options for securing drivers include creating and hiring paid driver positions, establishing volunteer driver pools or recruiting volunteer drivers who get reimbursed a set dollar value based on the total kilometers driven. Beginning with the latter option of reimbursing drivers on a per km basis, this can be eliminated as it is used during transportation solutions where the volunteer driver is using their own vehicle, such as the Volunteer Transportation Network outlined in the scoping review.

Based on further findings from the scoping review as well as factoring in the limited fiscal resources available for the Village, it is determined that establishing a pool of volunteer drivers is the recommended option. Further support for this decision was obtained during a stakeholder call with the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure who confirmed that there is a significant economic advantage to utilizing a volunteer only driver pool as communities are able to avoid the increased insurance costs that come with paid driver transportation solutions.

Furthermore, the scoping review demonstrated that it is best practice for all volunteer drivers to complete driver screening requirements. This includes obtaining RCMP criminal reference checks for working with vulnerable sector populations and attending mandatory driver training. This helps to ensure the safety of all passengers.

**RECOMMENDATION 7.0 Village shall recruit a pool of volunteer drivers which will be required to obtain the appropriate background checks and complete required training**

### Choice 3 – Fares

To determine whether the Village of Tahsis should charge a fare to passengers, what that fare amount should be and/or whether a donation only system could be applied, both the scoping review and the survey results were analyzed. As noted earlier in this report, Tahsis does have a higher than average number of low-income seniors and affordability of transportation is a significant consideration.

Consequently, the Village of Tahsis has limited economic funding for transportation and an entirely free transportation option would require significant funding from private

donors. There are large variances in the operating and maintenance costs for community transportation solutions. The 2019 Tsa'Xana and Gold River transport Feasibility Study provides rough order of magnitude costs for owning and operating a village vehicle at \$1500 per month. The Village of Sayward was able to purchase a 2016 Dodge Caravan for \$21,000. Therefore, it does not appear feasible that the Village of Tahsis can offer free transportation.

Specific analysis is needed once a vehicle is purchased and the ongoing operating and maintenance costs can be properly itemized. However, the scoping review indicates that a range of \$25 to \$50 per trip would be an appropriate starting point. At a high-level the survey did indicate that Tahsis residents were willing to pay a fare within the lower half of that range at around \$25-\$35 per trip.

**RECOMMENDATION 8.0 Village shall establish a fare for transportation services and explore options for financial relief for those most in need within the community**



## Next Steps

The transportation challenges that Tahsis faces are such that there is no single solution or initiative that will resolve them entirely. Instead, the recommendation is a staged approach, one that will effectively make incremental steps in closing the transportation gaps for seniors.

Below is a high-level recommendation for a tiered approach which ensures continual actionable steps are being taken to improve transportation and quality of life for seniors in Tahsis.

### Stage 1

- continue advocacy for road
- coordinated shopping
- TSS begins Tahsis Service Access Days
- electronic highway
- apply for community vehicle funding

### Stage 2

- purchase vehicle
- recruit pool of volunteer drivers
- create transportation schedule & get feedback from community

### Stage 3

- establish fares
- complete driver training program
- recruit community members to pilot the service
- begin service

In conclusion, O'Hara Aging + Accessibility would like to thank the Village of Tahsis for this opportunity to collaborate on meaningful age-inclusive community solutions and to acknowledge the Union of BC Municipalities for their contribution through the Age-Friendly Communities Grant Program.



**Aislin O'Hara | Principal Consultant**  
246 Bloor St W. Suite 712, Toronto, ON M5S 1V4  
T. 416 721-1972 [oharaconsult.com](http://oharaconsult.com)



**Thank You**





## References

Alberta Provincial Transportation Needs Assessment, 2017.

Conference Board of Canada Report, Managing Mobility: Transportation in an Aging Society 2016.

Council of Canadian Academies Report, Older Canadians on the Move. The Expert Panel on the Transportation Needs of an Aging Population 2017.

Kootenay Seniors Transportation Solutions for Rural Seniors Literature Review 2014.

Office of the Seniors Advocate BC, Seniors Transportation: Affordable, Appropriate and Available 2018.

Statistics Canada, Health Reports: Social Isolation and Mortality Among Canadian Seniors 2020.

Statistics Canada, Profile of Seniors' Transportation Habits 2012.

Strathcona Community Health Network. Social Determinants of Health Fact Sheet: Tahsis 2018.

Village of Tahsis Official Community Plan (OCP) 2019.

Village of Tahsis Official Community Plan (OCP) 2019 Survey by McElhanney Ltd.

World Health Organization, Global Age-Friendly Cities Project, Brochure published by the Public Health Agency of Canada 2006.