

Alberta Specialized Transportation Survey

Summary

The last comprehensive survey of accessible or specialized transportation in Alberta was over 10 years ago. There are over 60 organizations in Alberta providing transportation with wheelchair accessible vehicles. This number does not include care centres with a bus, volunteers using their own vehicles or municipal taxi subsidy programs. Most organizations work in relative isolation, addressing similar problems in different geographic settings.

Rocky View Regional Handibus Society, a charitable organization, provides accessible transportation in rural municipalities adjacent to the City of Calgary. Our buses work in six municipalities with varying degrees of municipal and provincial support. Our organization is challenged with aging equipment, lack of funding/donations/support and increasing demand for service. We surveyed other Alberta transportation providers to find if they faced similar challenges.

Our survey did not attempt to propose completeness of the industry, instead the intention was capture current opinion and scope of various small transportation organizations across the province. A total of 35 organizations responded to the questionnaire. While most respondents were handibus/ handivan organizations, taxi programs and volunteer driver programs also responded.

Results suggest that many communities in Alberta share the same frustrations. Several respondents commented on the simple need for better funding. The majority of providers desire further collaboration, however there are few avenues to facilitate such collaboration. Others noted the implementation of several significant provincial strategies –all dependant on accessible transportation-- yet no provincial responsibility for accessible rural transportation exists.

Most alarming is the advanced age of equipment. Many communities are using equipment older than ten years. In 1992, Canadian Standards Association developed the D409 safety standard for vehicles transporting wheelchair. Some vehicles built prior to D409 may still be in use with safety systems from an earlier era. Older equipment is less reliable and more expensive to operate. In a climate of poor funding, many groups find themselves paying for immediate repairs with funds earmarked to replace the aging bus.

Notable Findings

- 75% feel their local municipality is supportive of accessible transportation efforts.
- 67% feel they must replace a vehicle in the next 18 months.
- 65% of organizations feel they experience more demand than capacity.
- 65% feel their grant requirements have become more cumbersome and time consuming.
- 60% of organizations want more training for their drivers
- 33% feel the province is supportive of accessible transportation.
- 43% are using a vehicle older than 10 years.
- 30% indicate that their “newest” vehicle is older than 10 years of age.

Our 35 respondents provide at least 250,000 trips per year. The Province should consider extending more resources to this community infrastructure resource.

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Survey Overview

Survey Sample

This questionnaire was originally sent to some 35 organizations operating Handibus/Handivans in small town/ rural Alberta. Further circulation was advertised on the website of the FCSS Association of Alberta and through the “MuniMall” weekly electronic newsletter. Approximately 1/3 of respondents used the online version of the survey. A total of 34 organizations completed the questionnaire.

Instructions Provided To Respondents

In preparation for some lobbying efforts with Alberta Municipal Affairs, Rocky View Regional Handibus Society would like your assistance with this brief survey. Results will be shared with survey participants and the Alberta Government. Contact information will not be disclosed unless you consent to such release (see question 25). Any questions or comments contact Paul Siller (403) 948-2887 or email manager@rockyviewbus.ca. Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. This survey is also available online at: www.rockyviewbus.ca

In addition to your agency's contact information, this brief survey features about 25 multiple choice or short answer questions. Answer questions as they relate to your organization. For most answers, check the boxes most applicable to you or fill in the blanks. Question 25 is mandatory on the web version of this survey.

Respondent Metrics

Respondents: 35
First Response: 10/7/03 05:10 PM
Last Response: 11/19/03 03:49 PM

Survey Results

The following is a tabular depiction of the responses to each survey question. Additional comments provided by respondents, if any, are included after each table.

1. We experience more transportation demand than our present capacity.

26.5%	9	Strongly Agree
38.2%	13	Agree
11.8%	4	Neither
17.6%	6	Disagree
5.9%	2	Strongly Disagree

2. The province is supportive of accessible transportation needs.

33.3%	11	Agree
18.2%	6	Neither
30.3%	10	Disagree
18.2%	6	Strongly Disagree

3. Our local municipality is supportive of accessible transportation needs.

23.5%	8	Strongly Agree
52.9%	18	Agree
5.9%	2	Neither
17.6%	6	Disagree

4. There has been a decrease in financial donations.

15.2%	5	Strongly Agree
33.3%	11	Agree
30.3%	10	Neither
18.2%	6	Disagree
3.0%	1	Strongly Disagree

5. There has been a decrease in volunteer hours.

9.1%	3	Strongly Agree
24.2%	8	Agree
33.3%	11	Neither
33.3%	11	Disagree

6. We want more collaboration with other transportation groups.

26.5%	9	Strongly Agree
61.8%	21	Agree
11.8%	4	Neither

7. We want more training for our drivers and volunteers.

12.1%	4	Strongly Agree
45.5%	15	Agree
24.2%	8	Neither
18.2%	6	Disagree

8. We must replace a vehicle in the next 18 months.

42.4%	14	Strongly Agree
24.2%	8	Agree
9.1%	3	Neither
15.2%	5	Disagree
9.1%	3	Strongly Disagree

9. Grant requirements (applications and reporting) have become more cumbersome and time consuming.

37.5%	12	Strongly Agree
28.1%	9	Agree
25.0%	8	Neither
9.4%	3	Disagree

10. We need computer technology assistance (hardware/ software/ training).

12.1%	4	Strongly Agree
30.3%	10	Agree
18.2%	6	Neither
33.3%	11	Disagree
6.1%	2	Strongly Disagree

11. How many municipalities do you operate in?

62.9%	22	1
14.3%	5	2
11.4%	4	3
5.7%	2	4
5.7%	2	5 or more

12. What category best describes the nature of your organization?

62.9%	22	Non-profit organization operating a wheelchair accessible vehicle ("handibus")
25.7%	9	Municipal agency / authority
5.7%	2	Other:
2.9%	1	Care facility operating a wheelchair accessible vehicle
2.9%	1	Non-profit organization operating a regular vehicle

Comments/Notes for "Other:"

Community agency/care facility/service clubs

Private individuals use their private vehicle and then are reimbursed by our special transportation fund.

13. How would you describe your operation?

51.4%	18	Rural and urban operation
28.6%	10	A rural operation
20.0%	7	An urban operation

14. What does your organization consider as a "special need" (multiple responses)

100.0%	34 of 34 respondents indicated	"Seniors"
91.1%	31 of 34 respondents indicated	"Physical disability"
76.5%	26 of 34 respondents indicated	"Developmental disability"
70.6%	24 of 34 respondents indicated	"Must use a wheelchair"
58.8%	20 of 34 respondents indicated	"Balance problems"
58.8%	20 of 34 respondents indicated	"Cannot walk 250 m"
52.9%	18 of 34 respondents indicated	"Chronic illness"
50.0%	17 of 34 respondents indicated	"Inability to drive"
29.4%	10 of 34 respondents indicated	"Low income"
20.6%	7 of 34 respondents indicated	"Youth"
8.8%	3 of 34 respondents indicated	"Other:"

Comments/Notes for "Other:"

handicapped of all ages
 seniors (65+) & disabled
 service supplied to all individuals with disabilities

15. What are your target age groups?

100%	35 of 35 respondents indicated	Seniors
71.4%	25 of 35 respondents indicated	Adults
37.1%	13 of 35 respondents indicated	Children/youth (K-12)
25.7%	9 of 35 respondents indicated	Pre-schoolers

16. Our transportation program principally exists for:

68.6%	24	General public
17.1%	6	Other:
14.3%	5	Our program participants

Comments/Notes for "Other:"

Local Seniors
 mandate--seniors & those of all ages with special needs
 People receiving active cancer treatment
 School contracts/general public/our program participants
 Seniors & People with Disabilities
 Seniors (65+) & disabled

17. How many vehicles do you operate / use?

1	(15 responses tallied)
2	(7 responses tallied)
3	(2 responses tallied)
4	(3 responses tallied)
5	(1 responses tallied)
6	(1 responses tallied)
8	(1 responses tallied)
20	(1 responses tallied)
n/a	(3 responses tallied)

18. How many wheelchair accessible vehicles do you operate / use

0	(2 responses tallied)
1	(17 responses tallied)
2	(6 responses tallied)
3	(3 responses tallied)
4	(1 responses tallied)
8	(1 responses tallied)
13	(1 responses tallied)
17	(1 responses tallied)
n/a	(3 responses tallied)

19. What year is your oldest vehicle?

1977	(1 responses tallied)	1995	(2 responses tallied)
1986	(1 responses tallied)	1997	(2 responses tallied)
1987	(2 responses tallied)	1998	(2 responses tallied)
1989	(2 responses tallied)	1999	(2 responses tallied)
1990	(6 responses tallied)	2000	(2 responses tallied)
1992	(1 responses tallied)	2001	(2 responses tallied)
1993	(1 responses tallied)	2002	(1 responses tallied)
1994	(3 responses tallied)	n/a	(2 responses tallied)

20. What year is your newest vehicle?

1987	(2 responses tallied)	1998	(1 responses tallied)
1989	(1 responses tallied)	1999	(4 responses tallied)
1990	(2 responses tallied)	2000	(5 responses tallied)
1992	(2 responses tallied)	2001	(6 responses tallied)
1994	(1 responses tallied)	2002	(3 responses tallied)
1995	(2 responses tallied)	n/a	(2 responses tallied)

21. How many one-way trips did you provide in 2002?

- 90
- 100
- 500
- 650
- 700
- 806
- 980
- 1200
- 1500 (2 responses tallied)
- 1966
- 2600
- 2644
- 2900
- 3854
- 4100
- 5198
- 5500
- 5600
- 6000
- 6500
- 8474
- 9400
- 11300
- 13458
- 15676
- 19749
- 115000
- not specified (4 responses)

Ed. Note: This question created confusion. Counting passenger activity in terms of “one-way trips” is a transit industry standard. Unfortunately, some communities only disclosed the “single trips” from their total activity. Follow-up may be required.

22. What are your top three expenses? (multiple responses)

29.8%	28	Staffing costs
27.7%	26	Fuel
25.5%	24	Repair & maintenance
11.7%	11	Insurance
3.2%	3	Capital purchase
2.1%	2	Admin/office

23. What are your top three sources of revenue? (multiple responses)

28.3%	26	User / passenger fees
18.5%	17	Donations
16.3%	15	Accessible transportation grant
13.0%	12	Fee for service contract
9.8%	9	Other:
8.7%	8	Family & Community Support Services
2.2%	2	Other fundraising
2.2%	2	Volunteer efforts
1.1%	1	Casino / bingo fundraising

Comments/Notes for "Other:"

- Community Lottery Grant
- Legion and fundraising
- municipal contribution
- Municipality (2 responses)
- Tax revenue
- Town of Coaldale
- Town of Tofield
- Town of Brooks

Ed. Note: Many small organizations seem unaware of the source of their municipal funding.

24. Please contact us for any follow-up surveys.

94.3%	33	Yes
5.7%	2	No

25. Please post our contact information for the use of other groups.

91.4%	32	Yes
8.6%	3	No

26. Do you have any comments or suggestions?

- Question. #17 six volunteer drivers use their own vehicles Question #22 our only cost is to reimburse the volunteer drivers on a set fee table based on distance travelled
- 8474 trips (of which 1578 were w/c passengers)
- Drivers all use their own personal vehicles.
- Everyone agrees that all seniors programs depend upon transportation yet no government organization is willing to fund the same.
- Handivan is falling apart and needs to be replaced. No capital grants available to replace it. May have to discontinue the service.
- I think it very necessary the provincial government get involved/financially support special need transportation in the province.
- Important to maintain contact with other transportation services.
- Need a lot more Government funding.
- Our rural community (Raymond) is approx. 32 Kms from city of Lethbridge. Residents need transportation to doctor's appointments, etc. For some residents of Raymond this is their only way of transportation. We will be needing a new Handibus in the next few years -- No funding available.
- Our service is mostly in town use. We do transport to Red Deer, Ponoka, Edmonton and some other areas for medical purposes. We are all volunteer drivers and support persons. (secretary and treasurer) Board members
- Please provide us with survey results.
- repair and maintenance is highest cost (old bus).
- Thank you for mailing us the survey.
- The County of Rocky View to provide Handi bus services between Strathmore and Calgary. Or would they be interested in supplementing the Strathmore Handibus Association as we get numerous requests from Langdon and Chestermere.
- The MD uses contract operators (taxis, handibus) - not all parts of the MD are serviced by handibus or taxis - location dependent.
- The provision of accessible transportation is in more demand each day. We must be able to achieve a delivery model equal to other forms of public transportation with ease of acquiring monies to do so. This is not just a municipal responsibility, it's a national responsibility. We need to be collective in our quest to achieve these goals.
- We are also a registered charity. Our main focus is on Seniors and Handicapped of ANY age, but most of our clients are Seniors.
- Three of the six municipalities do not financially support us yet they still refer residents to us.
- We do contract to a private firm to supply the service, with equipment owned by the contractor. We deal with the public to book and schedule transportation.
- We have a Taxi Pass Program.
- We have started a drive to raise money to purchase a new Handivan.
- We operate a program which relies on contracts (taxi companies) to provide transportation to clients)
- We operate an on demand service for Persons with Disabilities and for Senior's in the Town of Edson. I find the service is under utilized. Groups should be encouraged to amalgamate their services. Providing a free service results in a lot of abuse but if it's more than the taxi we get a lot of complaints.

Respondents

Bashaw Bus Society
 Big Hill Senior Citizens Activity Society, Cochrane
 Blindman Handivan Society, Rimbey
 Bonnyville and Area Community Handi Bus
 Canadian Cancer Society, Calgary and area
 Claresholm Transportation Society
 Coaldale & District Handibus Association
 County of Athabasca
 Edson Senior's Transportation Society
 High River Handi-Bus Society
 Innisfail FCSS,
 Leduc Special Transportation Association
 Lethbridge Handibus Association
 MD of Foothills No. 31 FCSS
 Pincher Creek Handi Bus Society
 Provost Lions Community Handi-Van Service Society
 Raymond Handibus
 Rocky View Regional Handibus Society, Rural Calgary
 Rose City Handi-Van Society, Camrose
 Ryley Sunshine Club (senior's group)
 Spruce Grove Specialized Transit Service
 St Paul Abilities Network
 Stettler & District Handibus Society
 Strathcona County Accessible Transportation (SCAT)
 Strathmore Handibus Association, Strathmore/ Wheatland County
 Tofield Handivan Society
 Town of Brooks
 Town of Canmore FCSS
 Town of Carstairs
 Town of High River FCSS
 Town of Hinton, Family & Community Support Services
 Town of Lacombe
 Town of Stony Plain
 Valley Bus Society, Drumheller
 WJ Cadzow Health Centre, Lac La Biche

Credits/ Contact Information

All respondents are thanked for their support. This survey was pursued by Rocky View Regional Handibus with in-house resources and volunteers. The original questionnaire is available from our website. Cross-tabulations and “drill-down” are available upon request.

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