

TRANSPORTATION NETWORK STUDY
AN EXPLORATION OF EXISTING TRANSPORTATION
NETWORKS IN BROOKS AND COUNTY OF NEWELL

Phase I

October 2013



Report Prepared by Grasslands Regional FCSS

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Introduction

Grasslands Regional FCSS is conducting exploratory research and supporting the community coming together to have preliminary discussions regarding transportation issues in our area. Over the past few years the issue of access to transportation from and to rural communities and regional services such as specialized health care, government offices such as Citizenship and Immigration Canada, post-secondary institutions, the voluntary sector and within Brooks has been discussed by community residents in public forums, reports to Councils, surveys etc.

The needs of rural/urban, rural and small community residents to access transportation systems are not unique to the Newell Region, including the City of Brooks. National organizations such as the Federation of Canadian Municipalities have identified the lack of transportation as an issue in maintaining the viability of rural communities and encouraging economic development in rural Canada. FCSS programs throughout Alberta have also identified access to transportation as a major issue.

At the present time, there are multiple transportation networks throughout the Newell Region. The approach applied in the past has been for each to pursue an independent course for delivering a focused service within each organization or business.

The project will pursue broad objectives and help identify the means to address current and long term transportation needs within the Newell Region in an innovative, cost effective and efficient manner.

Designed as a two phase project with potential for additional phases, key objectives include:

Phase I: To research needs and map out existing transportation networks

Phase II: To provide preliminary opportunity to discuss transportation in the Newell Region.

This report is part of Phase I and is focused on identifying current transportation networks and needs identified by service provider and key stakeholders. Results of this research will inform a Transportation Forum (Phase II) to be held in on October 22, 2013 at the Brooks Campus. The forum will present the research findings and create the opportunity for a regional response to the transportation issues with consideration given to current financial and mandate constraints. Results will inform all levels of government, service providers and the health, education, business and social service sectors.

Definitions transportation networks

For the purpose of this report, transportation networks was defined as *all the ways that residents of Brooks and County of Newell get to work, school, programs and services and shopping*. It includes horses, walking, long boarding/skateboarding, cycling, travel by car, carpooling, taxis, public transportation that is regularly scheduled, agency/employer transportation service and doorstep service such as the City and County bus services.

Exploratory Research Methodology:

Information was collected through a variety of means. Background information on rural transportation and models from other communities was gathered to inform the data collection in Brooks and County of Newell. Some of these resources can be found in the reference section at the end of the report. 2011 Census and National Household Survey results were examined and are included in the report as they relate to transportation network. Over 30 persons were interviewed in person, through phone calls or by setting a series of questions in an e-mail. Some of these interviews lasted over an hour while others were of shorter duration. A Transportation Networks Survey was sent out to community organizations (through Survey Monkey) asking about what transportation issues they had identified and recommendations for solutions. There were 33 respondents. A shorter more focussed survey was sent to the municipalities within the County.

The data from the above data collection methods was gathered and used to inform the report below. When necessary, information from key informants was verified through phone calls, internet search or further conversations.

A. Existing Transportation Networks

Bike: There are no bike lanes or purposely built bike trails or commuting paths in Brooks. Riders mostly ride on sidewalks on the main roads within the City of Brooks, however, bicycles with a wheel diameter more than 20-inches should not be riding on the sidewalk according to provincial laws. Many of the adult riders do not wear a helmet. Bike racks are difficult to find in most buildings including the hospital, shopping centers, housing, ESL classes etc. Pathways that link subdivisions often do not have the ramps that facilitate the use of the pathways by cyclists. There are no bicycle repair shops in Brooks but the three shops that sell bicycles have a supply of parts (inner tubes, tires etc.).

A large number of the population of Brooks are newly arrived to our community and Canada and appear to use a bicycle during the warmer weather as a primary mode of transportation to various activities.

In addition to two wheel bikes used by children and adults, there are some seniors who use scooters to get around town. These scooters ride along the sidewalks and allow seniors a degree of mobility and independence.

The EcoBrooks Committee sponsors a Bike to Work Week in September to encourage residents to consider using the bike as an alternate mode of transport and to promote safe riding. A Bike Safety Clinic is held in conjunction with Bike Week and free helmets are given to children.

Generally key informants had not considered cycling as an alternate transportation network or considered the role that their organization might have in promoting this transportation method.

<http://www.commutebybike.com/2008/07/09/top-5-rules-for-riding-on-the-sidewalk/>

<http://www.transportation.alberta.ca/2046.htm>

<http://www.calgary.ca/Transportation/TP/Pages/Cycling/Cycling-Education-and-Safety/Roadway-laws-and-etiquette.aspx#>

Long Board/Skateboard: Young adults can be seen around Brooks using their long boards or skateboards to get around. They use the sidewalks or roadways and weave in out of traffic sharing the road with bikes, walkers and cars. Acceptance of this method of transport might involve similar strategies as that needed to encourage safe cycling and walking within the City of Brooks, Hamlets and Villages. It should be noted that for many young people and young adults, long boards or skateboards may be their only method of transportation.

Walking: Residents without cars walk to shops, medical appointments, to services such as Alberta Works, to pick up and take children to school and to community agency services. For those without access to a car and without the funds for taxis, walking is the most popular alternative. A large percentage of walkers are women often with toddlers in tow or seniors. Some of the new residents come from background where walking was the only mode of transport. The difference is that walking

Neighborhood Design Affects Walking Activity

A study comparing neighbourhood features and travel activity by the Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC 2008) found that the highest proportion of pedestrian trips (18%) is found in areas where a path is relatively more direct to nearby retail and recreational destinations on foot than by car. The lowest proportion (10%) of trips occurs on foot in places where there is a low degree of pedestrian connectivity. By comparison, places with both high levels of pedestrian and vehicle connectivity have only about 14% mode share on foot. These results suggest that the relative connectivity of pedestrian and vehicular modes is an important predictor of the choice to walk.

<http://www.vtqi.org/tdm/tdm3.htm>

Living Streets (2011), Making the Case for Investment in the Walking Environment, Living Streets Program (www.livingstreets.org.uk), University of the West of England and Cavill Associates; www.livingstreets.org.uk/index.php/tools/required/files/download?fid=1668

during the winter months can be dangerous due to the cold, snow and unplowed sidewalks. A number of respondents expressed concerns about newcomers walking in winter without adequate footwear.

There are areas of the City of Brooks without sidewalks or safe walking areas. In rural areas, pedestrians share the road with cars, trucks etc. Safety is always a concern when there are no sidewalks or when the sidewalks are not properly maintained in winter.

The Meadowlark subdivision in the City of Brooks, while home to an affordable housing project and a large number of moderate priced homes, has no retail shops or services easily accessible by walking.

Riding horses: Riding horses might be overlooked as a transportation method in Brooks and County of Newell but there are many residents who maintain and ride horses. While we are no longer used to seeing horses in our city or hamlets, it is a valid transportation method.

Car: The recent federal census pointed out that 94% of Brooks residents use a car to commute to work. Obtaining a car (after obtaining a driver license) is an important step for newcomers to our communities from overseas. Without access to a reliable car, it is a challenge to shop for groceries, go to medical appointments in and out of town, and obtain services from community agencies and federal and provincial departments. For residents of hamlets or rural areas, there are very limited services unless they can get to Brooks, Bassano or Medicine Hat. Cars/trucks are needed to get to oil and gas employment sites and for most employment. The main employer in Brooks offers a subsidized bus system for the A Shift (day) and B Shift (evening) employees.

Driving can be a challenge during the winter in rural areas especially in areas that are not cleared as they are not designated school bus routes.

Brooks has a large number of newcomers to Canada who have not had Canadian driving licenses prior to moving to Alberta and therefore must participate in the Graduated Licensing Program. While it is possible for persons holding licenses from other jurisdictions to be exempted from the Graduated Licensing Program requirements,

obtaining original documents and other proofs of driving ability is a challenge for newcomers from some African and Asian countries. If a new immigrant must participate in the Graduated Licensing Program it means they need to have another fully licensed driver with them at all times, cannot drive between midnight and 5:00am (Shift B of the JBS plant ends around 1:00am) and have a zero alcohol level.

Insurance is required for all drivers and in Alberta it is privatized and therefore careful research to find out the best rates is required. New drivers usually pay higher rates because there is no record of their driving. These rates can be problematic for newcomers who face other financial pressures. This can make owning and running a vehicle prohibitive for newcomers who come here to work at the JBS plant as permanent residents or Temporary Foreign Workers.

Parking is not an issue in Brooks and the larger stores (Wal-Mart, NoFrills, and Canadian Tire) have large parking lots to accommodate in and out of town shoppers. The main employer in Brooks (JBS) has a large parking lot that can meet the needs of its entire staff.

There is one car rental agency located outside of Brooks – Discount Car and Truck Rentals¹

Carpooling: Carpooling (also known as car-sharing, ride-sharing, lift-sharing and covoiturage), is usually defined as the sharing of car journeys so that more than one person travels in a car. By having more people using one vehicle, carpooling reduces each person's travel costs such as fuel costs, tolls, and the stress of driving. Carpooling is also seen as a more environmentally friendly and sustainable way to travel as sharing journeys reduces carbon emissions, traffic congestion on the roads, and the need for parking spaces. In Brooks and County of Newell carpooling is done out of necessity rather than a concern for the environment or traffic congestion on the roads. It is the only way that some residents have to go to work, buy groceries, socialize or go to medical appointments.

There are two types of carpooling that is prevalent in Brooks and County of Newell: (i) the informal carpooling where a group of friends ride together to work or shops; (ii) when a person acts more like an unlicensed taxi and charges a monthly fee or a fee per ride to the user.

Carpooling is an important transportation network in the region. The National Household Survey (2011)² indicated that 18% of Brooks' residents commute to work as a passenger in a car/van driven by someone else. Carpooling is a crucial component of employee transport to the JBS Plant. Carpooling is a prevalent method of transport for member of immigrant communities to get groceries, get to medical appointments or needed services.

There are no formal methods in the community such as a Share Ride Board, website or program at the JBS plant or other employer to identify potential carpooling partners. Some companies elsewhere have

¹ <http://www.discountcar.com/English/Locations.cfm?Country=Canada&city=Brooks>

² Statistics Canada. 2013. Brooks, CA, Alberta (Code 806) (table). National Household Survey (NHS) Profile. 2011 National Household Survey. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 99-004-XWE. Ottawa. Released September 11, 2013. <http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/nhs-enm/2011/dp-pd/prof/index.cfm?Lang=E>

adopted carpooling as an important strategy and provide company incentive to carpoolers such as reserved parking.

Employer sponsored transportation network: There is only one employer in Brooks that provides a bus system for their employees. JBS Foods Canada meat packing plant is located eight (8) kilometers from Brooks along the TransCanada Highway and employs about 2500 employees in three shifts. The employer provides a bus that picks up employees who work the A and B shifts. There is no bus for employees of the C shift (overnight) or who work for the contracted cleaning company. The bus service started a few years ago when the company began to hire Temporary Foreign Workers (TWFs) who come to Canada for a limited number of years - initially the bus system was only for these workers but company policy was changed a couple years ago and all employees have access to the bus. The cost for employees is \$1.50 per ride and bus tickets are available through payroll deduction. The company subsidises the cost of running the bus. The buses are usually not full as employees with cars or with access to a carpool prefer using that method as the bus takes longer to get to the plant. A special bus run takes Temporary Foreign Workers (TFW) to their English as a Second Language Class at the plant.

The Company also provides transportation to employees who live in Medicine Hat.

Public Transit Services: Neither the County of Newell nor the City of Brooks has a scheduled transportation service offered to the general public. There are two services that operate for persons with disabilities and seniors.

a. **NCAGS³ Handibus (City of Brooks):** The City of Brooks contracts with the Newell Community Action Group Society to provide services with two wheelchair accessible buses. The City owns the buses, maintains them, insurances the buses/van and pays for the fuel. Funds for administration and staff salary come from ticket sales and other grants. This organization serves seniors (60+) and residents within Brooks that have a physical or cognitive disability. They only operate within Brooks and take clients to appointments, shops or to services/programs. They also have a contract with Grasslands Regional School board to transport 3 and 4 year olds to preschool. They also serve 42 older children K-12 within Brooks delivering them to schools. The contract with Grasslands Regional School Board severely limits the time the buses are available for seniors and persons with disabilities.

Service operates generally from 9:00am to 2:30pm Monday to Friday. Cost of one way trip is \$4.00. The users must fill out an application form but access to the service is not means tested. Ridership is spread evenly between seniors and persons with disabilities. There are about 380-450 riders per month, or from 5-30 per day (excluding children going to school). While the organization prefers to have riders book the ride beforehand, they will go and pick up people even on short notice. There are some planned trips such as the ones from senior lodges to go grocery shopping once a week. They used to do churches on Sunday but it was difficult to find groups to support the cost of this service. The

³ <http://ncag.ca>

organization has not been able to fund extended hours for the service such as 4:00pm to 9:00pm or weekends.

They do not rent their vehicles when not in use. The organization employs 2 full time drivers and one part time driver.

Seniors and social service organizations have expressed frustrations when interviewed or responding to the online survey as to the limited time that the buses are available for seniors or adults with disabilities.

b. County of Newell⁴ Mini-Bus: This service is operated by the County of Newell primarily for seniors and people with disabilities but anyone can use the bus if there is room. There is one full time driver and one part time driver. The bus leaves Brooks every day and travels to pick up riders in a different hamlet or part of the County, brings them to Brooks and takes them home in the afternoon. Riders are picked up at their home, even if they are in rural areas and delivered to various stops in town. The bus drivers work with the riders in terms of grouping appointments etc. and a schedule for the day.

The ride is \$5 for a return trip. On occasion, the driver will let someone on for free if it is known that they have financial problems, for example they are going to the Brooks Food Bank. Riders call the day before to arrange for pick up.

Ridership has declined drastically over the past couple of years. Current riders are primarily seniors over 80years. Average riders per trip are about 3 in a bus that could hold 16. The bus has been in existence for 20 years. For a brief time it was run by NACGS but this did last long as there were complaints about the service.

The bus drivers are acting as senior outreach workers, ensuring that they check up on seniors if they do not call for Handibus service if they are regular riders, carrying the groceries right into the house and listening to their stories on the bus. The trip is often the only time that some isolated seniors have someone to visit with.

One of the bus drivers has organized outings for the Sunrise Garden seniors. These seniors do not have access to a bus and therefore, no way to go on outings. Many of them are County of Newell residents that had to move to Sunrise Garden for health reasons. The driver takes them on occasional Monday afternoon outings around the county and charges them \$5 for the trip. She has had up to 15 seniors on a trip. The Gem riders organized themselves to go to Rosebud for the matinee and they were charged \$10 for the trip. There seemed to be a real need for organized senior outings.

<p>Current Schedule: Monday – Tilley and area, Tuesday – Scandia and area, Wednesday – Gem and area and on alternate week Patricia and area, Thursday – Rollins Hill and area, Friday – Bassano and area</p>

Out of Town Services:

⁴ <http://countyofnewell.ab.ca/mini-bus-service>

Greyhound⁵: They operate a twice a day service into Calgary, Medicine Hat and with a connection in Calgary to Lethbridge. It takes about 2.5 hours to Calgary, 1.15 hours to Medicine Hat and 6-8 hours to Lethbridge because there is a 4-6 hours wait in Calgary for a connecting bus. The buses to Calgary leave Brooks at 4:45am and 4:10pm. The buses to Medicine Hat leave Brooks at 2:10am and 2:45pm. There is no local run, the buses into Brooks are those doing the cross Canada trips along the TransCanada Highway and this is the reason they leave Brooks at the time they do. The cost is \$44.10 to Calgary, \$29.70 to Medicine Hat and \$82.50 to Lethbridge.

Prairie Sprinter Shuttle Service⁶: This service uses a *Mercedes Sprinter* 12 seater with a high roof for comfort. It is run by a private company. There is one run that leaves Medicine Hat and goes to Calgary via Brooks, Bassano and Strathmore. It picks up at Brooks at 8:30am and arrives in Calgary between 11:00am and noon. It picks up passengers back to Medicine Hat between 2:00pm and 3:30pm. The cost to Calgary from Brooks is \$45 and from Bassano \$35. Children receive a discount. On average 4/5 persons per week use the service from Brooks to Calgary and one or two persons per week go to Medicine Hat from Brooks.

J & L Shuttle Services⁷: They provide two daily mini bus services to and from Medicine Hat to Calgary and one to Lethbridge. They also make stops throughout the County including Brooks. Their buses can also be chartered. The cost is Medicine Hat to Brooks \$40, Brooks to Calgary \$50 and Bassano to Calgary \$40. The first bus leaves Medicine Hat between 7 and 8am and the second one between 11:00am and noon returning between 12:30pm and 2:00pm and the second bus after 5:00pm.

Traxx Coachlines: This Company discontinued its daily service between Medicine Hat and Calgary via Brooks on August 31, 2013.

School (K-12) Transportation:

There are a number of school boards with schools in the County of Newell and the City of Brooks. Grasslands Regional School Board (Public) operates schools throughout the County and has about 46 different bus routes. Christ the Redeemer School Board (Catholic) operates three schools in Brooks and 15 routes contracted to Southland Transportation. The Greater Southern Public Francophone Education Board operates one school in Brooks. In addition there is one Christian School (Newell Christian School) located outside of Brooks near Duchess with a transportation program. There is a Seven Day Adventist School located at the Lakeside Recreation Center. Prairie Rose School board also buses students into Brooks from the Jenner area.

School Boards receive funds from the provincial government for each student that lives 2.1 km away from the school. They have to ensure there is a seat for that student on the bus although many high

⁵ <https://www.greyhound.com/farefinder/step1.aspx>.

⁶ <http://www.praoriesprinterinc.ca/about-us/>

⁷ <http://www.jandlshuttle.com/>

school students choose to use alternate transportation such as their own car/truck. Generally, School Boards will ensure that the bus is as full as possible by the time it reaches the school and they arrange routes to ensure student safety and comfort. School Boards have a challenging time to find bus drivers as the job is very part time, pays relatively poorly and involves being responsible for driving children in sometimes adverse weather.

Grasslands Regional Public School Board⁸:

Approximately half of the 3600 students are bused. The School board is very liberal in its application of transportation policies and only charges parents if the student is within 1.5 km rather than the 2.1 km limit set by the province. Of the total bus routes, there are 17 in Brooks and about 30 in the rural areas. Some buses collect students in rural areas only while other buses collect students in rural areas and then pick up students in Brooks. Some parents choose to send their children to Brooks rather than their local school. The longest bus route takes about 50 minutes to drive - Bassano to Brooks. It is up to the driver to decide if the weather conditions are unsafe for them to drive (i.e. Blizzards or uncleared snow-covered roads). The Board policy is that if it is under minus 35 degree the buses do not operate. The bus drivers are responsible to inform parents and the school principal(s).

The district owns 70 buses of different sizes ranging from 30 to 82 passengers, 3 students to a seat. There are two buses that are wheelchair accessible – one is reserved for a student in a rural area. The School Board plans on buying another wheel chair accessible bus. There are two buses that are called *transition buses* and are used for children with special needs who are coded High Functioning. NCAG transports student with special needs s to their programs within Brooks.

In Brooks all K/grade 1 students are currently bused to Central School which is where all Kindergarten (K) and Grade 1 students attend school. This will change next year with the opening of the new school and all elementary schools in Brooks will have K and Grade 1 classes.

Bus drivers get paid a set rate per day plus a bonus for longer routes based on kilometers driven. Some work less than 2 hours while most work 3-4 hours per day. Bus drivers and mechanics are not unionized.

The buses are not rented to outside groups due to a School Board policy. They can only be used by schools for extracurricular activities. Parents or adults are not allowed on buses during the regular bus routes. Parents can only ride the buses when they are chaperones for extracurricular activities. Apparently this is an Alberta Education Ministry directive.

There is only one afternoon bus therefore students who take the bus cannot participate in extracurricular activities unless their parents want to pick them up.

Christ the Redeemer Separate School Board⁹: The service is run by Southland Transportation using 72 passenger buses that bring students to their schools in Brooks. There are a total of 12 routes. Most of the buses are full by the time they reach Brooks. Two of the buses pick up high school students within Brooks, drop them at the school and turn around to pick up elementary school students. They only use a handicap bus when there is a student who needs transportation. Approximately 60% of their students

⁸ <http://www.grasslands.ab.ca/>

⁹ <http://www.redeemer.ab.ca/Pages/default.aspx>

are bused. Of that number 75% live in Brooks and 25% in rural areas. They only have one afternoon bus so parents have to make alternative arrangements if the student participates in extra-curricular activities. However if feasible the bus will drop off students to an alternate destination such as after school care or the home of another parent. The Board is busing students that live less than 2.1 km from the school because they found that many of their parents are new immigrants and found it a challenge to have their children walk to school. However parents have to pay a fee if they live within the 2.1km limit.

This board operates on a reduced schedule on Fridays to permit staff meetings and thereby reducing the number of professional days. They also schedule Spring Break so that it fits within the Easter holidays.

The high school St. Joseph Collegiate bought a 24 seat bus a few years ago because they could not find enough parents with the time and appropriate license to drive students involved in sports to events. Southland buses were not available because they are driving students back home. Appropriate licensed staff drive the bus.

The Board would be willing to collaborate with the City and other groups if there was public transportation available.

Greater Southern Public Francophone Education Board¹⁰: This board has one school in Brooks that is co-located with a Grasslands Regional School Board elementary school (Griffin Park). This board buses about 85% of its 69 students. They contract their transportation needs to Southlands and use 2 buses to transport students from Brooks and Duchess. The students must live more than 1.2 km from the school.

Newell Christian School¹¹: This independent school has 59 students and 75% to 80% are bused. The school has one 72 seat bus and picks up students from Brooks, Tilley, and Duchess. They have their own driver. Their bus is not rented out to other groups.

Grocery and Medicine Deliveries: None of the large grocery stores (Safeway, NoFrills, IGA, and Wal-Mart) have a delivery service. The only delivery service that has been identified is Apollo Delivery. This owner operated service has a number of drivers who shop, pickup and delivery groceries, medicine and other items. It cost about \$7 per delivery within Brooks. The service is not available outside of Brooks. The gentleman who runs the service tries to meet the needs of his clients and especially the needs of seniors and others in the community who are more vulnerable.

The Brooks Food Bank does not deliver food hampers. Some of the service providers will go and pick up food for their clients at the Brooks Food Bank if they do not have access to transportation.

¹⁰ <http://www.conseildusud.ab.ca/> This school board merged with Conseil scolaire catholique et francophone du Sud de l'Alberta to form the Conseil scolaire FrancoSud on August 30, 2013

¹¹ <http://www.newellchristianschool.com/>

Taxi/Cabs: There are currently three taxi companies¹² in Brooks/County of Newell- Klein Taxi, Brooks Taxi and City Taxi. A total of 24 taxis operate in Brooks. About 13 cabs operate during the day, 13 during the weekends and 5 at night. Drivers are sub-contractors and take in 50% of the taxi revenue. Usually taxis use the meter (different meter rate for each company) but have flat rates for rides outside of Brooks. None of the three companies have a handicap cab because it is too expensive to equip a cab and there is a Handibus in Brooks.

Until recently there was only one taxi service in Brooks but the City of Brooks changed its by-laws to allow more than one company to operate. There is one more company that is seeking approval from the City. The City issues licenses to cab companies and drivers. Owners¹³ of existing taxi companies are concerned that there are too many cabs operating in Brooks and region and that there is not enough business to keep the current three companies operating and to retain drivers. Taxi owners state that recruiting good drivers that stay is a challenge. One owner had calculated that there was one cab for 600 residents while the usual rate was one for 1,000 residents. The busy times for taxis are on the weekends when the bar closes and driving people to work. The taxis have not had much demand for pickups or delivery to the outside hamlets. One taxi company only accepts cash and demands upfront payment for out of town rides. Main uses for taxis are going to work, medical appointments and grocery shopping in that order.

Sample rates: Tilley \$35, Duchess \$28, Rosemary \$50, Patricia \$50, Medicine Hat \$125. Flag rate is between \$3.40-3.60. The average ride in Brooks is \$6-7 and going to the JBS Plant is \$10-11

It is common to have passengers carpool to the plant but little carpooling to other places or from other places such as Duchess.

One taxi company offers a 10% reduction for seniors but they don't have a lot of seniors as riders. The owner thinks that seniors could use the Handibus service as it is easier for them then getting in and out of taxis.

Taxi companies accept vouchers from various employers. This is especially used for parties that involve drinking. They also have a billing program that is used by groups like SPEC to pick up clients.

Service Provider transportation: A number of agencies maintain vehicles to pick up clients and bring them to appointments in town and sometimes out of town. SPEC has 5 vans that are used by staff to transport clients or to take staff to programs outside of Brooks. Other agencies allow staff to use their own cars (with the proper insurance) to assist clients with their transportation requirements in emergency or urgent situations. Women with children and youth are the ones most often who need transportation help to programs.

¹² <http://citytaxibrooksalberta.com/>

¹³ Conversation with two of the taxi company owners

Alberta Health Services maintains one handibus that is occasionally used by long term care patients. This bus can only be driven by Alberta Health staff and is not available to other community agencies.

Ambulances and Ambulatory Patient Transport: Alberta Health Services (AHS) operates ambulances to transport emergency patients. Ambulances are located in Brooks and one in Bassano. Paid and volunteer firefighters are trained First Responders and may get to the scene first as they are located throughout the County. AHS also operates transportation services for non-emergency patients who need to be transferred to another facility or need to go to a specialized center for tests or treatments. This service is only available for patients that are admitted as in -patients at a hospital or at a long term care facility.

Patients who are required to go to another facility such as in Calgary or Lethbridge for tests or treatment have to find a family member or friend to take them or go by commuter bus. Patients who qualify may get a subsidy from Alberta Works but there is no other funding available.

TeleHealth¹⁴: Alberta Health Service uses video conferencing calls to allow patients to have follow up appointments with medical specialists. TeleHealth allows patients to be followed in their own community rather than to have to make an expensive and time consuming trip to another center.

Meals on Wheels: With funding from Grasslands Regional FCSS, The Brooks & District Seniors Outreach Society¹⁵ administers and coordinates Meals on Wheels. Food is prepared by the Newell Foundation at Newbrook Lodge¹⁶ and delivered to seniors within Brooks by volunteers. Seniors who qualify for Meals on Wheel outside 10 kilometres from Brooks must arrange for someone to pick a week of meals from the Lodge on Fridays. The cost is subsidized according to the income of the senior. The number of seniors that use the service has doubled over the last few years to about 30 currently; this number continues to rise.

Services delivered in senior housing: Some doctors make visits to assisted living centers and lodges. With funding from Grasslands Regional FCSS, Home Cleaning is provided to seniors. Public Health Nurses make visits to palliative care patients. Churches hold services and bible studies in senior housing complexes.

Faith Groups: There is one church that has 2 school buses used to transport parishioners on Sunday to the service and children to Sunday School. Most faith groups have an informal transportation network for persons who need a ride to church or events.

¹⁴ <http://www.health.alberta.ca/initiatives/telehealth.html>

¹⁵ <http://www.seniorsoutreach.org/aboutus.html>

¹⁶ <http://www.newbrooklodge.com/prices.html>

Primary Issues/Challenges Identified:

Graduated Licensing Program and persons new to driving in Canada

Brooks' main employer attracts many employees who are new immigrants and Temporary Foreign Workers to Canada. These residents often do not come to Canada with a valid driver's license from countries who have a reciprocal arrangement with Alberta or with documents to prove they have the required two years of driving experience they under the Graduated Licensing Program. Under this program it takes at least three years to get a full Class 5 License. While in the program for the first year, they are prevented from driving between midnight and 5:00am and must have a fully licensed adult seated next to the driver. This is a major barrier to new immigrants who have to find a friend or family member to drive with them at all times and especially hard for JBS employees who are on B shift and finish work around 1:00am. Acquiring a car, obtaining a car loan and paying for insurance provides a challenge for new immigrants with no credit and driving record. It may take them a year or more to have the necessary funds or credit record. In the meantime the family is dependent on carpooling or taxis.

Consistent car maintenance may also be a challenge to persons new to Canada and who may have very little discretionary income. Cars have to be maintained regularly especially in cold weather to be able to run properly. Poorly maintained cars with bald tires or no winter tires can be a hazard to the driver, his/her passengers and others. New Immigrants and Temporary Foreign Workers need to be taught about proper maintenance of a car for winter weather.

The rules concerning car insurance and registration are not easily mastered. The necessity to have valid car insurance is new to many of the immigrants living in Brooks and is a challenge when finances are tight and the demands of family left in their homeland take priority.

An additional requirement of car ownership is the proper installation of car seats for infants, toddlers and young children. This requires added expenditures and a familiarity with the requirements.

SPEC¹⁷ and BCIS¹⁸ with the help of the RCMP and Alberta Health Services regularly hold workshops to inform newcomers of the intricacies of car ownership, driver licensing and the usage of car seats. The Child Development Society has a car seat rental program. However, the lack of alternate transport possibilities means that there are a number of newcomers who drive without the proper license or who may not have the required insurance. They face fines when caught and experience difficulties in renewing insurance, licenses etc. Fines and penalties for not complying with the constraints of the Class 7 Graduated License are prohibitive.

¹⁷ <http://www.spec.ab.ca/>

¹⁸ http://www.ccis-calgary.ab.ca/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=214&Itemid=163

Seniors and persons with disabilities

The availability of the Brooks Handibus service to transport seniors and people with disabilities to medical appointments, shopping, social and recreation events was noted by many respondents as an issue. The buses currently are only available from about 9:00am to 2:30pm Monday to Friday. If a medical appointment runs past 2:30pm, the senior is left to find alternative transport back to their home. Senior events such as the monthly wellness tea run by the Seniors Outreach Society cannot depend on the Brook Handibus as their event finishes at 2:30pm. Seniors would also like to have access to a service after 4:00pm and on weekends to visit friends, attend community events, go to the cinema etc.

For County of Newell residents, the availability of the Minibus once a week (or every two week for Patricia) is appreciated but challenging if they cannot obtain medical and other appointments that fit in with the bus schedule. Ridership has declined drastically over the last few years and the current service appears to mostly support elderly isolated seniors over 80 years of age. County bus drivers report that their role extends often beyond that of a bus driver to one of providing support and safety checks for isolated seniors.

Seniors who have driven all their life find that they are unwillingness to lose their independence by voluntary agreeing to give up their license and therefore drive longer than they should. For seniors in rural areas, the car is the only way that they can get to any services, visit friends or take care of emergencies. (Community survey respondent)

In the table below are the most recent demographic numbers from the 2011 Federal Census. As can be seen in the table there are a large number of younger seniors in most communities who will probably be aging in their rural homes. It is expected that these seniors will likely need transportation support as they age.

There are no taxis that are wheelchair accessible or equipped to transport persons with mobility handicaps.

None of the lodges, assisted living and senior facilities has their own van or bus¹⁹ that is able to take seniors in wheelchairs and seniors without mobility issues to outings, medical appointments, grocery shopping etc. Sunrise and Orchard Manors share one van that is used on occasion to transport clients.

Discussions had taken place to gift the Alberta Health Services Handibus to Newell Foundation for use by their residents but the agreement was not concluded.

¹⁹ Orchard and Sunrise Gardens are in the process of looking for a Handibus to transport residents.

Number of Seniors²⁰

	Brooks (CA)	Brooks (CY)	County of Newell (MD)	Rolling Hills (UNP)	Tilley (VL)	Patricia (UNP)	Rosemary (VL)	Duchess (VL)	Bassano (T)	Scandia
65 to 69 years	775	375	260	20	10	5	15	30	90	0
70 to 74 years	505	240	165	10	0	0	20	20	50	5
75 to 79 years	400	205	110	15	10	0	10	10	50	5
80 to 84 years	315	190	85	10	0	0	5	5	35	5
85 years and over	340	265	30	5	0	5	10	0	25	0
Total	2335	1275	650	60	20	10	60	65	250	15²¹

Rolling Hills has the highest percentage of seniors with 29.3% of residents aged 65 and above.

Out of town Medical or other Appointments

There are very limited transportation options for residents that have out of town medical appointments in larger centres (e.g. Calgary, Medicine Hat and Lethbridge). The current commuter buses from Brooks to these larger centers make the scheduling of medical appointments challenging. The cost of travelling to medical appointments to these larger centers which is not covered by health benefits often makes it prohibitive to do so. Health care for some individuals is compromised such as pregnant women who cannot afford to go to another center for specialized screening. The cost of transportation is one concern but the time and manpower resources it takes to transport clients to appointments (generally an entire day out of office) are also major issues.

Residents throughout the County of Newell also have challenges to travel to and from Brooks, the region's main center for health services. The only public transport is the County of Newell bus which visits communities once a week and brings residents to Brooks.

Transportation to out of town appointments is particularly a challenge to residents who have no support system or limited support systems. These may include seniors whose children have moved away, or new immigrants without friends or relatives. Cantara Safe House staff report that travel to medical and legal appointments are often necessary and transportation creates a major challenge to accommodating these needs.

²⁰ Statistics Canada. 2013. Brooks, CA, CY, Alberta (Code 806) (table). National Household Survey (NHS) Profile. 2011 National Household Survey. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 99-004-XWE. Ottawa. Released September 11, 2013. <http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/nhs-enm/2011/dp-pd/prof/index.cfm?Lang=E>

²¹ Data is not reliable

Transportation to Calgary and Medicine Hat even once per week – would be awesome! (Community survey respondent)

The work schedules (up to twelve hour shifts) of persons who work for the major employer in Brooks create challenges in their availability to help family members get to out of town medical appointments.

Employers²² in Brooks have also reported that they find that employees need to take time off to transport relatives to out of town appointments. This can create scheduling challenges as the employee needs to take the whole day off rather than just a few hours.

Alberta Health Services staff did explore the possibility of having specialists reserve space for Brooks and County of Newell patients that fit in with the schedule of the commuter buses. Unfortunately, this is not always feasible in busy practices where the medical specialist may not have much scheduling flexibility.

It should be noted that both remaining out of town commuter services Prairie Shuttle Services and J and L Shuttle have capacity to transport more Brooks and County of Newell residents to Calgary, Lethbridge and Medicine Hat.

Access to Education, Community and Health Services:

Organizations try to have their programs centrally located but if the clients don't have their own transportation they are unable to attend programs such as group programming and intervention services. An issue is the lack of public transportation creates a problem for those with children who may need child care during appointments; For clients who live outside of Brooks and do not have their own vehicle it can be challenging or impossible.

The Brooks Campus of Medicine Hat College is located on the outskirts of Brooks in a residential area but far away from any other services. Students must take a taxi, own a car or arrange carpooling. There is no pathway for pedestrian or bikes going to the College although student ride their bikes to the college. The College is located 4.5 km from the intersection of Cassils and 2nd St West.

Agencies must factor in the cost of transporting clients and staff in their budgets and, where possible, grant applications. Some funders do not pay for transportation costs. For example, Cantara Safe House often has clients coming from outside of Brooks who may not have access to a vehicle. For one client, the shelter estimated that it cost \$250 to bring the client into shelter.

²² Conversation with the Brooks and District Chamber of Commerce Manager

One group that is particularly challenged to get to community services is newcomer women with young children who do not have the appropriate driver's license, a suitable vehicle with child seats or access to a car. One service provider maintains a number of vans that are used to transport clients to their programs and staff to programs outside of Brooks. They have found this as the most economical way to budget for transportation for clients and staff.

Agencies report that activities especially in winter are severely limited by the lack of transportation. Clients do not want to walk home after dark in the cold weather. Staff often use their own vehicle/gas to ensure that clients can participate in programs. This is especially problematic for youth programs aimed at newcomer youth.

Alberta Health Services staff report that consistent access to preventive programs such as the maternity clinic is a challenge for patients without access to transportation. Pregnant women are encouraged to come to the clinic once every two weeks for monitoring, pre-natal information and to meet the doctors who may deliver her baby. Many miss out on these visits because they do not have access to transportation and have to walk often with a toddler or two in tow.

Low income persons rarely can afford a car and there is no alternative. The Affordable Housing Complex (MeadowLark) is located on the outskirts of town with no retail services nearby. One third of the residents do not have a car.

Buses would be a great help. Many of our clients cannot afford a vehicle. They have children and have few ways to transport them.

Regular transportation within Brooks for clients is imperative, regular transportation from the rural communities even once or twice a week would be great. (Community survey respondent)

There is no transportation for food bank clients to or from the Food Bank. Clients must arrange to have someone with a car help them pick up groceries or take a taxi.

Medical clinics in Brooks only operate Monday to Friday until 5:00pm. This means that persons who must rely on another person to take them to a medical appointment have to find someone who is not working or who can easily take time off. AHS reports that Brooks has one of the busiest Emergency Room in the Province after 1:00am. They report that families come in after the B Shift at the plant with sick children or adults with health issues. The shifts at the Plant are scheduled so that it is not possible for the adult with the car/driving license to be able to take family members to a medical clinic during office hours.

If a resident loses their driver's license or only has a class 7 licence (graduated licensing program), they may not have the funds to re-instate their license or to pursue full licensing if they have fines to pay. Families with small children find it challenging to manage city streets in snow and ice or during Chinooks with melting snow. Many newcomers do not wear proper footwear for such conditions. It is difficult for mom's pushing baby strollers, especially in the winter weather.

Cabs are expensive for people living in on fixed incomes and even though taxi companies in Brooks go out of their way to meet community needs, their drivers must make a living and meet the cost of running a vehicle.

School transportation makes it a challenge for students to participate in extracurricular activities as the school bus leaves directly after school. Families whose children participate in activities such as sport teams must be prepared to pick them up. However, family members may have conflicting events when scheduling transportation for family members - an elderly parent may need to go to Lethbridge for a medical appointment, a father to work and a child to a team tournament.

Many services are not offered in Brooks, clients are forced to travel to other communities such as Medicine Hat or Calgary. Often clients do not have access to a vehicle in order to travel to these places. In some cases the clients do have a vehicle but cannot afford the fuel costs of making these trips. Transportation around town is also an issue. For those clients who do not have a vehicle, getting from place to place can be a challenge. This is particularly difficult for clients who work at JBS as it's not easy to just walk there. As well, clients often have multiple children which make it difficult to walk to appointments, particularly in the winter. Trips to the grocery store or food bank can be challenging for those without a vehicle as well. Clients who reside in neighboring communities often find it difficult to access services in Brooks because of lack of transportation. *(Community survey respondent)*

Employment: Employers report that it is a challenge for them to keep their minimum wage employees to consistent schedules because many do not have access to a reliable vehicle.

JBS Food Canada²³ at its plant offers employees a company sponsored transportation system for employees without access to transportation. Unfortunately, this is not available for workers in the C shift (about 30 employees).

Unfortunately it was not possible to obtain any information from CSSI who hold the contract for cleaning at the JBS Food Canada meat packing plant as to the transportation needs of their employees. These employees work overnight and it is assumed that they carpool or drive their own cars to the plant. There are about 75 employees that work for CSSI every night from midnight to 7:30am.

²³ <http://www.jbssa.com/>

There is an increase number of Temporary Foreign Workers (TFW) employed by convenience stores, fast food outlets and JBS Food Canada meat packing plant. It is estimated that currently Brooks has 600 TFW. These workers arrive in Canada to work for specific employers and usually do not have their own transportation. Some employers help TFW get to their worksite but this still leaves them without access to transportation for necessary appointments, shopping, religious services or entertainment.

Lack of Coordination of Services:

A number of respondents and key informants discussed how existing transportation networks were fragmented and appeared not to coordinate or collaborate together. There is a wide spread feeling that existing resources and services could be better coordinated. For example, it does not appear that there is a common “table” or opportunities to discuss jointly how best to structure events for seniors to take advantage of the Handibus service. Organizations that work with vulnerable families may be able to organize their programs to increase these families access to services. For example, since SPEC and the Food Bank are located in the same building, it may be possible for families needing access to the Food Bank to go there before or after their programs at SPEC and benefit from SPEC’s access to vans.

Existing services are generally perceived to be underutilized. All existing transportation assets (school buses, County and City buses) are idle from approximately 5:00pm on Friday to 7:00am on Monday morning. The only alternatives to private car use are taxis in the evening and weekends.

In discussions, a number of transportation issues arose which might be resolved through community discussions and networking between organizations.

Summary:

Most residents of the Hamlets, Villages and rural County of Newell understand that living in a rural setting involves private car ownership and the ability to plan to ensure that transportation for employment, shopping, medical appointments and general business is taken care of. However as these residents age, they face more difficulties in driving themselves to Brooks or other nearby shopping and government centers. Rural families often face conflicting transportation schedules which may hinder transportation being available for senior family members. Many seniors move into seniors’ housing in the area.

Rural residents may face difficulties with travel to medical appointments in Calgary, Lethbridge, and Medicine Hat due to the challenges associated with driving in adverse weather, the cost of gas and conflicting family obligations regarding travel.

Residents of Brooks may or may not have access to a car for travel to employment, shopping and appointments. There are a significant number of residents including seniors, new immigrants, single parents and persons with disabilities that do not drive, or have access to family members or friends to drive them to work, for shopping or medical appointments. The major employer in Brooks is located

outside of the City and transportation is required. The location of cheaper housing away from the shopping district creates challenges for low income residents or persons without cars or driving license. Like the residents of the County; Brooks residents face major difficulties in going to Medicine Hat, Calgary and Lethbridge for medical specialists, court and lawyer appointments or immigration appointments.

Survey Responses:

What transportation gaps/issues/concerns have you or your clients identified?

- Many clients without driver's license or with class 7, or who have lost their license, can't afford to re-instate or to pursue license.
- Many clients have small children, challenging to manage city streets in snow and ice or during Chinooks with melting snow. Many newcomers do not wear proper footwear for such conditions.
- Many clients have health/mobility issues, making walking difficult. Difficulties getting food (grocery store or food box) as they cannot get to the different locations.
- Cabs are expensive for people living in poverty. Many live in outlying areas where there is low income housing, far from services--north, east, west end of town. Transportation from the food bank to client homes.
- Transportation to Brooks for services not offered or available in Bassano - doctors, Lawyer, clothing, Government services, senior care.
- Availability of the Brooks Handibus,
- No transportation option for residents that have out of town medical appointments in larger centres, e.g. Calgary, Medicine Hat
- No public transportation on major routes; difficulty in the wintertime due to no public service; getting rides involves tying up other people's time at specific intervals; lack of public transportation creates a problem for those with children who may need child care during appointments; people who work at Lakeside are very limited in the times they can access services, especially if they carpool to and from work.
- Our activities are severely limited by the lack of transportation. Attendance in winter drops significantly because students do not want to walk home after dark in the cold weather. Staff often use their own vehicle/gas to drive students home from activities.
- We try to have our programs centrally located but if the clients don't have their own transportation they can't make it to use our programs
- Challenge of clients not having their own vehicle - it can be challenging for clients who live far away within town to make it to the service location
- Affordable transportation within the city as well as to Medicine Hat and Calgary for medical appointments is a huge gap. The cost of transportation is one concern but another is the time and manpower resources it takes to transport clients to appointments (generally an entire day out of office).

Transporting children to child care is a problem even if clients have rides to work at Lakeside. Getting Children to and from school is also a problem. (*Community survey respondent*)

- Lack of transportation to and from appointments inside and outside the City of Brooks (Calgary, Medicine Hat, Lethbridge).
- Transportation to the Brooks Campus of Medicine Hat College.
- The County bus only operates one day a week per community and sometimes it is hard get all appointments on a certain day.
- Transportation to work especially for persons with minimum wage jobs who may not be able to afford a car and its associated costs.

As a lot of services are not offered in Brooks, clients are forced to travel to other communities such as Medicine Hat or Calgary. Often time's clients do not have access to a vehicle in order to travel to these places. In some cases the clients do have a vehicle but cannot afford the fuel costs of making these trips. Transportation around town is also an issue. For those clients who do not have a vehicle, getting from place to place can be a challenge. This is particularly difficult for clients who work at Lakeside as it's not easy to just walk there. As well, clients often have multiple children which makes it difficult to walk to appointments, particularly in the winter. Trips to the grocery store or food bank can be challenging for those without a vehicle as well. Clients who reside in neighboring communities often find it difficult to access services in Brooks because of lack of transportation.

It is difficult for mom's pushing baby strollers, especially in the winter weather - too hot to walk or too cold to walk given chronic health conditions chronic health conditions cost - fixed income and cannot afford alternative transportation such as a cab or taxi no support system or limited support system - no one available to drive them distance from newer communities to central areas in Brooks.

Many of them are low income and cannot afford transportation. Many are also newcomers with very large families and do not have a suitable vehicle to carry the entire family.
(*Community survey respondent*)

Suggestions from survey respondents:

The online survey asked respondents to identify one thing that could be improved, what would you like to see done to increase access to transportation networks in Brooks and the County of Newell?

- A small bus in place that operates within the Brooks area, possibly to villages like Duchess or Tilley where many of our clients live due to more affordable housing.
- More public discussion in open forum
- Increase the Handibus service for the seniors including evenings. We have transportation for seniors to Brooks on Fridays, some appointments not available on Fridays. Also, all other age demographics need travel to Brooks.
- Institute bike lanes within the city. There are a lot of people, who bike, but the roads are not very safe and attitudes of motorists towards cyclists are not positive. Bike lanes would increase the opportunity of bike traffic in town. It would provide an environmentally friendly alternative to using an automotive vehicle and would enhance the physical wellbeing of many citizens.
- Better connectivity between existing pathways and more paved and gravelled pathways to ensure safety of walkers.
- Public transportation - Transit system for navigating to and from well-travelled areas: Provide regular service on major routes, e.g. 2nd St north to south, and Cassils east-west and/or provide public transportation to and from Lakeside Packers that includes these routes. Transportation could be on request or even central hourly pickups/drop-offs. Any public transportation could include the need for JBS employees to get to the plant. A shuttle could be available for outlying areas.
- Some kind of bus co-op where a major funder would purchase and maintain an extra-long mini-van and/or small bus, with non-profits contributing through membership fees and meeting fuel costs. Member agencies could then reserve the bus a set number of times per month.
- More coordination between service providers would assist in transit planning since we share many of the same clients. We could perhaps coordinate our services to better accommodate the transportation of clients if transportation was accessible. The City and County buses working together to provide comprehensive routes that do not overlap but allow the best use of resources. More integration of services is needed.

Models from other Municipalities

Walking/Biking/Long Boarding:

Create safe walking/biking path to the Brooks Campus of Medicine Hat College

Ensure that there is a walking/biking path, with lighting adjacent to gravelled roadway (also known as 2nd Ave. East from 17 St East to Horticultural Station Road East so that Medicine College students have a safe path to walk or bike to the College.

Create bike path/lanes within Brooks to encourage riders to use the roads safely rather than the sidewalks.

In consultation with traffic engineers, Traffic Peace Officer or the RCMP, and bike riders create designated bike path/lanes with clear marking to encourage riders to use them.

Increase the number of businesses and organizations that have bike racks throughout the County

Support organizations and businesses to create bike parking i.e. Bike racks in front of their building by: providing an incentive, through bulk buying, sharing information or grants.

Bike safety campaign aimed at adults not just children

Encourage safe riding by encouraging the use of helmets by all ages, bike maintenance such as checking brakes and tires, appropriate sharing the road strategies etc. Hold bike riding workshops/demonstrations and or group rides to model safe behaviour on roads. Use Bike Week to highlight safe riding for adults within the City.

Improve the ability of walkers to be safe including during the winter months

There will always be residents in the City of Brooks or the neighbouring Hamlets and Villages that either chose to walk or need to walk to their destination. Their safety and ease of walking can be increased by ensuring that pathways/sidewalks are plowed in winter, that there is a visible line between the road and shoulder, that existing pathways are connected and that walking/pathways are designated on maps. In addition, public awareness campaigns focussing on the wearing of bright/reflective clothing in winter, appropriate footwear, and knowledge of the designated pathways can be created.

There are some school based programs such as the "Walking bus"²⁴ that might be applicable in Brooks or other communities with elementary schools.

²⁴ A walking bus is a form of student transport for schoolchildren who, chaperoned by two adults (a "Driver" leads and a "conductor" follows) walk to school, in much the same way a school bus would drive them to school. Like a

Riding Horses:

Safe hitching posts and a recognition of horses as a valid alternatives would make it easier for residents with horses to use them to get to the places in rural areas they need to get to or even into Brooks. Such as with bike path, the City and Hamlets could designate roads/path for horse riders away from the main roads.

Helping newcomers with their safe use of a vehicle:

Car maintenance workshops

Owning and maintaining a car properly to ensure safety especially in winter conditions can be a challenge for newcomers. Community organizations, employers, union, businesses could institute car maintenance workshops to teach the basics of maintaining a car in working conditions and ensure safe driving on winter roads. This would not replace the need for cars to undergo regular maintenance checkups but help newcomers to ensure proper tire pressure, the use of winter tires, checking for oil level and cleanness, brake maintenance.

Encourage the use of the Alberta Motor Association (AMA) website and its information on buying and maintaining a car.

Encourage the use of the JBS Employer Bus

The JBS bus is an important transport network in Brooks. If it is not used as much as it could be by employees, discussions could be held with JBS to ensure that employees use it and escape the need to drive without the appropriate licenses and insurance. Transportation for the cleaning shift/Shift C could also be provided.

Reducing the cost of existing transportation networks:

Reduce the cost of using taxis by instituting a "Taxi Shared service"²⁵

Rethink the idea of a taxi as an on demand method of transport and explore the idea of using taxis as a shared or group service. There are four main taxi-sharing categories that are used (group marshals, group taxi stands, web-based taxi-sharing applications and cell phone applications). Examples of taxi-

traditional bus, walking buses have a fixed route with designated "bus stops" and "pick up times" in which they pick up children.

²⁵ Taxi sharing is when two or more persons, who may have different origins and destinations, share one taxi and split the costs. While taxi sharing has been in place informally for decades, some municipalities in Canada are now putting programs in place especially as it provides additional and more cost-effective options for those living in rural or outlying areas that have no or limited public transportation. www.tc.gc.ca

share services that could serve as a model for Brooks and the County of Newell includes the City of Rimouski in Quebec, the cities of West Bend and Sun Prairie in Wisconsin and the taxi/bus service offered by the Société de Transport de Montreal.

The taxi-sharing program might work very well to transport students to the Brooks Campus of Medicine Hat College, transport C shift employees to the JBS plant, residents who have shopped at Wall-Mart etc.

Support low income residents with the cost of using existing transportation networks

Some small municipalities where the number of residents or the distances involved make it challenging to provide a public transportation system provide vouchers to seniors and low income residents rather than providing large municipal subsidies to a public transportation system. This could be considered in Brooks and the County of Newell in conjunction with the Taxi-Sharing Program.

Transportation for seniors and persons with disabilities within Brooks and to and within hamlets/villages in the County

Creating one seamless handicap and senior transportation system

Examine the possibility of merging the County of Newell and the City of Brooks Handibus systems to create one integrated transportation network. This service could run on extended hours and be available to facilitate attendance to community events such as Canada Day, the Medieval Faire etc. Explore the possibility of having one bus used to transport passengers from outlying areas and another one to transport passengers within Brooks. The new integrated system could work closely with the Seniors Outreach Society, NAGS and Next Steps clients and staff, and the senior housing facilities (Newell Lodge, Newell Housing, Sunrise and Orchard Manors) to create schedules that fit in the needs of seniors and persons with disabilities.

Incentive to taxi companies

Provide an incentive for taxi companies to acquire at least one accessible taxi so that there is at least one accessible taxi per shifts i.e. Day or night. Companies who benefit from the incentive could be willing to make it a priority to take calls for persons requiring the accessible taxi.

Collaboration within and between organizations:

Maximize the use of existing resources

There are a large number of transportation resources within Brooks and the County that sit idle and are underuse. While there are insurance and jurisdiction challenges to overcome, organizations with transportation assets could meet and discuss how these assets can be used to meet clients' needs. For example, if an organization is taking a client to Medicine Hat or Calgary, is there the possibility of filling

the van with other clients? Can programs be scheduled so that existing transportation assets/resources are better used and clients can benefit?

Build funding to support assistance to clients when negotiating fees for service agreements or contracts

Since the ability of clients to obtain transportation to community programs determines their attendance to community programming, build in a transportation component to funding applications or fee for service agreements.

Collective owned bus/vans/cars

Community agencies might want to explore the feasibility of collectively owning transportation assets such as a small bus or vans. A good model for such an arrangement might be the car co-ops²⁶ such as Modo Car Co-op or Calgary Car Share. The Northern Alberta Development Council report on “Vehicle Sharing in Northern Alberta, does it have wheels” provides interesting ideas for Brooks and the County of Newell²⁷.

Using a transportation network lens when planning the location of programs, affordable housing, grocery stores and community infrastructure

Development plans for new subdivision, retail zones or community infrastructures, could consider bringing a transportation network lens to the planning. For example, are there bike racks, walking/biking pathways, how will persons without vehicles access the amenities, services etc.

Extended hours for Medical Clinics

Develop a system to ensure that the medical clinics in Brooks develop a rotation system for extended hours in the evening and on Saturday. The development of the new Community Health Centre may facilitate the development of extended hours but in the meantime, the existing clinics could consider extended hours.

School Transportation:

Busing of children requiring a Handibus within Brooks

The current arrangement of the Grasslands Regional Public School Board using the NAGS/City of Brooks Handibuses has limited their use for seniors and adults with disabilities. Grasslands Regional Public School Board could be encouraged to increase its school bus fleet to provide for its students with disabilities. This would free the existing Handibus(es) to provide better services to adults and seniors within Brooks.

Collaboration between the three School Boards with schools in Brooks and the County

While there are jurisdiction challenges in considering collaboration between the three school boards, it is worth exploring. Discussions could focus on an existing ongoing issue such as the inability of the Grasslands Regional Public Board to bus children to the SPEC Kids Club from Ecole du Ruisseau even though the school is housed in the same location as a Grasslands Regional Public Board school. Further discussions might include the possibility of a jointly run second bus in the afternoon to allow students

²⁶ <http://www.modo.coop/>, <http://www.calgarycarshare.ca/>

²⁷ <http://www.nadc.gov.ab.ca/Docs/Vehicle-Sharing.pdf>

from out of town to participate in after school activities or sharing buses for students who live in widely dispersed areas.

Out of Town Transportation:

Funds for out of town transportation

Create a community fund to help residents who need to go to Calgary, Edmonton, Medicine Hat and Lethbridge for medical appointments. This fund could be administered by a community agency and the criteria for obtaining financial support would be determined by a community committee.

Work with Alberta Health Services to explore an out of town transportation services to medical facilities

Alberta Health Services maintains a Handibus in Brooks which is underutilized. Explore with Alberta Health Services the use of this bus to provide on weekly basis transportation to out of town medical facilities.

Work with the existing services to maximize their use by residents

Currently there are three services for out of town transportation needs with excess capacity. Another company recently stopped its service. These services need to be supported as they provide a much needed service in our community. A meeting could be held with the owners/operators to further understand how Brooks and County of Newell residents are using these services and what might be the options to maximize their use. The Community Fund might make it a policy to issue vouchers for these services.

Public transportation:

If the option is chosen to have a public transportation system within Brooks, the following could be considered to enhance its efficacy and meet community needs:

1. Negotiate with the Grasslands Regional Public Board and the Christ the Redeemer to have the “public transportation” transport high school students within Brooks for a fee. This is done in a number of municipalities reducing the need for the school boards to bus students and helps promote ridership of the public transportation. This would also allow high school students to stay behind for extra-curricular activities and have access to transportation.
2. Create routes that include the Brooks Campus of Medicine Hat College, Meadowlark and the JBS Plant. The College has indicated that they are willing to adjust their class time to support a “public transportation system”. The JBS Plant could be approached about contributing to the public transportation system freeing them from having to run their own buses.
3. Ensure that the buses and drivers are “stroller friendly”.

4. Have agencies and community groups work with their clients to see the bus as the first option to attend appointments, meetings, shop, recreation etc. If the bus is not seen as the first option, it will be difficult to maintain ridership. The operating organization will need to work with the community; businesses etc. to establish routes and schedule and community organizations will have to indicate a willingness to adjust appointment and program time to allow clients to take the bus.
5. Due to the demographics, being a bedroom community and a main travel corridor, consider extending a bus route to Duchess to encourage commuters into Brooks to use the bus.
6. Consider using the “dial a bus”²⁸ model of providing bus services outside of the morning and afternoon commuter “rush”.

²⁸ Dial-a-bus is a cost-effective way to provide "as needed" transit service when ridership is low. Dial-a-bus is available upon request to travel to bus stop locations where riders wish to board or be dropped off. Dial-a-bus operates along existing bus routes and "collector" roadways.

<http://www.strathcona.ca/departments/transit/schedules-routes/dial-a-bus/>

Appendix A

PEOPLE INTERVIEWED FOR THE TRANSPORTATION NETWORK STUDY

Evelyn Fundack	CEO	Newell Housing
Kasey	Crisis Intervention Worker	Cantara Safe House
Karyn Dornan	HR Manager	JBS Food Canada
Maureen Andruschak	Associate Executive Director	SPEC
Bill Bennett	Union Representative	UFCW local 401
Leona M. Ferguson	Director Community/Rural Hospitals	Alberta Health Services
Tracy Kaczanowski BSc., RN BN	Public Health Nurse, Newcomer Health Services Liaison	Alberta Health Services
Roger	Owner	Apollo Delivery Services
Pat Whyte	Executive Director	Newell Community Action Group
Reg Radke	Manager, Brooks Campus	Medicine Hat College
William Best	Transportation Supervisor	Grasslands Public School
Cathy Stephenson	CAO	Newell Foundation
Mohammed Yusuf Idriss, Deanna Ward and Israel Fayisa		BCIS
Tracy Acorn	Manager	Brooks and District, Chamber of Commerce
Tracy Acorn	Manager	Brooks Affordable Housing
Tracy Oliver	Adult Program Coordinator	Next Step Residential Services Ltd.
Daphne Anstey-Martin	Executive Director	Seniors Outreach Society
Brenda Frances	Minibus Supervisor/Bus Driver	County of Newell
Tom McNulty	in Charge Officer	RCMP
	Secretary	École francophone le Ruisseau
Mike Kilcomens	Administrator	Christ the Redeemer Catholic School Board
Jason Levy	Owner	City Cab
John Klein	Owner	Klein Taxi
	Secretary	Newell Christian School
Julia Brzhazovskaya	Owner	J and L Shuttle Inc.
Isabella Hansen	Owner	Prairie Shuttle
Gwen Cameron	Manager	Brooks Food Bank
Seniors at the Wellness Tea Sept 30, 2013		Seniors Outreach Society
Viv Nielsen	Owner	Minerva Employment & Career Services

	Staff	Alberta Works
Martin Boardman	Vice-Chair	EID Ministerial

Appendix B: Bus Resources in Brooks and County of Newell

Organization	Type	Number	Use	Hours of operation	Funding
County of Newell	16 passengers and two wheel chairs	1	Daily trips on a rotation basis to communities in the County for residents to go to Brooks. Used mostly by seniors.	Monday to Friday 8:00am to 4:00pm	County resources/users
City of Brooks/NCAGS	Wheelchair accessible Handibus	2 plus one van	For handicap persons and seniors within Brooks.	Monday to Friday 8:00am to 4:00pm. The bus is used early morning and after 2:30pm for handicap school age children going to Central School.	City resources/users/contract/grants/
Alberta Health Services	Handibus	1	Occasionally used for long term care patients and must be driven by AHS employee	Very Occasionally	AHS
Victory Church	School bus	2	Pick up of congregation on Sunday. Also used for mission trips.	Sunday	Church/tithe
SPEC	7 passengers	5-6 vans	Transport staff and clients to programs	Monday to Friday 8:00am to 4:00pm with some evening and weekend use	Grants/fee for service contracts/fundraising
Grasslands	School bus	70	Transport school	Monday to	School District from

Regional School District	in various sizes, 2 with wheelchair capacity		age children to schools.	Friday 8:00am to 4:00pm	provincial grant. Parents if within walking limits.
Redeemer School District	72 passenger school bus	Buses belong to Southland Transport	Transport school age children to schools. Contracted to Southland Transport.	Monday to Friday 8:00am to 4:00pm	School District from provincial grant. Parents if within walking limits.
Francophone School District	school bus (one large and one medium)	Buses belong to Southland Transport	Transport Brooks and Duchess school age children to the school (85% of the 69 children). Operated by Southland Transport.	Monday to Friday 8:00am to 4:00pm	School District from provincial grant. Parents if within walking limits.
Cantara Safe House	7 persons	1 van	Driven by staff to take clients to and from appointment	As required	fundraising
Sunrise Gardens and Orchard Gardens	5 persons	1 van	Used by staff and to take clients to appointment or occasional outings. Can only be used by ambulatory residents. They are in the process of buying a wheelchair accessible bus to buy for use by the residents.	24/7	Resident fees
JBS Meat Packing Plant	School buses	4	Transports A and B shift staff to the plant from Brooks. A Bus also operates to Medicine Hat. No	Operates to meet shift requirements and to bring TFW to ESL classes.	Employees pay \$1.50 per ride and JBS subsidizes the cost. Used primarily by TFW when they first come. Used by other staff but

			transport for C shift or CCCSI staff		not as many as could use it.
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Appendix C

Commuting Data from the 2011 Federal Census and the 2011 National Household Survey²⁹

In 2011, 1.2% of commuters within Brooks used public transit to get to work. This compares to Alberta at 10.5%. In Brooks, 81.0% of the population used a car, truck or van as a driver, while 12.9% used a car, truck or van as a passenger (carpooling). The average commuting time to work in Brooks was 15.4 minutes, this compares to Alberta at 25.1 minutes. Of interest is that close to 22% of workers leave home for work between midnight and 5:00am and over 50% in total leave home before 7:00am.

Table 6 Employed labour force by mode of transportation, Brooks (City)³⁰, Alberta

Table 6 Employed labour force by mode of transportation				
Mode of transportation	Brooks		Alberta	
	number	%	number	%
Total employed labour force with a usual place of work or no fixed workplace address	7,325	100.0	1,839,355	100.0
Car, truck or van as driver	5,930	81.0	1,406,145	76.4
Car, truck or van as passenger	945	12.9	103,715	5.6
Public transit*	85	1.2	193,115	10.5
Walked	205	2.8	91,005	4.9
Bicycle	80	1.1	19,540	1.1
Other	85	1.2	25,835	1.4

*This may include JBS bus, the NCAG Handibus

Time leaving for work	Brooks	
Total	7,325	100.0
5 to 5:59 a.m.	785	10.7
6 to 6:59 a.m.	1,290	17.6
7 to 7:59 a.m.	1,790	24.4
8 to 8:59 a.m.	1,495	20.4
9 to 11:59 a.m.	385	5.3
12 p.m. to 4:59 a.m.	1,585	21.6

Commuting duration	Brooks	Alberta
Average	15.4	25.1

²⁹ Statistics Canada. 2012. Brooks, Alberta (Code 4806016) and Alberta (Code 48) (table). Census Profile. 2011 Census. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 98-316-XWE. Ottawa. Released October 24, 2012. <http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2011/dp-pd/prof/index.cfm?Lang=E>

The data is also available for the Brooks Census Agglomeration. It is not available for the Villages and Hamlets.