



Regional Transportation Plan

Greater Miramichi Service Commission
August 2025



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1 Introduction

The Greater Miramichi region is located in northeastern New Brunswick, Canada, covering most of Northumberland County with a total land area of 12,950 square kilometers. Situated at the mouth of the Miramichi River where it enters Miramichi Bay, the region features the second longest valley in New Brunswick after the Saint John River Valley. The area is home to multiple Indigenous communities and represents a diverse multicultural population with distinct cultures and linguistic communities.

The region has a total population of 39,295 (2021). The Greater Miramichi Service Commission (GMSC) area encompasses six local governments:

- City of Miramichi (largest city in northern New Brunswick with 17,692 residents),
- Rural Community of Upper Miramichi,
- Village of Doaktown,
- Rural Community of Miramichi River Valley,
- Rural Community of Alnwick, and
- Greater Miramichi Rural District.

Additionally, three First Nation communities are geographically within the region but not members of the GMSC Board: Esgenoopetitj (Burnt Church), Natoaganeg (Eel Ground), and Metepenagiag (Red Bank).

The Greater Miramichi Service Commission, through the Regional Strategy and Population Growth Strategy and other policies, recognize the role of expanded transportation and mobility options in meeting the needs of the region in key priority service areas of economic development and workforce attraction, regional tourism, regional community development, regional planning and cost sharing, regional public safety, regional housing, and interregional public transportation. GMSC's community transportation priorities ensuring access and participation of all citizens within the regional community by providing reliable, safe, affordable & inclusive transportation in all parts of the region. This Regional Transportation Plan strives to identify and recommend transportation and mobility options to further support these priorities and goals and respond to the Regional Transportation Mandate required by the province of New Brunswick.

1.1 Project Background

In 2009, the Province of New Brunswick launched and funded various community transportation programs aimed at providing on-demand, door-to-door volunteer driver services. The *Transport Communautaire Northumberland Community Transit* program provided affordable door-to-door ride-home service by volunteer drivers with their own vehicles. It served all of Northumberland County residents Monday – Friday who were in need of transportation and did not have other

transportation or mobility options available. In the fall of 2022, GMSC integrated the Northumberland Community Inclusion Network (CIN) into their operations, with a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Economic and Social Inclusion Corporation (ESIC) for funding community development and transportation services. Under GMSC, the Northumberland Community Transit program became the Greater Miramichi Community Transportation Volunteer Driver Program. Therefore, community transportation services in the Greater Miramichi region has had a longstanding presence and reliability in the area.

In 2023, the provincial government released a new Regional Transportation Mandate (RTM), that integrated the responsibilities of regional transportation management into local government reforms and transferred these responsibilities to the Regional Service Commissions (RSCs). Upon receiving these responsibilities, RSCs were granted the flexibility to manage services directly, through third parties, or via hybrid approaches. The RTM has been provided in Appendix A.

The new RTM further tasks the Regional Service Commissions to develop Regional Transportation Plans (RTPs) that identify immediate priorities and long-term strategies to help achieve, launch, or otherwise deliver affordable transportation and mobility options across their respective regions.

1.1.1 Regional Transportation Mandate

Currently, transportation options in the region include the Greater Miramichi Community Transportation Volunteer Driver Program, which provides door-to-door service primarily for low-income individuals and people with limited transit means. This service operates during regular business hours based on volunteer availability. The existing geographic extent of the Service Commission's boundary presents challenges for transportation infrastructure and service delivery, particularly in rural areas where transit options are limited or difficult to access.

1.1.2 Minimum Requirements of the Mandate

The RTM outlines the responsibilities and minimum requirements of Service Commissions:

- Develop a regional transportation plan that set out immediate priorities and long-term strategies that help achieve the delivery of *passenger transport services*.¹
- Work toward achieving *passenger transport services* that are available, affordable, and accessible for residents and ultimately can become highly integrated on a provincial scale.
- Effectively oversee and organize transportation services by either operating services themselves (internal model), contracting a third-party (external delivery), or a combination thereof. In any case, regional integration is to be explored where possible.

¹ Passenger Transport Services are defined in section 1.1 of the Mandate and identified as Urban Public Transit, Regional Public Transit, Community Transit, and Intercity Transit.

Essentially, the RTM requires service commissions to develop or contract *public transit* or *community transportation systems* to provide mobility options to residents. The mandate does not require this to happen all at once, but the plan would need to include incremental increases to the service(s) through advancing the following action items.

RTM Action Items

Required action items of the RTM to be undertaken by the RSC are categorized into four streams:

- **Regional Planning Stream Actions:**
 - Develop a regional transportation service.
 - Develop regional transportation plans that identify immediate priorities and long-term strategies based on a three-year timeline.
 - Consider current services and areas of improvement to achieve a sustainable, integrated transportation system.
 - Outline strategies and tools for service delivery, key partnerships, cost implications, funding needs, next steps.
- **Financial Management Stream Actions:**
 - Develop annual financial plans to support the transportation strategy.
 - Determine level of investment to be eligible to receive provincial funding support.
- **Program/Service Delivery Oversight Stream Actions:**
 - Determine level of administration to execute the transportation plan.
 - Establish a community forum to consultation purposes to promote the objectives of regional transportation services
- **Public Relations**
 - Ensure the public are kept informed
 - Promotional activities are undertaken.

1.1.3 Plan Requirements

As per the RTM, the Greater Miramichi Service Commission (GMSC) has developed this Regional Transportation Plan. The plan identifies strategies to deliver cost-effective mobility options that will meet the requirements of the RTM as well as champion their current strategic vision of operating a reliable, safe, affordable, and inclusive system that meets the needs of the Greater Miramichi Region. It also identifies additional transit opportunities that are operationally contingent on provincial (or other) funding to reflect viable and effective options that are reliable, safe, inclusive, and regionally-focused but are cost-prohibitive at this time.

To fulfill the requirements of the mandate, the Regional Transportation Plan makes recommendations on current transportation services in their region, gauges community needs and priorities, establishes short- and long-term priorities, produces financial projections, and maps implementation timelines.

Regional transportation, particularly in rural settings, can be challenging to implement economically and sustainably. Therefore, the project established four prominent goals to develop a Regional Transportation Plan that is achievable, implementable, and cost-effective as well as reflective of resident needs and the unique priorities of communities in the Greater Miramichi Region. These project goals were:

1. To identify gaps, challenges, and opportunities that exist within transportation services currently offered across the region. This included understanding how these services interact and overlap.
2. To explore the capacity of existing transportation services and how they may be leveraged or enhanced to further support residents within the Greater Miramichi region. This included examining partnership opportunities, assessing operational data, and understanding the strategic objectives of these existing systems.
3. To engage broadly with the public and with stakeholders to supplement the current state inventory with resident needs, leading to more impactful and achievable priorities.
4. To estimate financial projections for new or expanded transportation services to have a baseline understanding of costs moving forward. This included identifying funding streams available to the Regional Service Commission that will aid in off-setting capital and operating costs.

1.1.4 What is “Regional Transportation”?

Section 1.1 of the RTM² illustrates that New Brunswickers rely on personal vehicles, cycling, walking, and public services (public transit, community transportation programs, etc.). The intent of the RTM is explore “integrated regional transportation systems with mobility options that are available, affordable, and accessible for residents and ultimately can become highly integrated on a provincial scale.” Table 2 of the mandate implies that mobility options considered through RTPs are to be focused on four identified types of *passenger transport services*:

1. Urban Public Transit,
2. Regional Public Transit,
3. Community Transit, and
4. Intercity Transit.

Therefore, this Regional Transportation Plan will focus recommendations and priorities on these outlined *passenger transport services* and explore transportation solutions that support providing mobility options that are available, affordable, and accessible – as appropriate.

² Link to the Regional Transportation Mandate: <https://www2.gnb.ca/content/dam/gnb/Departments/rdc-sdr/pdf/regional-transportation-mandate.pdf>

2 Profile of the Greater Miramichi Region

This section establishes the context for this Regional Transportation Plan by defining the Greater Miramichi region's geographic footprint, population profile, and guiding policy frameworks. It then maps the full suite of existing travel options, from fixed-route and specialized transit to volunteer-driver and community programs, intercity rail and bus, taxi services, and local air operations, setting out the baseline of assets, gaps, and partnership opportunities.

2.1 Regional Transportation Plan Study Area

The Regional Transportation Plan scope will encompass the entirety of the land area that the Greater Miramichi Service Commission currently services, as depicted in Figure 1, below. To fulfill the intent of the mandate, the Regional Transportation Plan will look to deliver affordable mobility options across the region, including the rural areas.

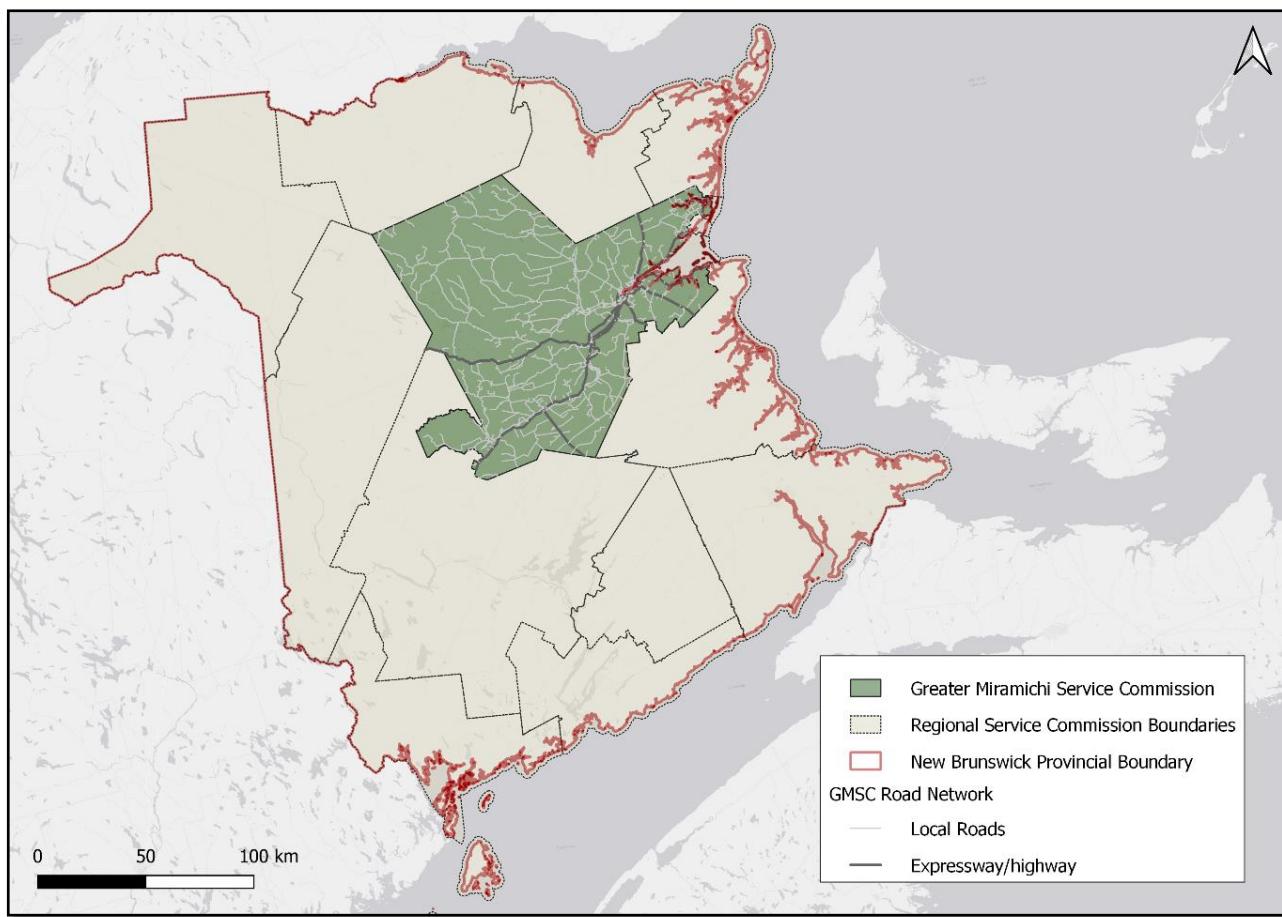


Figure 1: Greater Miramichi Regional Service Commission Service Area

As shown in Figure 1, the Greater Miramichi region is located in northeastern New Brunswick and covers most of Northumberland County. The territory has a total land area of 12,950 km² and a population of approximately 37,500 (as per the 2021 Statistics Canada Census, further broken down in 1.3.1).

2.2 Demographics

As of 2024, the Greater Miramichi region had a total population of 39,295 residents.

Approximately half of these residents (46%) reside within the City of Miramichi, while the remainder are dispersed geographically. Similarly, there is a wide demographic variety amongst the population. The following information outlines various demographic metrics across Greater Miramichi as a whole and further delineated between the City of Miramichi, Rural Community of Upper Miramichi, Village of Doaktown, Rural Community of Alnwick, Miramichi River Valley, and Greater Miramichi Rural District. Regional transportation, mobility options, cost-effectiveness, and service efficiency are all impacted by relevant demographic information, particularly % of seniors, average age, and income.

Table 1. Demographics within the Greater Miramichi region

Geographic Area	Demographics ⁰				
	Population	% of Seniors ²	Dwellings	Income ³	% of Low-income households ⁴
Greater Miramichi region	39,295 ¹	26.2%	16,485	\$66,000	15%
<i>City of Miramichi</i>	18,125	27.6%	8,155	\$67,000	15%
<i>Upper Miramichi</i>	2,175	30.8%	955	\$58,000	19%
<i>Doaktown</i>	1,250	33.2%	605	\$57,200	19%
<i>Alnwick</i>	3,580	28.6%	1,590	\$59,600	14%
<i>River Valley</i>	7,205	25.7%	3,090	\$69,500	16%
<i>Greater Miramichi Rural District</i>	4,790	24.3%	2,090	\$70,000	21%

⁰Data based on the 2021 Statistics Canada Census data and Housing Supply & Forecast Study

¹Greater Miramichi population is net of First Nation communities in the area.

²Includes individuals aged 65+.

³Total median household income is presented.

⁴Defined as being 50% Area Median Household Income (AMHI) or below, the higher end being generally to one full-time minimum wage job.

Based on the Housing Supply & Forecast Study for the Greater Miramichi Region, population growth is expected to increase by 8% between 2021-2031, with an increase in the senior population and 25-44 age range. Likewise, there is an increase in senior-led households indicating a potential, correlated increase in demand for the community transportation program that prioritizes medical-based appointments.

2.3 Community Travel and Transportation Metrics

This section overviews travel demand and behaviour within the Greater Miramichi region, demonstrating mode share, commuting metrics, and travel times. Data is based on Statistics Canada Census information in 2021.

2.3.1 Mode Share

The Greater Miramichi region's most used form of transportation is single passenger vehicles at 84.8%, as shown in Figure 2, below. Public transit accounts for 0.5% of the mode share. However, this is due to the availability of service. There are three options for public transit in the Greater Miramichi area – Miramichi Transit, which only serves the City's urban core; Miramichi Accessible Transit, serving as specialized transit for residents with accessibility or mobility requirements; and the Community Transportation program provided by the GMSC, whose targeted clientele are residents not physically and/or financially able to use other modes.

Further, the pandemic has impact travel behaviour across the country, with increasing levels of demand in rural and regional areas. Therefore, data based in 2021 is not necessarily conducive to current mode shares. Finally, the public and stakeholder engagement conducted as part of this project indicates that public transit services are desired within the region.

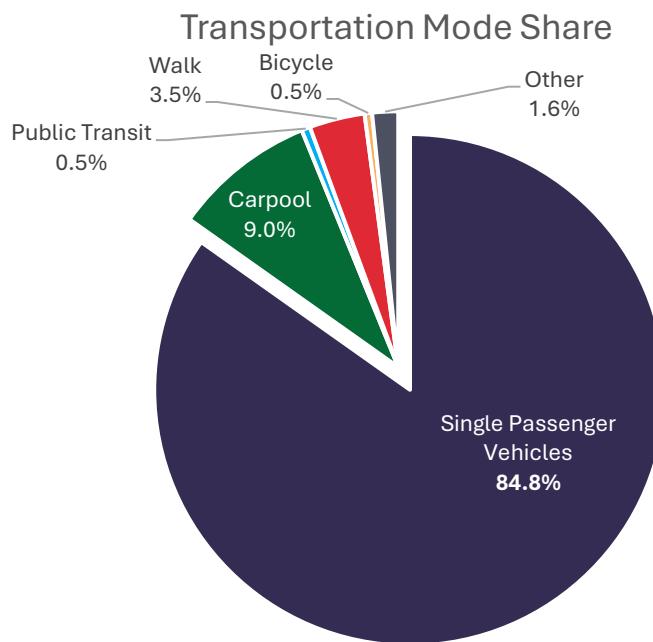


Figure 2. Transportation Mode Share

2.3.2 Commuting Trends and Travel Times

92% of residents work and commute within the Greater Miramichi area. The majority of that 92% are residents working locally within their community (83%) as well as residents working outside their respective community but still within the Greater Miramichi region (9%). Public transit is predominantly used for work and/or school trips and supports this type of highly focused local commuting.

The duration of resident commutes supports this localized trend. 88% of residents have a commute under 30 minutes (with 60% of that being under 15 minutes). 9.5% of trips are between 30 and 60 minutes, while only 2% of residents commute over an hour. As public transit may add travel time compared to a single-occupancy vehicle, it is particularly suited for commuters with lower travel times.

Finally, departure time aligns with standard peak hour travel in the morning between 7am-9am (53%). With the 6am-7am timeband being the next most-popular (which are typically healthcare and other shift workers) at 18%. Transit services that align with peak time trips can mitigate traffic congestion and improve employee well-being.

2.4 Planning and Policy Context

Within the Greater Miramichi region—and New Brunswick—goals and responsibilities of transportation service delivery and mobility options are outlined in various policies, strategic plans, and government-issued frameworks. The following table is an inventory of internal and external planning and policy documents that have transportation-related content and may have an impact on the Regional Transportation Plan.

Table 2: Relevant Policies

Document	Description
GMRSC Regional Strategy 2023-2028	A comprehensive plan to support sustainable growth across the region through collaboration between varying levels of government and stakeholders. Transportation is featured as an emphasized area, focusing on commitments to reliable, safe, affordable, and inclusive transportation services across the region.
Greater Miramichi Population Growth Action Plan 2025-2028	This plan outlines the GMSC's expanded role in strengthening the regional economy through strategic growth initiatives while also gauging economic growth and population retention barriers. Transportation is one of the main priorities identified.
Regional Transportation	A framework for Regional Service Commissions (RSCs) in New Brunswick to develop integrated public transport systems, part of a

Mandate (Framework) June 2023	broader government reform aimed at addressing the growing need for accessible and affordable public transportation. The framework outlines responsibilities and expectations related to the role of the province and RSCs, operations management, and service delivery, as well as providing guiding principles and financial support streams.
Regional Transportation Work Plan	Developed in response to the Mandate, this is an implementation and action plan focused on increasing service efficiency, regional collaboration, partnerships, infrastructure investment, and regional services in the short-term (2024-2026).
Climate Change Action Plan 2022-2027	GHG emission reduction are of increasing focus in New Brunswick. The CCAP outlines mitigating actions, including the recommendation that RSCs develop and implement regional transportation plans to increase accessibility, affordability, and availability of community and public transportation services.

2.5 Transportation Services within the Region

Central to the development of the Regional Transportation Plan is understanding what transportation services are currently available for residents of the region. While the RTM specifies that *passenger transport services* are the key considerations for implementation, this section outlines all transportation service types available in the Greater Miramichi region. Knowing all options and modes may present opportunities for interregional or interprovincial partnerships in the future. The following sections provide a high-level description and overview of type. See Section 3: Current Services for details on specific *passenger transport services* providers.

2.5.1 Passenger Transport Services

Public transport refers to passenger transportation services for use by the general public, typically managed on a schedule and charge a posted fare for each trip. Many public transport services operate on a fixed-schedule, while others may operate on an as-needed/as-scheduled basis. Common modes of transportation associated with public transport are buses, trams, rail transit, ferries, and metro/subways. The following services are offered in the Greater Miramichi Region.

Fixed-route Transit

Traditional, fixed-route transit is offered within the City of Miramichi via Miramichi Transit. Miramichi Transit operates three fixed routes within the City, serving the urban communities of Newcastle, Douglastown, and Chatham. Miramichi Transit will explore the addition of on-demand services in 2025.

Specialized Transit

Also referred to as paratransit, specialized transit is a service for people with accessibility needs who cannot use regular public transit services. Specialized transit is often provided on a temporary, conditional, or permanent basis and can include an eligibility review based on a functionality assessment. In Miramichi, specialized transit is offered by a non-profit entity, Miramichi Accessible Transit (MATbus), offering door-to-door transit service for individuals with accessibility needs and seniors (aged 50+). This service provides clients with inter-regional and inter-provincial services as required.

Community Transportation

These refer to specific transportation programs that are devised in response to community needs. In 2009, the provincial government launched a series of door-to-door volunteer driver services funded through the Economic and Social Development Corporation. Operations of this service have been transferred to the GMSC, and they currently coordinate the Community Transportation Program, a door-to-door volunteer driver service focused on providing services to seniors, low-income families, newcomers, and others without access to alternative transportation. This service provides clients with inter-regional and inter-provincial services as required.

2.5.2 Taxi Services

For-hire automobile travel supplied by private companies that provide point-to-point passenger transportation, with fares typically determined by distance travelled. Several taxi companies operate within the Greater Miramichi region, with most based in the City of Miramichi.

2.5.3 Inter-Regional Travel

There are options available in the Greater Miramichi region that provide residents the opportunity to travel between regions in New Brunswick and beyond. Except for the modes noted in 1.4.1 (Specialized Transit and Community Programs), inter-regional travel modes are often more costly, have lengthier travel times, and have limited services, times, and destinations making them infeasible for daily commuting.

Passenger Trains

A single passenger rail line exists through Miramichi. VIA Rail Canada's *Ocean* service (Trains 15/16) has a station stop in Newcastle and travels southeastwards through Moncton with an end destination of Halifax, or westwards through Bathurst, Campbellton, Riviere-du-Loup, and other communities before arriving in Montreal (from where additional trains and lines may be accessed). Service is limited to three trips per week in each direction.

Motorcoaches

There is currently one private company, Maritime Bus, that provides motorcoach transport within the Maritime provinces, connecting hub communities on a fixed-route and schedule. New Brunswick is served by two routes that split at Moncton—the first traveling north to Miramichi and continuing to Campbellton, the second travelling southwestwards to Saint John before moving north through to Edmunston. No route crosses central New Brunswick, nor is there a direct connection between Edmunston and Campbellton. Beyond passenger services, Maritime Bus also provides package delivery services.

Airlines

Miramichi has a local airport but has not provided commercial flights since the pandemic, before which it used to provide chartered flights to popular work locations for commuters, including Western Canada, Newfoundland and Labrador, and the Canadian Arctic. Currently, it is used for government departments, firefighting services, and as an engine testing facility.

3 Current Services

This section explores the existing public transport services in the Greater Miramichi region and how their services are meeting community needs. This includes stakeholder feedback on service gaps and opportunities, details regarding how the services interact, as well as case studies on the existing service providers outlining their operations, ridership, fleet, and other available information.

3.1 Profile of Public Transit and Community Transportation Needs

Understanding how the communities and residents within the Greater Miramichi region could be better served by public transit and community transportation is crucial in ensuring an achievable, relevant, and responsible Regional Transportation Plan. The goal of this needs profile is to understand perceptions around existing strengths and learn where transportation services can improve—whether through changes to the network(s), operations, or simply expanding services.

3.1.1 Methodology

To develop a robust and resonant profile, the project team used industry best practices, as well as current data and documents provided by the Service Commission. However, noting the importance of community context, the profile is predominantly derived from community and stakeholder feedback. Throughout the Current State phase of the project, meetings were held with the Service Commission’s Resiliency Working Group (with representatives from 20+ organizations), existing service providers within the region (Community Transportation Program, Miramichi Transit, and Miramichi Accessible Transit), and the Service Commission’s Board of Directors.

The profile is built upon two themes: the state of existing services and future modifications. The state of existing services explored strengths, gaps, opportunities, and barriers that pose challenges to residents today. Future modifications sought feedback on short-term and long-term changes and priorities for the system.

3.1.2 State of Existing Services

To more effectively structure feedback, questions and engagement were framed through a SWOC lens—Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Challenges. For clarity, strengths and weaknesses represent the positives and negatives, respectively, internal to existing services. Within transportation, this includes operations, management, fleet, peer collaboration, use of technology, etc. In contrast, opportunities and challenges represent the positives and negatives, respectively, external to the services—how residents use the service, politics, funding, education/trip planning, fare, etc.

Figure 2, below, summarizes the extent of what was heard via stakeholder conversations as they relate to strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and challenges.

		INTERNAL	
POSITIVE	Strengths	Weaknesses	NEGATIVE
	<p>Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Miramichi Transit is reliable • Easy access to transportation • Steady annual increase of ridership • Low-cost rides for RSC service • Current transit options (Miramichi Transit, Miramichi Accessible Transit, Volunteer Driver Program) is providing essential services 	<p>Weaknesses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Longer wait and travel times discourages use • Service hours do not support all employment opportunities • Coordination between existing transportation services • GMSC internal capacity is limited 	
<p>Opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public transit funding streams are increasingly available • Promoting the services • Large potential source of untapped riders in the rural districts • Increasing social and health benefits as well as community cohesion and equity • Increasing connectivity opportunities along active transportation network • Recruitment campaign for Volunteer drivers have doubled driver pool 	<p>Challenges</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service Commission's capacity for growth (staffing, buses, etc.) • Large geography, low population density • Inclement weather affecting services • Poor rural internet • Balancing investment across various communities • Government emissions targets • Potential for duplication of service • Stall in the closure of the Centennial Bridge 		
EXTERNAL			

Figure 3: SWOC Analysis³

³ All bulleted items included in the SWOC table is based on commentary from stakeholders during the workshop. References to reliability, ease of access, or any other aspects are subjective and not necessarily the experience of all users or Greater Miramichi residents.

Key Passenger Issues and Challenges

The following statements were provided by stakeholders with specific reference to how the current system continues to cause issues and challenges as it relates to passengers and potential riders:

- Long distances/non-centralized areas of interest (e.g., grocery stores, hospitals, etc.),
- Social stigma of relying on community transportation services rather than a personal vehicle,
- Service scope for community transportation options are limited (seniors, medical, accessibility, low-income, etc.) leading to potential riders being turned away,
- Not being able to book trips as/when needed, and
- Limited service area.

Transit Service Provider Issues and Challenges

Key stakeholder groups engaged through this process were the three existing transportation service providers: Miramichi Transit, Miramichi Accessible Transit, and the Volunteer Driver Program. They provided insights into the key issues and challenges that their organizations are facing in the Greater Miramichi region related to their operational health, sustainability, and longevity. Discussions were left open-ended. Key issues identified by these stakeholders included:

- Availability, recruitment, and retention of volunteer/paid drivers,
- Marketing of various services (many residents still do not know of available services),
- Funding options,
- Vehicle maintenance is outsourced, and
- Sourcing accessible vehicles.

3.1.3 Future Modifications

Discussions on “future modifications” were focused by short- (1-2 years) and long-term (3-5+ years) changes and implementation, as well as aspects/features of passenger transportation systems that should be prioritized by regional systems to more effectively serve residents.

Table 3, on the following page, outlines the summation of feedback from the stakeholders on future modifications. Section 4 outlines additional community and stakeholder feedback and input.

Table 3. Future Modifications

Short-term Changes	Long-term Changes	Aspects/features to be prioritized
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase volunteer driver ratio • Explore on-demand transit • Seek additional funding • Increase service hours • Form a transportation advisory committee • Equitable service delivery • Increase fleet/drivers • Explore partnerships 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carpooling infrastructure • Paid driver positions • Employer partnerships • Weekly fixed route from rural communities • Expand routes • Invest in increased education/promotional activities • Leverage data insights • Build/implement transit app 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Park and rides to increase bus catchment area • Increase collaboration across systems • Coordinate interprovincial transportation • Accessibility • Align transportation planning with development planning

3.2 Existing and proposed services

This section outlines details on the existing transportation services within the Greater Miramichi region that provide relevant *passenger transport services* aligned with the provincial government's definition of "regional transportation" in the context of the RTM.

In this context, the Greater Miramichi region has three distinct services that fall into two of the four passenger transport services types outlined in the RTM. These are:

- Miramichi Transit, falling into the RTM's "Intercity Transit" type,
- GMSC's Volunteer Driver Program, falling into the RTM's "Community Transit" type, and
- Miramichi Accessible Transit, also falling into the RTM's "Community Transit" type.

To further detail each of the existing services, the following one-page cutsheets have been developed that include service descriptions, clientele base, area served, operations overview, fare structure, and how to ride or make a reservation information.

MIRAMICHI TRANSIT

YEAR LAUNCHED 2009

PASSENGER TRANSPORT SERVICE TYPE Intercity Transit

OPERATING ORGANIZATION Miramichi Transit

SERVICE DESCRIPTION

Miramichi Transit is the fixed-route public transit agency, providing service in the urban core of the City of Miramichi. The service has three routes that connect residents in and around Chatham, Newcastle, and Douglastown. It is a scheduled service operating 6 days/week, funded via fare revenue and municipal subsidy. Miramichi Transit is exploring the feasibility of on-demand transit to expand their service area to encompass the entirety of the City of Miramichi.

CLIENTELE

The service focuses on:

- Residents of urban Miramichi
- Able-bodied individuals*

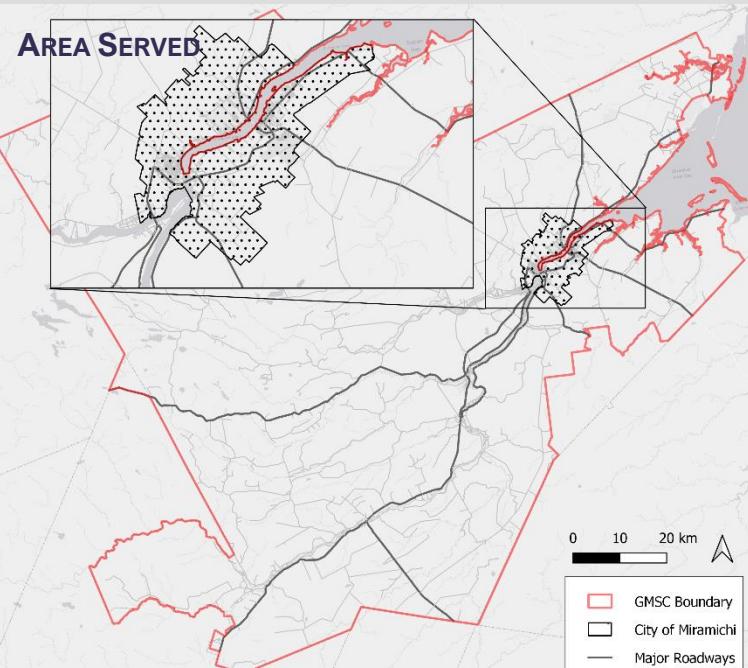
OPERATIONS OVERVIEW

Annual Ridership: **115,000**

of Drivers: **10**

of Vehicles: **8**

Vehicle Type: **24 seat minibuses**



FARE

\$3 cash fare. However, discounts are available via bulk fare media such as tickets and passes.

FUNDING SOURCES

Miramichi Transit's operating funding is derived through fare revenue and municipal subsidy. Capital funding is provided by the City of Miramichi as well as through provincial and federal grants.

*Miramichi Transit buses are not accessible.

MIRAMICHI ACCESSIBLE TRANSIT (MATBUS)

YEAR LAUNCHED --

PASSENGER TRANSPORT SERVICE TYPE Community Transit

OPERATING ORGANIZATION Miramichi Accessible Transit

SERVICE DESCRIPTION

Miramichi Accessible Transit, also known as the MATbus, is a non-profit organization providing door-to-door transportation and paratransit services across the Greater Miramichi region.

The service operates 7 days/week, and is almost entirely funded through fundraising activities and a contractual agreement with the school district.

CLIENTELE

The service focuses on:

- Individuals with accessibility needs
- Seniors (aged 50+)

OPERATIONS OVERVIEW

Annual Ridership: **40,000¹**

of Drivers: **5 Full-time, 2 Part-time**

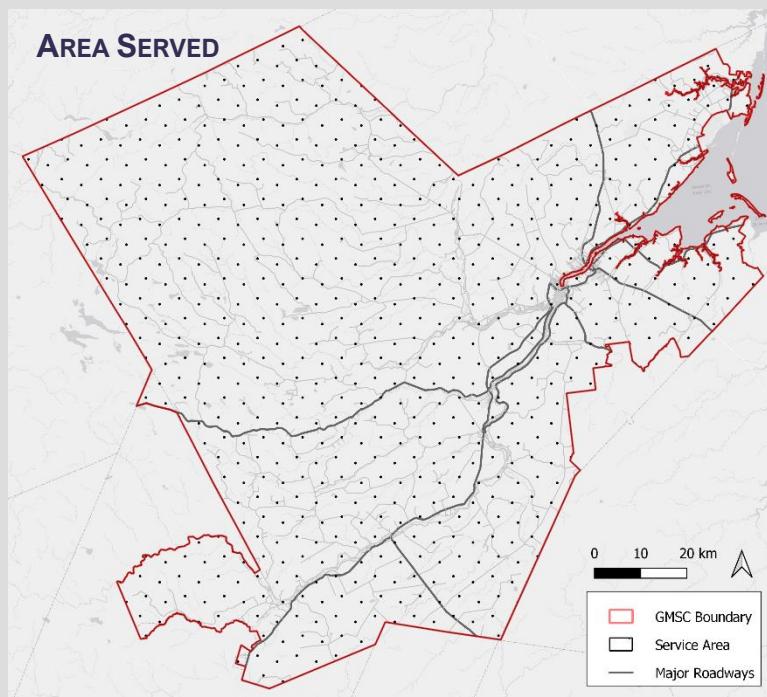
of Vehicles: **4 vans + 1 bus**

Vehicle Type: **Mix of accessible features**

FARE

\$10 per roundtrip fare, however there are discounted rates available to low-income riders and families.

AREA SERVED



HOW TO MAKE A RESERVATION

Clients can schedule rides via email, text, or by phone call. Rides must be scheduled with advanced notice.

¹Unconfirmed. Estimate based on anecdotal ridership data of “100-200 passengers per day” provided by the organization.

VOLUNTEER DRIVER PROGRAM

YEAR LAUNCHED 2020

PASSENGER TRANSPORT SERVICE TYPE Community Transit

OPERATING ORGANIZATION GMSC (since 2023)

SERVICE DESCRIPTION

The Volunteer Driver Program is a community transportation program that provides door-to-door ride-home service via volunteers using their own vehicles. The service runs on a non-profit model.

The Program is an integrated service of Northumberland Community Inclusion Network and the GMSC and subsidized in part by the Economic and Social Inclusion Corporation (ESIC).

CLIENTELE

The service focuses on:

- Low-income individuals
- People with limited transit means

OPERATIONS OVERVIEW

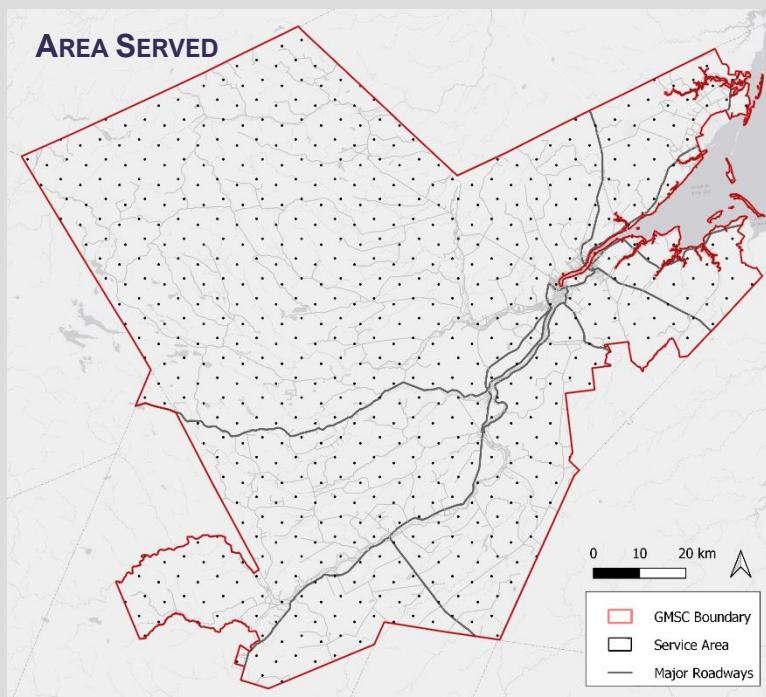
Annual Ridership: **2,800¹**

of Drivers: **16**

of Vehicles: **16**

Vehicle Type: **Driver-owned vans**

AREA SERVED



FARE

Distance-based fare that is heavily subsidized by the GMSC or Social Development, as appropriate, on a per-ride basis.

HOW TO MAKE A RESERVATION

Clients can reserve rides via phone. Rides must be scheduled with advanced notice.

Dispatch services are provided by Urban / Rural Rides.

¹Estimated for 2024, based on average ridership July – Sept inclusive.

4 Community and Stakeholder Engagement

To supplement the current state findings, community and stakeholder engagement was undertaken to identify and assess the needs and priorities of riders, residents, and stakeholders. These needs and priorities can help identify the transportation solutions that would be appropriate for implementation within the Greater Miramichi region.

4.1 Methodology

To ensure the success of the community engagement activities, consultation opportunities were designed to be flexible and geographically dispersed:

- 1. Flexibility:** Residents and stakeholders have lives, hobbies, work, time restraints, childcare responsibility, and other obligations that often prevent them from filling out surveys let alone spend hours attending in-person engagement activities in the middle of the workday or evening. The project activities were held at various times and locations across the region to mitigate the burden of access. Similarly, various ways of engaging were offered to residents via an online survey (with physical copies available) and in-person sessions.
- 2. Geographically Dispersed:** In-person engagement activities were held in various locations across the service commission's boundary to make the sessions easily accessible to the public.

4.2 Activities Summary

Three engagement activities were undertaken to solicit input and feedback from members of the public and stakeholder groups. The following describes each of the activities and the dates they were held (if applicable).

4.2.1 Pop-up Consultation Sessions

Three 2-hour in-person pop-up consultation sessions were held over two days, in various areas of the Greater Miramichi region. The timing of these sessions was scheduled in collaboration with GMSC staff and the respective venues. They included a combination of morning and afternoon sessions. The locations were determined in collaboration with GMSC staff to ensure that the venues were in higher pedestrian traffic areas and were strategically located across the GMSC boundary to accommodate a wide and representative range of residents. The timing and location of the three⁴ sessions were as follows:

⁴ A fourth session was planned to be held in the Alnwick community. However, the planned venue was unable to accommodate staff on the date. In lieu, staff traveled through the community leaving project materials and handouts (with project descriptions and survey links) in various locations (Alnwick municipal office and other destinations, where available).

- Session 1: Thursday, January 23, 10am – 12pm in Boiestown, Upper Miramichi Rural Community Office,
- Session 2: Thursday, January 23, 1pm – 3pm in Village of Doaktown Community School Library, and
- Session 3: Friday, January 24, 10am – 12pm in City of Miramichi Newcastle Public Library.

At these sessions, two members of the project team were on-site with engagement materials and interactive posterboards on display. Residents were encouraged to interact with the materials (including posting stick-notes, talking to staff, providing recommendations, etc.) on topics relating to current or future transportation services, service delivery, areas of desired connections, accessibility of service, challenges/barriers, and any other topics they desired. On-site staff were able to answer project questions as well as receive anecdotal information on the transit service that residents shared.

The pop-up nature of the activities was implemented so that residents could provide as much input as they wanted on their schedule, outside of the bounds of rigid start and end times like formal public meetings or virtual engagement sessions. Residents were welcome to drop by at any point within the session's timeframe and stay for as long – or as short – as they were comfortable.

4.2.2 Public Survey

A survey was created by the LTRT project team. The survey was available virtually, with a physical copy being available upon request at the discretion of commission staff since not all residents may have had access to online services or had limited broadband connectivity.

The survey was launched on December 18, 2024, being released in advance of consultation sessions. The survey was open for response until February 2, 2025, closing at midnight. Commission staff advertised the survey on social media.

The survey was divided into four sections: demographics, transit experience, transportation and travel needs, and the Regional Transportation Plan (focusing on transportation values). It incorporated mapping and graphics to supplement the understanding of questions. Individual questions asked about age, residence (community), transportation barriers, connectivity, transit perceptions, current transit usage, and more. The complete survey is provided in Appendix B.

The survey had the highest participation rate of engagement activities, and offered residents a platform to provide multiple, detailed answers, suggestions, and comments.

4.2.3 Community Partner Workshops

Diving deeper into the community needs and priorities that should be explored through the Regional Transportation Plan, two 60-minute virtual workshops were held with key community partner organizations that are representative of larger groups of people and who are likely to be involved in and impacted by the RTP.

Both workshops received an overview of the project and objectives of the RTP, with the majority of the sessions being dedicated to discussion activities centered on existing transportation services and future priorities. The workshops were intended to ensure a collaborative approach to defining needs and priorities for transportation, as well as the goals for the RTP that is informed by the community.

4.3 Engagement Results and Analysis

The following subsections outline the feedback received during each of the previously mentioned engagement activities. Input received has been grouped and consolidated for clarity.

4.3.1 Pop-up Consultation Session Results

The pop-up consultation sessions were in venues with higher-foot traffic and received feedback, input, and anecdotes from residents. The engagement materials provided relayed information on the project, including a project description and key objectives, as well as providing QR codes to English and French versions of the public transportation survey. Additional posterboards asked:

- How would you describe transportation in your community?
- What do you think transportation should look like in your community?
- What are your travelling/transportation priorities in your community?

Unfortunately, participation in the in-person sessions was not high. This outcome may be attributed to several primary factors: a general lack of public engagement with transit-related matters and insufficient promotional efforts regarding the events. Despite the limited attendance, the in-person sessions yielded valuable and insightful feedback from participants and was complemented by other activities described in subsequent sections.

“How would you describe transportation in your community?”

The table below provides question responses, consolidated into themes. While some answers may be more relevant to other questions, the exercise respects where respondents decided to place their input. Overarching themes involved community, infrastructure, and connectivity. Table 4 summarizes the responses received on this topic.

Table 4: Summary of feedback received on current transportation options.

Themes	Response Summary [Number of responses]
Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not everyone has access to a car/mobility option [3] Good for people in urban areas [2] Additional insurance needed for transporting people [1] Residents with mobility challenges rely on taxis with a ramp [1]
Infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Roads are in poor condition and need to be fixed [3]
Connectivity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Areas are difficult to access [2] Used to be a community connector bus – was not well used [2]

“What do you think transportation should look like in your community?”

The table below provides question responses, consolidated into themes. As above, answers were placed by residents and remain in their selected locations. Responses were focused on new services and community connections. Table 5 summarizes the responses received on this topic.

Table 5: Summary of feedback received on the future of transportation.

Themes	Response Summary [Number of responses]
New Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Vehicle that operates 1/week that travels to destinations (e.g., Miramichi, Fredericton) [4] Vehicle that operates 1/week that travels to appointments (e.g., banks, barbers, pharmacies, medical appointments) [3] Bus route from Boiestown to Fredericton [1]
Community Connections	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Medical appointments should be a priority [3] Grocery delivery services [1] Great for connecting seniors (to community events, benefits) [1]

“What are your travelling/transportation priorities in your community?”

Posterboards were seeded with four priorities: connectivity, sustainability, ease of information, and transportation funding. Residents were able to indicate where on a physical spectrum (shown below) they valued the priority, ranging from ‘not important’ to ‘extremely important.’ Residents could also provide their own priorities/inputs, if desired. Unfortunately, no residents engaged with this activity in any of the sessions.

While there was no board interaction, anecdotes suggested that connectivity was top of mind, though it was stressed by residents that there was pride in their community cohesion and ability to care and look out for individuals in need.

4.3.2 Stakeholder Workshops⁵

Two stakeholder workshops were held, with various government, non-profit, and other representatives. The virtual engagement platform Conceptboard was used to conduct both workshops. The workshops were designed as a discussion forum that mirrored the type of questions asked in the public transportation survey, with input into:

- Existing transportation systems or services within the Greater Miramichi region, and
- Future priorities and modifications over the short- and long-term horizons.

The results and input from these groups are consolidated into the tables on the following pages.

A notable discrepancy between the public survey and pop-up consultations to the stakeholder workshop feedback centered on service to the Moncton airport and large employment areas like Renous. Stakeholders made repetitive notes that service to the Moncton airport is non-existent⁶. The survey and pop-ups were more focused on local transportation challenges and barriers.

Discussion Topic 1 – Reflecting on the Existing System

The first topic of discussion centered on community partners reflecting on the current state of the existing transportation systems in and around the Greater Miramichi region. Notably, community partners focused on different aspects of transportation within the Greater Miramichi region—some responses are specific to Miramichi Transit’s fixed-route network within the city, the Service Commission’s Volunteer Drivers Program, or are just general. Context has been provided where appropriate. Table 6 through Table 8 summarize responses received on this discussion topic.

Table 6: Responses to the question "What are the strengths."

Topic	Response Summary [Number of responses]
Miramichi Transit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service is reliable [2] • Drivers are dedicated [2] • Fare is reasonable [2] • Increasing attention to Active Transportation (AT) network connectivity [1]
Volunteer Drivers Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Program is growing; number of drivers and awareness is increasing [4] • Service/fare is low cost for residents [3] • Drivers are dedicated; go above and beyond [2]

⁵ All bulleted items within Tables 6 – 11 are summarized commentary and responses discussed during the stakeholder workshops. References to reliability, ease of access, or any other aspects are subjective and not necessarily the experience of all users or Greater Miramichi residents.

⁶ Maritime Bus does provide a daily, roundtrip service from Miramichi to the Moncton Airport. It is only once per day and not necessarily at optimal times, but it does exist as an option.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No routing to navigate making it easier to understand [1]
General	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunities to expand transit systems [2]

Table 7: Responses to the question "What are some gaps."

Topic	Response Summary [Number of responses]
General Transportation Options	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of awareness of services [8] • Airport Service is non-existent [6] • Lack of coordination between various transit services [4] • Lack of funding [4] • Rural communities are heavily dependent on personal transit options, such as ridesharing, relying on family/friends, using their own vehicles [3] • Fixed route transit is limited to the City [3]
Miramichi Transit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accessibility is an issue with Miramichi Transit [2] • Service hours do not support employment opportunities [2] • Insufficient bus stops leave parts of the region underserved [1] • Driver availability [1]
Miramichi Accessible Transit (MATbus)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MATbus is not affordable as a primarily accessible service [2]

Table 8: Responses to the question "What are some challenges."

Topic	Response Summary [Number of responses]
Growth and Infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Physical capacity for growth within government (e.g., staffing) [3] • Poor internet connectivity imposing a barrier to online travel booking and options [2] • Road conditions, winter weather, reliability [2] • Public transit is not profitable – who pays? [1]
Dispersed Geography	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Long travel times in public transportation vehicles [3] • Large geographic area, low population base [2] • Vast areas with no transportation available [2]
Planning and Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing development with transportation options [1] • Government emission targets and costs [1]

DISCUSSION TOPIC 2 – FUTURE PRIORITIES AND MODIFICATIONS

The second topic of discussion centered on community partners prioritizing future modifications and additions to the various transportation systems in and around the Greater Miramichi region. Discussion questions focused on implementation priorities in the short- and long-term. Context has been provided where appropriate. Table 9 through Table 11 provide a summary of responses received during the workshop on this discussion topic.

Table 9: Responses to the question "what would be some desired short-term changes (0-2 years)."

Topic	Response Summary [Number of responses]
General	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More advertisements/marketing/education of available options [7] • Moncton Airport connection [6] • Increased funding [4] • Easily accessible service information (e.g., fare prices, exact change required, how it works, etc.) [2] • Forming a regional transportation advisory committee that has service providers working [2] • Ridesharing services [1] • Taxi services [1] • Equitable service delivery [1] • Establishing consistent levels of service [1] • Availability of car rentals [1] • Leveraging capacity of existing service providers instead of building brand new [1] • Find existing platforms to promote alt. solutions (e.g., poparide, Turo) [1]
Miramichi Transit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have an on-demand shuttle service [2] • Increase to fixed-route service hours [2]
Volunteer Driver Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have a comfortable ratio of drivers to clients [3] • Expand the Volunteer Driver Program beyond medical appointments [2]

Table 10: Responses to the question "What would be some desired long-term changes (3-5+ years)."

Topic	Response Summary [Number of responses]
General	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Private taxi or ridesharing services with modern services [3] • Cost sharing model review [2] • Ensuring each community has local means of transportation [2] • Explore employer partnerships [2] • Infrastructure for carpooling [2] • Tourism-focused transportation [2] • Integration of real-time information systems [1]
Regional Transportation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interprovincial connections (e.g., routes to Acadian Peninsula) [3] • Weekly fixed route from various rural communities into the city [3]
Planning and Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transportation and land use planning and development coordination [2]
Miramichi Transit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase service coverage of Miramichi Transit [1]
Volunteer Driver Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moving from Volunteer to Paid driver positions [1]

Table 11: Responses to the question "are there any transit features that you would like to see as priorities."

Topic	Response Summary [Number of responses]
General	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accessible mobility options for all residents [7] • Increased promotion and education of available services [6] • A booking system that works for older residents and those with poor internet connectivity [3] • Collaborative work is essential [3] • Increased consultation with First Nation Communities [2] • Coordinating Service Commission delivery with other services [2] • Active Transportation Integration [1] • Park and rides would be feasible in rural communities [1]
Regional Transportation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shuttles/connections to the airport [6] • Interregional connections (e.g., routes to Acadian Peninsula) [4] • Shuttles/connections to employment areas (e.g., Renous prison) [3]

4.3.3 Public Survey

This section summarizes findings from the public survey conducted December 2024 – February 2025 for the RTP. The survey addressed the low turnout at the in-person engagement sessions by capturing high-level feedback from a much broader cross-section of the public. Overall, the public survey findings mirror those from the in-person engagement sessions and lay the groundwork for quantitative analysis.

Who we heard from

The community engagement survey received 137 responses, capturing a diverse cross-section of the Greater Miramichi Region.

The age profile of respondents skewed toward older adults, with more than half (52%) aged 60 or above. The remaining respondents were distributed across other age brackets, with notable representation from those aged 50-59 (18%) and 30-39 (14%). In terms of employment status, the survey captured a balanced mix of working and retired residents, with 50% employed full-time and 36% retired.

The geographic distribution showed survey respondent representation from:

- City of Miramichi (64%),
- Alnwick (8%),
- Upper Miramichi (8%),
- Greater Miramichi Rural District (7%),
- Miramichi River Valley (4%),
- Doaktown (4%), and
- Natoaganeg (1%).

A significant finding emerged regarding public transit usage: 65% of respondents indicated they had never used public transit services in the region, with this pattern consistent across both urban and rural areas. Among those with transit experience, Miramichi Transit (18%) and Maritime Bus (11%) emerged as the most frequently utilized services.

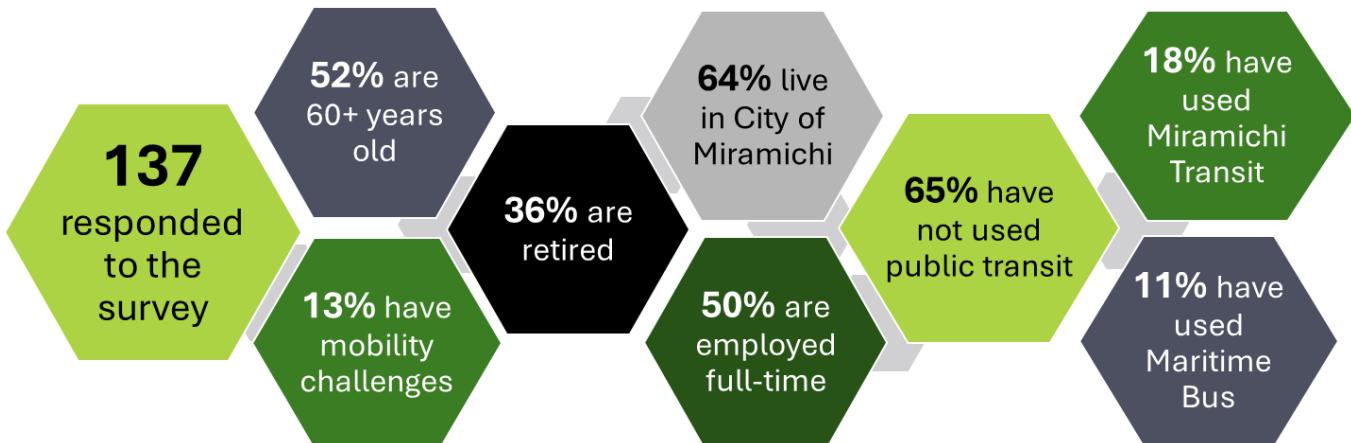


Figure 4: Snapshot of Who We Heard from in the Survey

Transportation needs and travel patterns

The survey findings revealed significant insights into transportation patterns and needs within the Greater Miramichi Region. Personal vehicles dominated as the primary mode of transportation, with 90% of respondents relying on them, while public transit usage remained low at 4%. Notably, when asked about their reasons for using personal vehicles, the most chosen reason is 'there aren't other options', representing 28% of survey responses. The survey identified the top three purposes for frequent trips:

- Shopping (29%),
- Personal business (27%), and
- Work (25%).

This pattern emphasizes the need for a reliable transportation system that can accommodate both essential daily commutes and routine activities. The significant portion of work-related travel indicates the importance of aligning transit schedules with work shifts.

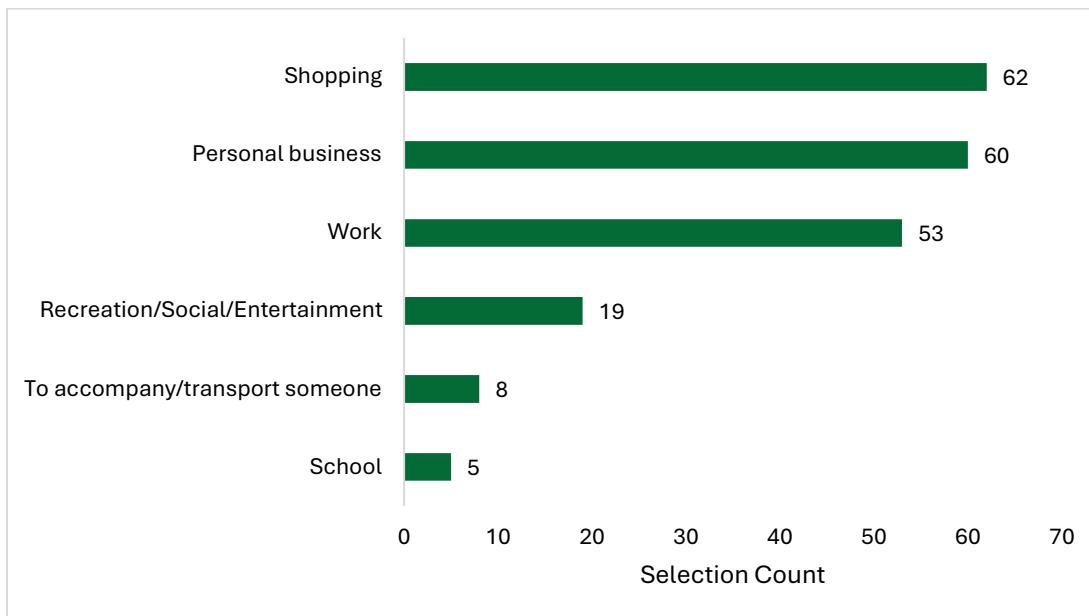


Figure 5: Purpose of Most Frequent Trips⁷

Regarding travel patterns, the survey revealed that most activities remain localized, with 32% of respondents conducting most trips within their local community. Another 29% mix local travel with trips outside their community for services. Equal shares (15% each) frequently travel to other parts of the Greater Miramichi Region and beyond. Among City of Miramichi residents, 43% mostly stay local, while 36% combine local trips with travel for amenities outside their community.

Current Transit Experience

Understanding the current transit user experiences is critical for effective transit system planning and service design. Survey respondents who used public transit services (including Miramichi Transit, Accessible Transit, Community Transportation, and Maritime Bus) reported generally positive experiences: over half agreed the service is reliable, fairly priced, and worth reusing, while also expressing interest in expanded operating hours. However, only 46.6% found the service easy to understand. Among the 12% of all survey respondents who exclusively used Miramichi Transit, 61% agreed the service was fairly priced. However, only 44% agree that the service is reliable, and 50% disagree that it is easy to understand how to use it. Half expressed willingness to reuse it, and 89% would like to use it outside the current hours of operation.

⁷ Survey respondents were asked about the purpose of their most frequent trips, with options to choose from. Due to a flaw, 70 responses were limited to one choice, while 67 could select multiple options.

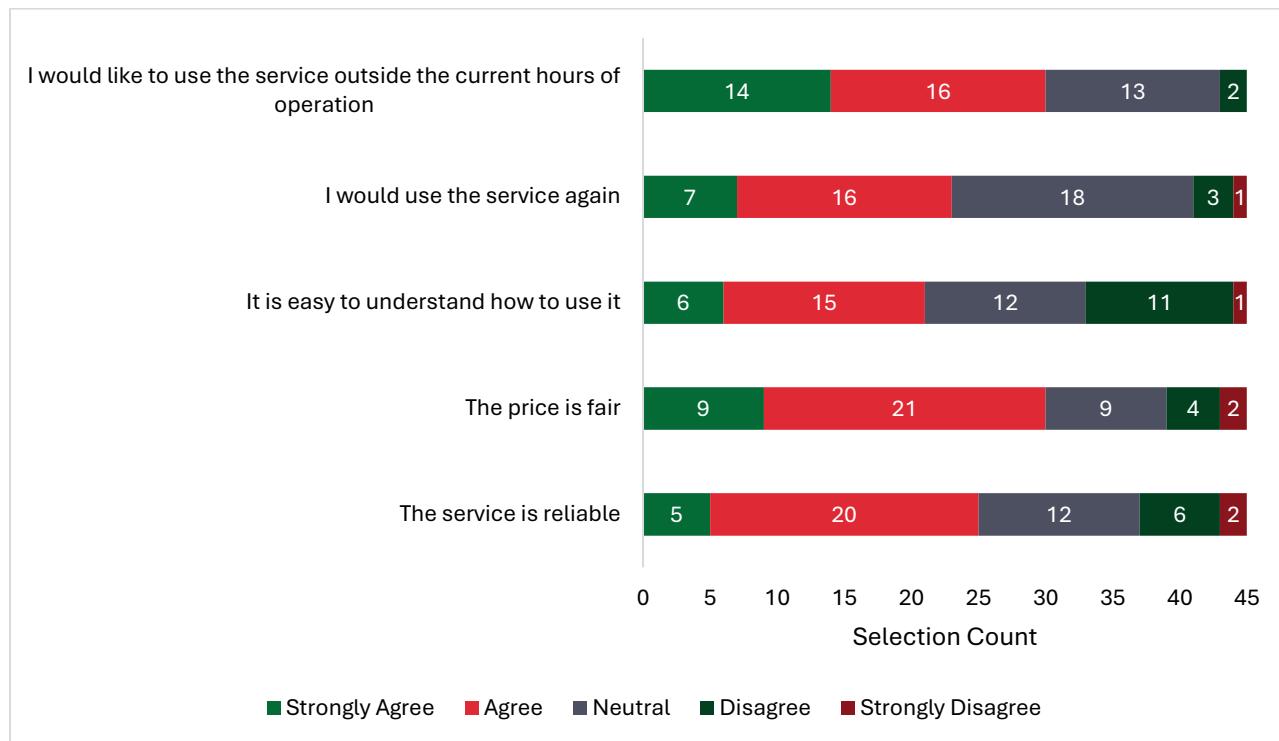


Figure 6: Current Transit Experience

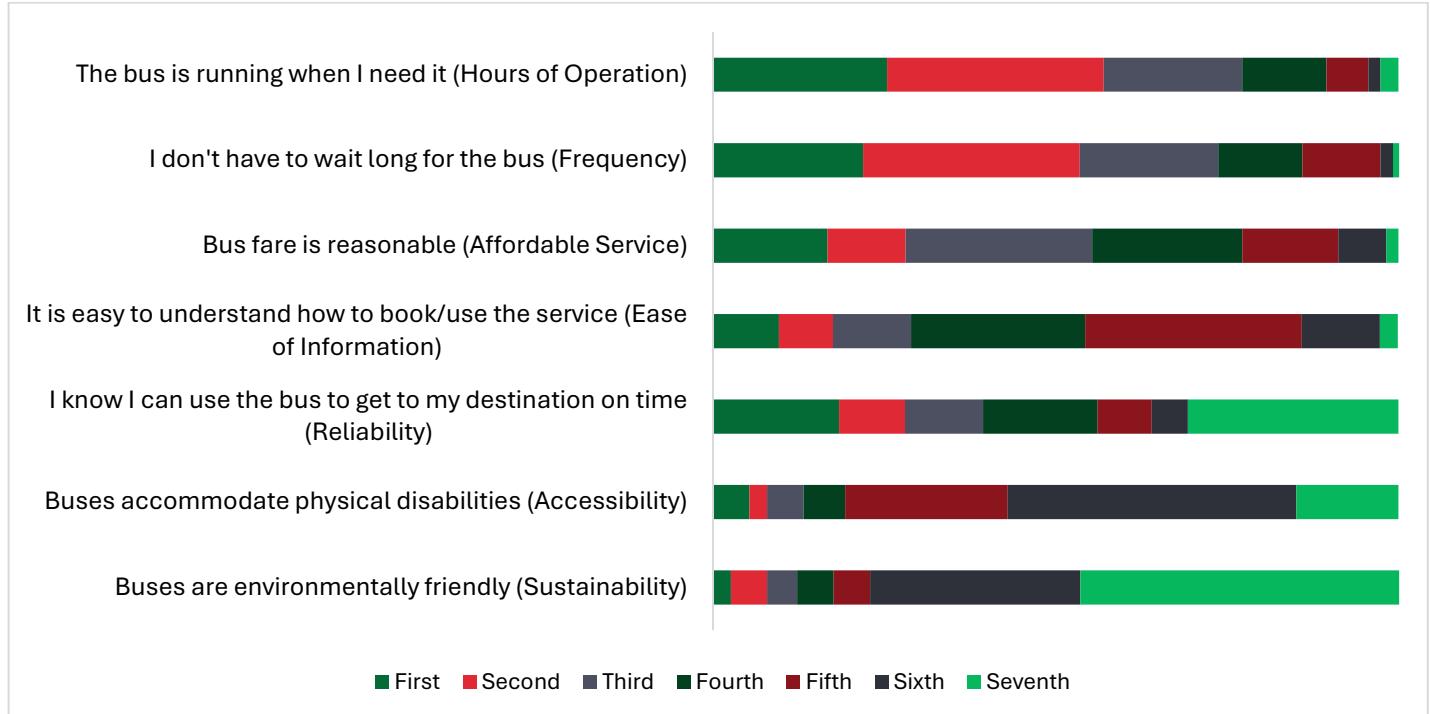
The most cited reason for avoiding transit was a preference for driving (43%), followed by limited operating hours (13%), excessive wait times (9%), ‘I did not know it existed’ (6%), and ‘I don’t know how to use the service’ (4%). The data underscores the need to address convenience barriers and enhanced transit public education to encourage transit adoption.

Transit Network Design

The survey collected feedback on transit network design priorities, with participants ranking service features. The top priorities were hours of operation, frequency, and affordable service.

When asked about potential transit expansion, 52% of all respondents expressed likelihood to use expanded services. Among those residing outside the City of Miramichi, the likelihood to use expanded services was slightly reduced: 27.5% indicated they would be "very likely" to use expanded options, 20% "somewhat likely," 12.5% neutral, 17.5% "somewhat unlikely", and 22.5% "very unlikely".

In response to the question asking for “additional feedback regarding the Regional Transportation Plan or public transit in the region,” survey respondents highlighted expanded regional coverage (15 survey respondents) and improved schedule alignment with work hours and weekend travel (9) as critical transit priorities. Additional feedback included requests for event-specific transportation (3), affordable pricing (2), accessibility improvements (2), user education initiatives (2), network adjustments for potential Centennial Bridge closures (2), and enhanced reliability (2).

Figure 7: Network Design Priorities⁸

⁸ Survey respondents were asked, “Whether or not you use transit, please prioritize the following transit service features based on what is important to you.”

5 Assessing Needs

All feedback received from residents, community members, and stakeholders is invaluable to building an understanding of transportation needs from which the Regional Transportation Plan is based. Staff heard feedback on a variety of transportation topics, service types, solutions, and mobility options. It should be noted that participation rates varied across engagement activities, with some pop-up sessions experiencing lower turnout. This introduces potential self-selection bias where findings may not fully represent all demographic groups. Despite these limitations, the data collected remains valuable, especially given the multiple engagement efforts made to reach diverse community segments.

Select themes continued to recur. These recurring inputs, in conjunction with the service findings, establish a series of top-of-mind needs and desires from future transportation systems. These preliminary priorities include:

Priority 1: Promotion and Education of Current and Future Transportation Systems

Educating residents on the services available—and how to use the services—is crucial to drawing people into transit. Simply put, they cannot use it if they do not know about it. Not understanding how to use a system is also a barrier that prevents use.

More than a quarter of survey respondents (28%) reported being unaware of any transportation options beyond private vehicles. Overall, 70% of survey participants have never used public transit, and that share climbs to 81% among those living outside the City of Miramichi. This is consistent with what was heard in the in-person engagement sessions and heavily noted by community partners.

Youth education, in particular, has been researched within the public transit industry. Research shows that early education has a positive impact on ridership over-time as being familiarized with transit in grade school increases the chance that they will use it as adults.

Priority 2: Physical Accessibility of Vehicles

Of the existing mobility options within the region, Miramichi Transit – the public transit system within the City of Miramichi – does not possess accessible vehicles. Instead, those seeking accommodation must use either the Volunteer Drivers Program or book with the more expensive Miramichi Accessible Transit (MATbus) service. Not only is this not equitable, but it unnecessarily burdens the already limited Volunteer Drivers Program as well as creates an inconsistent experience across modes that undermines perceptions of reliability and consistency.

Priority 3: Regional Connectivity

Mobility options are limited outside of the City of Miramichi. Among City of Miramichi residents, 43% conduct most of their trips within the city and 36% split their travel between local destinations and amenities elsewhere. In contrast, only 20% of residents in other regional communities primarily travel within their own area. While there is tremendous community cooperation and spirit in all areas of the Greater Miramichi region—where residents are able to rely on friends, family, and neighbours for rides and transport to appointments and necessities—this is not something available to all residents. The provision of mobility options across the region would ensure *all* residents have access to essential services. As community members who currently provide transportation begin to need support themselves, it's critical to establish a sustainable continuity of transportation options.

How these mobility options are presented and connect throughout the region has not yet been identified. Options relating to fixed-route transit, subsidized ridesharing or taxis, dedicated on-demand transit, supported carpooling, and other modes of mobility lend themselves to the intent of the Regional Transportation Mandate and subsequent Plan.

Priority 4: Continued and Consistent Public and Stakeholder Outreach

The provision of various mobility options is a public service. As such, it must reflect the needs and desires of residents and users to be successful. Therefore, there should be scheduled engagement activities for transportation options that are focused on the public to ensure regular communications and check-ins. This also includes the inclusion of various stakeholder groups, such as First Nations Communities, to ensure all voice are being heard and considered.

Priority 5: Explore Connections beyond the Greater Miramichi Region

This project is focused on developing a RTP for the Greater Miramichi region. While proposed services are meant to be scalable for eventual interprovincial travel opportunities, the current focus is to provide mobility options for residents within the region so they can access essential services, shopping, appointments, and work. However, there is a significant amount of feedback and input on connections to out-of-region locations, such as the Moncton International Airport.⁹

⁹ As previously noted, Maritime Bus provides daily, roundtrip service from Miramichi to the Moncton Airport, albeit at limited times. However, in this context, the airport is an example of an external “out-of-region” location. Fredericton and Bathurst are other notable locations.

5.1 Discussion on Existing Services Limited that of Prospective Services

While community engagement exercises often result in revealed preferences for future services, specifically pertaining to service types, the discussions during this needs assessment as dominated by issues and improvements to existing services. Potential new service model(s) (e.g., fixed-route transit, on-demand service, volunteer drivers or paratransit) were not the focus because respondents and stakeholders were concerned with the types of services that currently exist within the region. Discussion focused on how they are or are not perceived to be functioning, or what they value about transportation, not necessarily on how they would prefer to see these transportation services delivered.

The priorities that have been identified are values such as connectivity, accessibility, and awareness of options — many of which align with the requirements of the RTM — were used to guide the development of transportation options and solutions within the region in conjunction with industry standards, existing services, the current state assessment, the requirements of the RTM, and the capacity of the Greater Miramichi Service Commission.

6 Transportation Solutions

Through the current state findings, the transportation services that exist within the Greater Miramichi region, the priorities heard through the public engagement, and desired future state of transportation from the service commission's staff and board, transportation solutions have been identified to be pursued by the Service Commission in the near-term. Priorities derived from the needs assessment (see Section 5, previously) include:

- Priority 1: Promotion and Education of Current and Future Transportation Systems
- Priority 2: Physical Accessibility of Vehicles
- Priority 3: Regional Connectivity
- Priority 4: Continued and Consistent Public and Stakeholder Outreach
- Priority 5: Explore Connections beyond the Greater Miramichi Region

These priorities and values are broad. In cross-referencing the Regional Transportation Mandate, it specifies that there are four types of passenger transport services in New Brunswick, identified by the metrics outlined in the following table:

Table 12: Passenger Transport Service Classifications

	Management	Distance of Trips	Service Area	Vehicle Size	Route Type	Frequency
			Density			
Urban Public Transit	Mid-Size to Large Cities	Short to Med	Med to High	Mid to Large	Fixed Route, No reservation	High
Regional Public Transit	RSCs	Short to Med	Low to Med	Small to Mid	Variable	Med
Community Transit	RSCs and Non-profits	Short to Long	Variable	Small	Customized route	On-demand
Intercity Transit	Private Sector	Long	Variable	Very Large	Fixed Route, With or Without Reservation	Low

Of these listed passenger transport service types, 3 are represented within the Greater Miramichi Region: Urban Public Transit via Miramichi Transit, Community Transit via the Volunteer Driver Program and Miramichi Accessible Transit, and Intercity Transit via Maritime Bus. Yet, for the

purposes of this Regional Transportation Plan, in particular the role of the Greater Miramichi Service Commission, there are only two relevant passenger transport service types, as identified by the mandate: Regional Public Transit, and Community Transit. These are either a regionally scaled fixed-route system (Regional Public Transit), or an on-demand/specialized transit system (Community Transit). Both are appropriate for the Greater Miramichi region regardless of rural vs. urban contexts due to the operation of Miramichi Transit in the larger urban centre.

However, in the general broadness of these priorities and values, as well as the general broadness of the mandate's intent to bring "viable travel options to support the efficient movement of people," alternative transportation options beyond traditional transit solutions have been explored in this Regional Transportation Plan.

Building upon the findings to date and these priorities, this section discusses the various transportation solutions that have been developed to meet the required "streams" of the Regional Transportation Mandate. These transportation solutions focus on service models and types recommended for enhancement and implementation across the region, as well as focusing on internal efficiencies and resource management and capacity within the GMSC. The four streams of the RTM and their subsequent solutions are:

- **Regional Planning**

- Continuing supporting the GMSC's Community Transportation System
- Carpooling Pilot
- Carshare Platform

- **Public Relations**

- Education and Awareness Campaigns
- Periodic Newsletters
- Employer Partnerships

- **Resources and Oversight**

- Transportation Coordinator Position
- Funding Opportunities
- Community Forum
- Transit Agency Working Group

6.1 Regional Planning Stream

Within the Mandate, the regional planning stream is focused on enhancement or introduction of various transportation services and types appropriate for the Greater Miramichi region. Several services were assessed throughout this process that moved toward meeting the intent of the mandate. These included implementing a fixed-route transit service from Alnwick – Upper Miramichi (that could have been expanded beyond service commission boundaries in the future)

but was too costly; Moncton airport shuttle service but was duplicative to service already provided by Maritime Bus; and contracting and subsidizing a ridesharing service but was not an equitable solution.

There are three transit services already operating within the region: Miramichi Transit, Miramichi Accessible Transit, and the GMSC Community Transit Program. Miramichi Transit's coverage is limited to the City and Miramichi Accessible Transit is a private, not-for-profit entity. The prevailing transit solution is continuing to support and facilitate the expansion of the existing GMSC Community Transit Program.

Other regional planning initiatives beyond public transit to be explored includes further supporting mobility modes that are familiar to residents, identified through the public engagement, and the idea of community cooperation that is already apparent within the region. These include a carpooling pilot program and a carshare platform.

6.1.1 Supporting the Expansion of GMSC's Community Transit Program

The GMSC currently operates their Community Transportation Program, a door-to-door volunteer driver service focused on providing services to seniors, low-income families, newcomers, and others without access to means of alternative transportation. This service provides clients with inter-regional and inter-provincial connections as required.

Despite being not well-known amongst community members, those who are aware of the service use it significantly. The service formerly operated using 6 drivers, increasingly to 17 in 2025 to better meet demand.

This increase of drivers and vehicles will allow for immediate growth. Being a 'dial-a-ride' service' that can go anywhere in the region, this service can satisfy mandate requirements for mobility options if its userbase was expanded. Moving forward, the Community Transportation Program could expand beyond its primarily medical-based appointments, seniors, and low-income families to include accessibility needs in the near-term and simply anyone in the longer-term (with medical trips maintaining booking and scheduling priority).

Opening the user-base of this service will touch on many of the applicable priorities identified, including increased accessibility, regional connectivity, and even exploration of connections beyond the region since the service currently offers that option for medical-based appointments.

Expanding into accessibility in the near-term would provide another option for residents, of which there is currently only the Miramichi Accessible Transit (MATbus) service. It would also serve to support other modes of transportation like Miramichi Transit, the carpooling pilot solution (see 6.1.2), and the carshare platform (see 6.1.3).

In the medium-term, the service could be used to assist during peak hour traffic, acting as commuter transit vehicles connecting into large areas of employment. During engagement with stakeholders, it was noted that there are large employment areas outside of the City of Miramichi, such as the penitentiary in Renous, that are not served by transit and face limited housing supply in the surrounding communities.

In the future, expanding into providing service to any resident, the service could act as an on-demand service utilizing the province's agreement with Blaise Transit's booking and scheduling system. In an on-demand model, the service would support general mobility as well as Miramichi Transit and any future fixed-route services introduced in the region (see section 9).

6.1.2 Carpooling Pilot

This solution refers to the creation or encouragement of use of a formal carpooling platform to encourage ride/trip sharing to better meet resident transportation needs and provide localized and regional mobility options. Offered initially as a pilot to gauge interest, this would expand mobility options for residents beyond standard transit-centric modes. Public engagement noted the current reliance on neighbours and families for rides in various communities to get to essential services like medical appointments, pharmacies, banks, and grocery stores. This solution formalizes that mentality, providing peace of mind for individuals to know that carpooling options still exist even if neighbours and family happen to be unavailable.

There are software solutions that support and formalize carpooling, such as ridesharing.com and poparide.com. In these account-based applications, users can book specific seats in vehicles, view driver profiles, agree on costs, even know the make and model of the vehicle. It becomes a transactional service which improves upon an informal carpooling structure where, for example, someone who relies on family and friends for rides may avoid asking for rides when needed all the time to avoid being viewed as a burden.

This also helps with regional and interprovincial connectivity as software like ridesharing.com and poparide.com are nation-wide. Users could get or chain trips across the country if they so desired. A large limitation to these services however, particularly in areas of dispersed populations, multiple options can be a barrier to finding rides. Therefore, in this solution, the GMSC would choose and actively promote and educate residents on their preferred software.

Finally, to further promote carpooling during the pilot program, the GMSC could provide an offer a subsidy to drivers to encourage use during the initial launch.

6.1.3 Carshare Platform

Carshare platforms are becoming increasingly popular options as cost of living and cost of vehicle ownership increases. There are two types of carshare models: business-to-consumer and peer-to-peer.

- **Business-to-Consumer Model**

Carshare service where a company owns a fleet of vehicles that are strategically located throughout urban areas in “zones.” Through a subscription-based account system, users can book vehicles for hours or days at a time as available. A notable business-to-consumer carshare company example in Canada is Communauto.

- **Peer-to-Peer Model**

This model relies on private automobile owners renting out their vehicles. It is not dissimilar to the Airbnb model of renting out your home. Through software platforms and mobile applications, insurance, driver’s licenses, and other liabilities are accounted for before prospective owners and users can engage. A notable peer-to-peer carshare company is Turo.com.

For the Greater Miramichi region, a business-to-consumer model is not recommended. It is often more urban-centric and while it may benefit residents within the City of Miramichi, other communities are too dispersed to effectively and equitably deploy and use this system. Further, for companies like Communauto, introducing carshare presents significant upfront costs as they provide the fleet. Therefore, there typically has to be a dependable and consistent user base upon rollout which is not guaranteed.

A peer-to-peer system, however, could excel in the region. Start-up costs and time are minimal, requiring only the identification and recruitment of local vehicle owners willing to list their vehicles for use. Further, it allows vehicle owners the opportunity to realize profit on sitting or seldom used vehicles and provides users the convenience and directness of a single-occupancy vehicle without having to take the financial burden of vehicle ownership and maintenance.

6.2 Public Relations Stream

Community outreach, meaningful engagement on transportation issues, and pursuing partnerships are the hallmarks of the public relations stream. The mandate outlines action items required to be undertaken by service commissions, which include:

- Ensuring the public are kept informed
- Promotional activities are undertaken

The solutions developed directly address these action items.

6.2.1 Education and Awareness Campaigns

This solution is heavily tied to Priority 1 of the needs assessment: Promotion and Education of Current and Future Transportation Systems. Awareness is a prominent barrier to increasing the use of alternative modes of transportation. Residents will not be able to use modes if they do not know they exist. 28% of survey respondents noted that they were unaware of any transportation options beyond their private vehicles. Similarly, educating residents on the services available – and how to use the services – is critical to resident mobility and independence.

Campaigns can promote new or existing transportation services and should be conducted, at least in the short-term, at a quarterly frequency to ensure resident familiarity. Repeated and periodic campaigns ensure knowledge reaches residents. These campaigns should target all demographics and locations across the region, including youths, seniors, working adults, schools, malls, libraries and other community facilities, post-secondary institutions, markets, and events.

6.2.2 Periodic Newsletter

This solution is focused on communicating news, mobility options, events, and other information to residents on a monthly basis. This is recommended to be a subscribed-list based e-newsletter. Content should note system changes, innovations, and ways to engage with GMSC staff.

6.2.3 Foster Employer Partnerships/Sponsors

There is merit to exploring local employee/employer transportation needs. By understanding these needs, solutions can be developed that facilitate the movement of employees and provide expanded employment opportunities to those that cannot travel by themselves. This is a beneficial arrangement that benefits employees, employers, and the municipalities, by decreasing unemployment rates and improving access to good-paying jobs.

There are numerous benefits to the implementation of this solution. The following benefits consider both the perspectives of employers and employees. These include:

- Expands employment opportunities for residents and newcomers by providing dependable mobility.
- Seasonal flexibility allows resources to be allocated to other solutions/municipal priorities in off seasons.

6.3 Resources and Oversight Stream

6.3.1 Transportation Coordinator Position

This is crucial to the resources and oversight stream, and successful management and implementation of the Regional Transportation Plan. The GMSC has limited capacity to operate its current Community Transportation Program, let alone develop and manage additional modes, conduct community engagement, liaise with employers and stakeholders, and pursue additional funding opportunities.

6.3.2 Funding Opportunities

Significant streams of funding exist for transit planning, fleet electrification, infrastructure, and capital cost supports (including vehicles), making funding grant applications essential to agencies exploring the introduction of additional service or mobility options. Funding applications can represent significant undertakings and it is recommended that the Transportation Coordinator oversee this responsibility. A list of opportunities is provided in the Funding Glossary, Section 8.4.

6.3.3 Community Forum

Residents and stakeholders need a reliable, constant, accessible way to provide feedback and input on the transportation options that exist within the Greater Miramichi region. It is recommended that the forum be versatile, and consist of a multi-point interface, including: a physical comment box on-board vehicles, a municipal website-based comment portal, a standard ‘forum’-style online messaging page where residents can ask questions and staff can respond, and annual in-person sessions held across the region. This forum is a requirement of the mandate, to ensure resident feedback is being received regularly.

6.3.4 Transit Agency Working Group

The 3 existing transportation service providers operate in a silo to each other despite providing complementary services. It is recommended that a transit agency working group be struck to allow members of each agency to come together to share information and ideas, service changes, upcoming events or activities, and identify how the services could integrate or align to improve service delivery and quality for residents.

7 Implementation Planning

Key to the success of this Regional Transportation Plan is sound implementation planning. This section overviews implementation requirements and efforts that will be needed to increase ridership and benefit residents of the Greater Miramichi region over the next three years.

7.1 Solutions Staging

Section 6 outlines 10 transportation solutions that address physical transportation modes, community engagement, and internal capacity and resourcing. To navigate the staging of these solutions, the figure below identifies when it is recommended for staff prepare, promote, work toward, implement, or otherwise proceed with any of the prepared solutions.

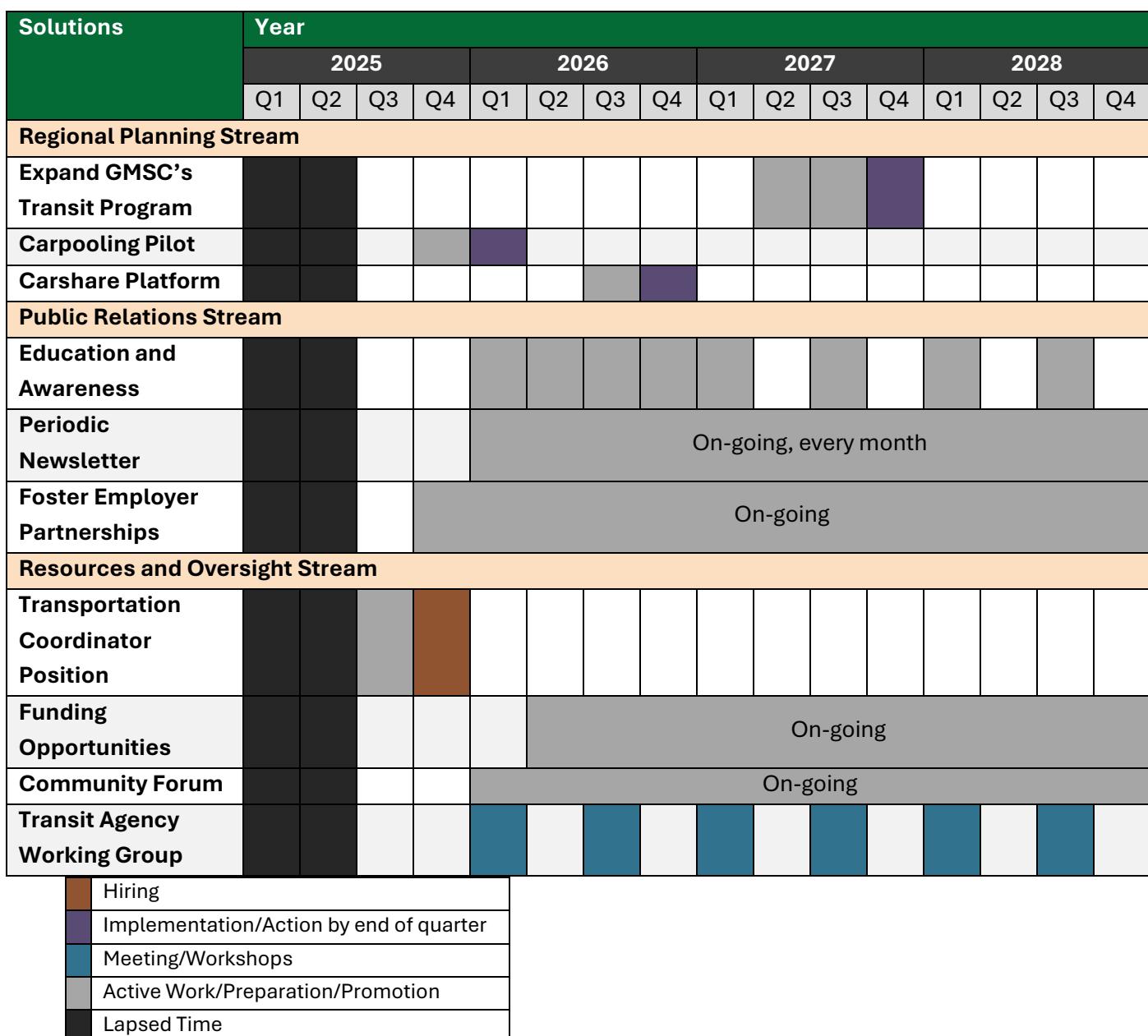


Figure 8: Implementation Staging

7.2 Implementation Considerations

Regional Planning Stream

The key to successful development and delivery of transportation solutions is phased implementation. It is infeasible for staff to deliver on all recommendations simultaneously. For these solutions, there will be a steady stream of development, preparation, promotion, and launchings of various mobility options over the next 3 years.

1. Carpooling Pilot | Q1 2026

Being a community staple already, will move toward fruition first. Background work will begin in 2025, with launch in early 2026. Following the 2026 Q1 launch, it is recommended that staff take time in Q2 to monitor and evaluate resident response and use.

2. Carsharing | Q4 2026

This will follow the carpool pilot, with work being done in the later half of 2026, with launch by the end of the year.

3. Expand GMSC's Community Transportation Program | Q3 2027

After having just tripled its contingent of drivers in Q1 of 2025, other modes will be prioritized first. That tremendous growth, coupled with a focus on introducing new mobility options for residents, has the next expansion planned for mid 2027.

Public Relations Stream

Focused on engaging residents, stakeholders, and employers, as well as spreading knowledge about the mobility options available, the implementation of this stream is straightforward – communication and engagement activities happen regularly if not constantly.

4. Education and Awareness Campaigns | Quarterly in 2026, bi-annually afterward

The priorities outlined in the Needs Assessment identified that awareness was a key issue to be remedied. Therefore, the frequency of these education and awareness campaigns are increased during the first year (2026), moving to a spring and fall activities in 2027 and beyond.

5. Periodic Newsletter | Monthly

This is the only solution that happens at a monthly frequency. The Transportation Coordinator will prepare and mail one-pagers at the beginning of every month, explaining transportation services available and notable transportation events happening.

6. Foster Employer and Stakeholder Partnerships | On-going

This is an on-going activity falling under the responsibility of the Transportation Coordinator. Phone calls, site-visits, and working groups can be scheduled on an ad-hoc basis, as appropriate.

Resources and Oversight Stream

This is the most pivotal stream, with resourcing being essential to unlocking the ability for the GMSC to not only develop new mobility options but also promote them, manage them, and conduct community engagement. This is a versatile stream that has recurring workshops and deadlines rather than hard implementation dates.

1. Transportation Coordinator Position | Q3 2025

It is set as the first activity of this implementation plan, with the implicit understanding that the transportation coordinator position hired would be responsible for carrying out this Regional Transportation Plan.

2. Funding Opportunities | Ongoing

The deadlines of funding opportunities vary, requiring flexibility in this implementation plan. However, the responsible staff should, at a minimum, check in on prospective funding timing and deadlines regularly.

3. Community Forum | Ongoing

The format and timing of the Community Forum is up to the GMSC. However, it is recommended that the forum be constantly available to residents to provide feedback. This feedback can be taken in quarterly or bi-annual reports on how transportation services may be better improved.

4. Transit Agency Working Group | Ongoing, bi-annual meetings

The three services within the region are busy – ridership increases, service changes, new drivers. However, the working group could find time to meet bi-annually either virtually or in-person.

8 Financial Management

For the purposes of this Regional Transportation Plan, only services provided under the GMSC have been assessed as the GMSC has been the entity mandated to provide services. This includes only the community transportation Volunteer Driver Program and does not include Miramichi Transit or MATbus. Insights into the capital and operating budgets of these other systems may be informative if any formal partnerships or integrations are explored in the future.

8.1 Capital Budget and Requirements

Due to the volunteer nature of their community transportation program, the GMSC does not incur capital expenses. They do not own or have a need for procuring infrastructure, technology, vehicles, software, or hardware (e.g., backend systems, fare boxes, etc.). This is not expected to change based on the two new recommended transportation modes of carpooling and carsharing.

8.2 Current 2024-25 Operating Budget and Expenditures

The Volunteer Driver Program does not require capital expenditures but does incur operating costs. Table 13 provides the estimated operating budget and expenditures for the community transportation program for the 2024-2025 fiscal year. Note that the estimated expenses are derived from actuals as of December 2024 and are trending to be under budget for the fiscal year.

Table 13: 2024-2025 Volunteer Driver Community Transportation Program Operating Budget

Costs of Service	Budget	Est. Actual*
Operating Expenses	\$ 224,500	\$ 185,500
Sources of Funding	\$ 224,500	\$ 225,500
<i>ESIC Annual Funding</i>	\$ 50,000	\$ 50,000
<i>ESIC “Top-up” Funding</i>	\$ 25,000	\$ 25,000
<i>RSSF 2025</i>	\$ 74,000	\$ 75,000
<i>GMSC 2025</i>	\$ 40,000	\$ 40,000
<i>GMSC Surplus[^]</i>	\$ 35,500	\$ 35,500
Net Cost/(Surplus)	\$ -	(39,000)

*Actuals are estimates only, derived from 2024 Sep – Dec data, and rounded.

[^]Sources include: GMSC 2024 RecCamp, GMSC 2023 Second Year Surplus, and GMSC 2024 Second Year Surplus.

Funding is received from various sources, as outlined below, each providing \$75,000 in addition to the operating allocation from the service commission.

8.2.1 Current Funding Sources

Currently, the GMSC has one dedicated source of transportation service funding — “ESIC funding” – focused on covering annual operational costs of the community transportation Volunteer Driver Program. There is also the Regional Services Support Fund (RSSF), a general fund received by service commissions. These are elaborated below:

- **Economic and Social Inclusion Corporation (ESIC) Funding**, administered by the Economic and Social Inclusion Corporation, provides \$50,000 in annual operating funding to GMSC for their community transportation program. The fund covers all costs related to program operations including dispatcher salaries, employee benefits, office rentals, and other back-end expenses. The ESIC funding has provided an additional \$25,000 for the 2024-2025 budget cycle.
- **Regional Services Support Fund (RSSF)**, a provincial funding mechanism in New Brunswick, used to support regional service commissions. This is not transportation specific but a general funding source for the commissions that funds the delivery of services like waste management, water, and wastewater treatment, economic development and other initiatives. \$75,000 of the RSSF was allocated to the Community Transportation Program. RSSF funding amount is based on a matching program with ESIC.
- **GMSC Annual Contribution** is provided by the Greater Miramichi Services Commission to support the community transportation Volunteer Driver Program. This allocation is earmarked during the budgeting process, but it is redirected to other GMSC programs if grant funding is sufficient to support the Volunteer Driver Program.
- **GMSC Surplus** accounts for previous funding received that was unused.

8.3 2025-26 and 2026-27 Budgetary Forecasts

Using the 2024-2025 operating estimated costs as a base, high-level budgetary forecasts have been prepared for the next two fiscal years scaling to inflation and ridership increases. The total number of trips completed is expected to grow from 2,800 to 3,000 (7.1%) over the next two years.

Table 14: Operating budget forecast for Fiscal Years 2025 through 2027

Budget Item	FY24/25*	FY25/26	FY26/27
Operating Statistics			
<i>Number of Operators</i>	8	16	16
<i>Number of Trips Completed</i>	2,800	2,900	3,000
Operating Expenses	\$ 185,500	\$ 194,500	\$ 204,500
Sources of Funding	\$ 224,500	\$ 224,000	\$ 214,500
<i>ESIC Fund Annual Contribution</i>	\$ 50,000	\$ 50,000	\$ 50,000
<i>ESIC Fund “Top-up” funding</i>	\$ 25,000	\$ 20,000	\$ 15,000
<i>RSSF</i>	\$ 75,000	\$ 70,000	\$ 65,000
<i>GMSC 2025</i>	\$ 40,000	\$ 45,000	\$ 50,000
<i>GMSC Surplus[^]</i>	\$ 35,500	\$ 39,000	\$ 34,500
Net Cost/(Surplus)	\$ (39,000)	\$ (29,500)	\$ (10,000)

*Based on estimated actuals, derived 2024 Sep – Dec data.

8.3.1 Forecasting Methodology

Using the 2024-2025 operating estimated costs as a base, high-level budgetary forecasts have been prepared for the next two fiscal years scaling to inflation and ridership increases. Both 2025-2026 and 2026-2027 are derived from observed expenditure per service hour and observed expenditure per ride data, to create banded estimates. The total number of trips completed is expected to grow from 2,800 to 3,000 (7.1%) over the next two years. This outpaces moderate ridership growth estimates for specialized-based services within the transit industry, which projects ~3% growth year-over-year. The outpacing is predicated on driver increases as ridership increases with transit supply (to a point). Other local factors influencing ridership include population growth (or decline), fare changes, demographics, local economy, costs of alternatives, technology usage, and public engagement/marketing.

Likewise, the forecasts account for inflation and ridership increases. This impacts all operating expense components, which include:

- Office and communications,
- Travel
- Wages for full-time administrative employees,
- Advertising the service,
- Driver appreciation,
- Insurance/abstracts,
- Recruitment campaigns,
- Driver reimbursements, and
- Assisted rides.

All component costs will raise with inflation, with select component costs rising directly with ridership (driver reimbursements, assisted rides) and other components rising as a result of hiring more drivers (recruitment campaigns, insurance/abstracts, driver appreciation).

Notably, the number of drivers has doubled (increasing from 8 to 16), which has various cost implications. For forecasting, an increase of drivers does *not* correlate to an increase in ridership but rather a reduction of strain on current resources. The doubling of drivers does not have a significant impact on driver reimbursements or assisted rides as these are provided on a per-trip basis and directly dependent on ridership rather than the number of drivers.

Likewise, as a result of the successful 24/25 recruitment campaign, this funding is curtailed in subsequent years as it provides the service with enough resilience to accommodate changes in demand and mitigates restrictions based on driver availability over the forecasted two years. Conversely, recruitment retention and replacement, insurance/abstracts, and driver appreciation increase relative to the number of drivers. Overall, these additional costs negate any cost savings from curtailing recruitment campaign costs. Therefore, the extent of the forecasts are predominantly predicated on ridership growth and inflation.

Using the 2024-2025 operating estimated costs as a base, high-level budgetary forecasts have been prepared for the next two fiscal years scaling to inflation and ridership increases. The total number of trips completed is expected to grow from 2,800 to 3,000 (7.1%) over the next two years.

Table 14Table 14, above, outlines the projected overall expenditure required to operate the Volunteer Driver Program from September 2025 – through August 2027. An annual inflation of 2% assumed on all unit-costs. Table 15, below, forecasts driver reimbursement rates and cumulative driver reimbursement over the same timeline. Three key metrics are considered in the table and described below:

1. Number of trips completed: Total number of trips projected to be completed by the Volunteer Driver Program. Over two years it is anticipated that the total number of trips will grow from 2,800 to 3,000, representing an aggressive growth estimate of 7.1%. The amount of drivers doubled in 25/26 but that does not necessarily correlate to a doubling of ridership. 7.1% over two years is high, particularly for services prioritizing providing medical-based appointments.
2. Per-Trip Driver Reimbursement: Rates are scaled at a 2% rate in accordance with anticipated annual inflation.
3. Estimated Driver Reimbursement: Sums are a result of the number of trips completed and the per-trip driver reimbursement.

Table 15: Driver reimbursement calculation and forecasting

Budget Item	FY24/25*	FY25/26	FY26/27
Number of Trips Completed	2,800	2,900	3,000
Per-Trip Driver Reimbursement	\$ 12.50	\$ 12.75	\$ 13.01
Estimated Driver Reimbursement	\$ 35,000	\$ 37,000	\$ 39,000

8.4 Funding Glossary

In addition to the existing funds that the GMSC accesses to support the Volunteer Driver Program, there are a series of federal and provincial opportunities as well as alternative revenue sources that should be considered.

Canada Public Transit Fund (CPTF)

A permanent federal fund providing \$3 billion annually beginning in 2026–27 for public transit and active transportation infrastructure across communities of all sizes. It delivers funding via three streams: Metro-Region Agreements for large urban projects, Baseline Funding for routine investments in existing systems, and Targeted Funding for calls addressing priorities such as rural transit and zero-emission solutions.

Rural Transit Solutions Fund (RTSF)

A federal grant program helping rural and remote communities develop or expand transit service models, covering capital costs (including vehicle purchases and zero-emission vehicles) and

planning/design activities (feasibility studies, route assessments, stakeholder engagement). Capital Projects and Planning & Design streams support up to \$50,000 per planning grant.

Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada and Indigenous Services Canada

These departments provide contributions to Indigenous communities for infrastructure and capacity building. Esgenoopetitj, Natoaganeg, Metepenagiag, and other First Nations communities may partner with GMSC on joint applications to fund mobility solutions, such as culturally appropriate shuttle services, facility upgrades, and governance training, to improve access for First Nations residents. Given the potential benefits of regional services to these communities, this funding may also be used to establish them.

Community Sponsors

Local organizations—such as health authorities, Indigenous bands, non-profits, or employers—that contribute cash or in-kind resources to transit projects, often partnering on pilot services, vehicle acquisitions, or promotional campaigns.

Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program

The Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program’s Public Transit Infrastructure Stream can help fund the GMSC’s transit infrastructure projects, covering up to 40 percent of eligible costs for new builds and 50 percent for rehabilitation works, with the remainder provided through provincial cost-sharing. Applicants must satisfy program requirements—such as minimum ridership reporting and adherence to Provincial Gas Tax criteria, but future intakes may be tailored to better support the region’s needs.

The Canada Community-Building Fund (CCBF)

An indexed federal transfer to municipalities and service commissions for local infrastructure. Eligible categories include transit infrastructure, local roads and bridges, active-transportation corridors, and community facilities. GMSC can allocate CCBF dollars to improve bus shelters, accessibility ramps, and pathway connections across the region.

Regional Services Support Fund (RSSF)

By collaborating with other Service Commissions, GMSC can co-apply for interregional transit funding, share costs for fixed-route or shuttle services to Fredericton and Moncton airports, and coordinate schedules for seamless passenger connections beyond Northumberland County.

Economic and Social Inclusion Corporation (ESIC)

A provincial crown corporation that awards annual, non-repayable contributions (up to \$50,000) for community transportation serving low-income and vulnerable populations. GMSC's Volunteer Driver Program relies on ESIC funding for dispatcher salaries, office costs, and volunteer reimbursements, with occasional top-up grants to scale operations.

Regional Development Corporation (RDC)

A New Brunswick agency offering grants and matching contributions to diversify rural economies and strengthen community infrastructure. RDC funding can underwrite pilot projects-such as a carpooling platform, peer-to-peer carshare initiatives, or employer-sponsored shuttle services, to drive regional connectivity and economic growth.

9 Additional Considerations

The Regional Transportation Mandate is expansive, with eyes to highly integrated regional and provincial systems. As part of this project, there were additional public transit and internal opportunities identified as being relevant to the Greater Miramichi Service Commission but were not included in Section 8 due to being cost-prohibitive at this time.

These opportunities remain relevant and further address the intent of the Mandate by introducing additional modes of transportation available across the region as well as facilitating interprovincial travel. While they may not be within the 3-year timeline of this current Regional Transportation Plan, they are included as additional considerations if funding support from the province or other bodies is made available or otherwise secured. At a minimum, they should be explored in the next iteration of the Regional Transportation Plan.

9.1 Regional Fixed-Route Transit Service

This traditional fixed-route transit service could connect Upper Miramichi to Alnwick, connecting many of the major communities and employment centres in the region in a single route, as shown in the figure on the right.

This opportunity is of particular importance due to its scalability, interregional connections, increased resident access to employment and healthcare opportunities, innate accessibility, and tourism support. Moreover, it meets all applicable priorities derived from the needs assessment and provides an accessible mobility option to most of Miramichi's residents.

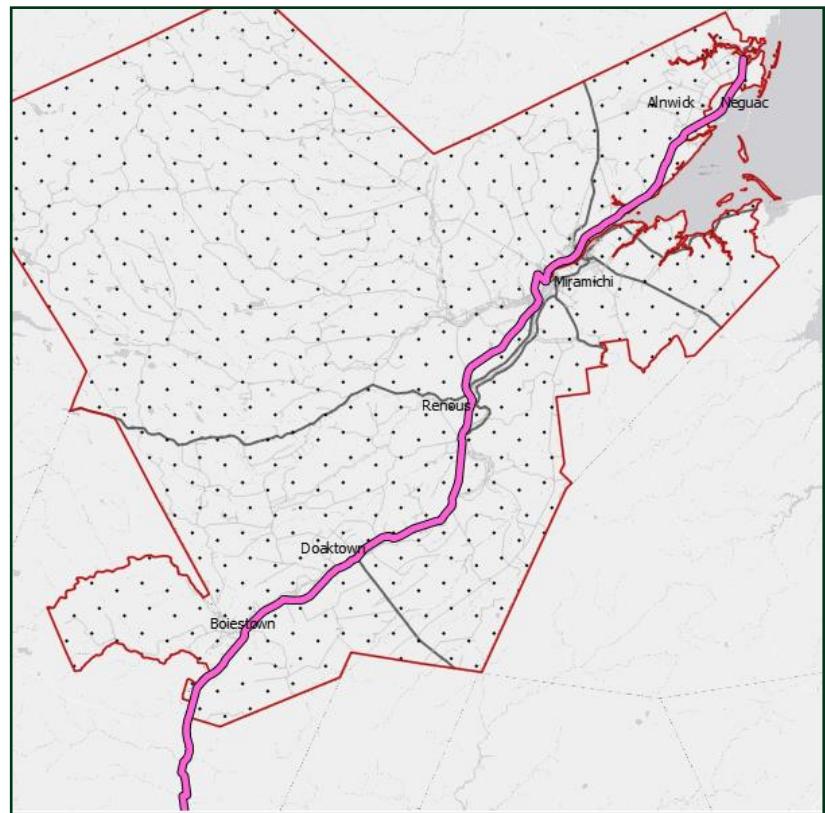


Figure 9: Proposed Regional Transit Service

From a scalability perspective, the route could first be piloted from Doaktown – City of Miramichi, requiring fewer service hours and mitigating cost. Depending on its ridership, this could be expanded to include Upper Miramichi and Alnwick, eventually growing beyond the Service Commission's border to connect to Fredericton and/or Bathurst to access significant healthcare, commercial, and employment locations.

The service design is variable and can be tailored to preferred levels of annual investment/service quality (hours of operation, frequency of service, etc.). Preliminary costing of various service designs is provided in the table below:

Table 16: Potential costs of various service levels and designs of a potential Greater-Miramichi regional fixed route service.

Connections	Annual Cost Estimate*	Service	Vehicles	Daily Trips/ Frequency
Fredericton – Alnwick	\$500k - \$625k	7 days/week	1	2
Fredericton – Miramichi	\$275 - \$320k	5 days/week	1	2
Upper Mir. - Alnwick	\$900k - \$1.15M	5 days/week	3	120-min frequency

*Service hour cost based on industry standard rate for a contracted service provider in 2025.

All cost estimates listed in the above table are assumed to be shared with all applicable governments/communities/agencies enroute. For example, a Fredericton extension would include the GMSC municipalities of Miramichi, Miramichi River Valley, Doaktown, Upper Miramichi, Alnwick, and the Rural District, the City of Fredericton, the Capital Region Service Commission, and the province. Costs would be shared as appropriate.

9.2 Subsidized Rideshare Service

Rideshare services connect ride requesters to local drivers using their own personal vehicles. Currently, rideshare companies do not operate in the Greater Miramichi area. Elsewhere in Canada, however, rural and regional locations have contracted rideshare companies to enter the market. A relevant example is the Town of Innisfil in Ontario, who currently uses a rideshare service in stead of a transit system by subsidizing the passenger trip fare so it is more affordable for users.

In this model, service would be contracted to a rideshare or taxi company who essentially provides a complete ‘turn-key’ service, handling drivers, vehicles, ride requests and dispatch (through mobile apps), and performance metric tracking. As the mandate seeks to make more mobility options available to the residents of Greater Miramichi, introducing a rideshare service would provide complete coverage and a high service quality to all residents, with municipal subsidies helping to mitigate the passenger fare cost.

A potential risk to standard rideshare services is that they are not always equitable – the use of personal vehicles often precludes accessibility needs; youth access can be difficult; and technology-based booking can pose issues to the unbanked, seniors, areas with poor connectivity, and those who may not own smart phones. This type of service excels when paired

with other options like the GMSC's Community Transportation Program that could be used for accessibility trips, youth trips, and has a low-tech/call-in option.

The other factor that precluded this option from being prioritized for the next 3 years is the issue of cost escalation. Other transit-related and mobility options are generally costed by service hour resulting in a consistent cost regardless of ridership. Subsidized rideshare, by contrast, is costed by ridership meaning the higher the ridership, the higher the cost. As the service would be new to the region, costs are difficult to calculate and is dependent on the contracted service provider at this time. However, without provincial or other secured funding, the potential cost of this service is too high to recommend at this time.

APPENDICES

Appendix A – Regional Transportation Mandate

Appendix B – GMSC Regional Transportation Plan Survey

Appendix C – Enquête sur le plan régional de transport
du GMSC

Appendix A – Regional Transportation Mandate

Appendix B - GMSC Regional Transportation Plan Survey

The Greater Miramichi Regional Service Commission (GMSC) have partnered with a transit consulting firm, Left Turn Right Turn, to develop a Regional Transportation Plan (RTP). In 2023, the New Brunswick provincial government released a new Regional Transportation Mandate, tasking Regional Service Commissions to develop plans that identify immediate priorities and long-term strategies to help achieve, launch, or otherwise deliver affordable transportation and mobility options across the region.

As per this mandate, the Regional Transportation Plan being developed is exploring current services, community needs and priorities, future short- and long-term recommendations, and subsequent implementation.

The Service Commission does not want the plan created in a silo. It is a Regional Transportation Plan intended to benefit residents. Therefore, to inform the plan, we are hosting public engagement sessions (in the new year) and conducting this survey.

This is an **anonymous survey** that seeks to collect information on resident preferences, travel needs, and opinion on new or expanding transit services. It will take approximately 7-10 minutes to complete.

The survey will close end of day Sunday, February 2, 2025.

If you have any questions about the survey, or would like to provide more information, please contact:

Evan Brown
Transit Innovator
Left Turn Right Turn
evan@ltrt.ca

Tell us about yourself

The following questions help us understand the communities and their specific transportation needs.

1. What is your age group? Please select one response.

- 18 and under
- 19-29
- 30-39
- 40-49
- 50-59
- 60+
- Prefer not to answer

2. Where do you live? Please select one of the following areas that you live in or are closest to.

- Alnwick
- City of Miramichi
- Doaktown
- Esgenoôpetitj
- Greater Miramichi Rural District
- Metepenagiag
- Miramichi River Valley
- Natoganeg
- Upper Miramichi
- Other

3. What best describes your current employment status? Please select one response.

Note: Employed includes self-employed.

- Employed, full-time (30 or more hours per week)
- Employed, part-time (less than 30 hours per week)
- Student
- Not employed
- Full-time caregiver/stay-at-home parent
- Retired
- Prefer not to answer
- Other

4. Do you identify as someone with a disability that impacts your ability to use transit, or someone who has mobility challenges?

- Yes
- No

Your Experience with Transit

The following questions relate to the public transit and services available within the Greater Miramichi Region. Current service providers include:

- *Miramichi Transit* (fixed-route transit within the City of Miramichi),
- *Miramichi Accessible Transit* (also known as MATbus, providing paratransit service to the entire region), and
- *the Community Transportation Program* (door-to-door ride-home service provided by the Service Commission, focused on providing transportation options in rural and otherwise limited areas).

5. Do you currently, or have you in the past, used any available public transit options? Please select all that apply.

- Yes, Miramichi Transit
- Yes, Miramichi Accessible Transit (MATbus)
- Yes, the Community Transportation Program
- Yes, Maritime Bus
- No, I have not used public transit

6. If you answered “yes” to question 5, please tell us your experience with public transit and your feelings on the following statements.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
The service is reliable	<input type="checkbox"/>				
The price is fair	<input type="checkbox"/>				
It is easy to use it	<input type="checkbox"/>				
I would use the service again	<input type="checkbox"/>				
I would like to use the service outside the current hours of operation	<input type="checkbox"/>				

7. If you answered “no” to question 5, please tell us some reasons you choose to not use transit.

Please select all that apply.

- I did not know it existed
- I do not meet required criteria
- The hours of operation are too limited
- The service costs too much
- I prefer to drive
- I don't know how to use the service
- Booking in advance is inconvenient
- Wait times are too great
- I do not feel that the service accommodates my accessibility needs
- Other, please specify: _____

Your Travel Needs

We want to better understand where you want to go so that the Regional Transportation Plan is reflective of the travel needs of residents. To do this, we want to learn more about the most frequent trips (transit and non-transit) you make and where you want to travel.

8. What is the purpose of your most frequent trip(s)? Please select all that apply.

- School
- Work
- Recreation/Social/Entertainment
- To accompany/transport someone
- Personal business (e.g., appointment, bank, doctor, volunteering, etc.)
- Shopping, including grocery shopping
- Other

9. How often do you leave your local community (e.g., Little Bartibog, St. Margarets, Blackville, etc.)? Please select the statement that best suits your travel needs.

- Most of my trips and errands are done within my local community
- Many of my trips and errands are done within my local community, but I commute elsewhere for work or school
- I conduct trips within my local community, but also travel outside to access other amenities/services
- I frequently travel outside my local community, to other places in the Greater Miramichi Region
- I frequently travel outside of the Greater Miramichi Region
- Other

9. What is your primary mode of transportation? Please select one response.

- Personal Vehicle
- Public Transit
- Taxi
- Walk
- Carpooling
- Other

10. Why do you use a personal vehicle? Please select all that apply.

- It is affordable
- It is convenient
- There aren't other options
- I prefer to drive
- It is there when I need it
- It is reliable
- My travel time is minimal
- Other

Regional Transportation Plan

As we develop a Regional Transportation Plan and explore appropriate transportation solutions for the Greater Miramichi area, we want to better understand your priorities and perspectives on what successful and useful transit services look like. The next few questions are about understanding your priorities for transit.

11. Whether or not you use transit, please prioritize the following transit service features based on what is important to you. To prioritize, please use numbers 1 – 7, with 1 being your highest priority and 7 being the least prioritized.

- ____ I don't have to wait long for the bus (Frequency)
- ____ The bus is running when I need it (Hours of Operation)
- ____ Bus fare is reasonable (Affordable Service)
- ____ It is easy to understand how to book/use the service (Ease of information)
- ____ Buses accommodate physical disabilities (Accessibility)
- ____ Buses are environmentally friendly (Sustainability)
- ____ I know I can use the bus to get to my destination on time (Reliability)

12. If public transit options in the region are expanded, how likely are you to try to use it?

- Very likely
- Somewhat likely
- Neither likely nor unlikely
- Somewhat unlikely
- Very unlikely
- I already use public transit

13. Do you have any additional feedback regarding the Regional Transportation Plan or public transit in the region?

Thank you!

We appreciate you taking the time to provide your input and feedback.

Appendix C - Enquête sur le plan régional de transport du GMSC

La Commission de services régionaux du Grand Miramichi (CSGM) a engagé une société de conseil en transport, Left Turn Right Turn, pour élaborer un plan régional de transport (PRT). En 2023, le gouvernement provincial du Nouveau-Brunswick a publié un nouveau mandat de transport régional, chargeant les commissions de services régionaux d'élaborer des plans qui identifient les priorités immédiates et les stratégies à long terme pour aider à réaliser, lancer ou autrement fournir des options de transport et de mobilité abordables dans la région.

Conformément à ce mandat, le plan régional de transport en cours de développement explore les services actuels, les besoins et les priorités de la communauté, les recommandations futures à court et à long terme et la mise en œuvre ultérieure.

La Commission des services ne souhaite pas que ce plan soit élaboré en vase clos. Il s'agit d'un plan régional de transport destiné à bénéficier aux résidents. C'est pourquoi, afin d'éclairer le plan, nous organisons des sessions d'engagement public (au cours de la nouvelle année) et menons cette enquête.

Cette enquête est anonyme, et vise à recueillir des informations sur les préférences des résidents, leurs besoins en matière de déplacements et leur opinion sur la création ou l'extension de services de transport en commun. Il faut compter environ 7 à 10 minutes pour répondre à l'enquête.

L'enquête sera fermée à la fin de la journée du dimanche 2 février 2025.

Si vous avez des questions sur l'enquête, ou si vous souhaitez fournir plus d'informations, veuillez contacter:

Evan Brown
Transit Innovator
Left Turn Right Turn
evan@ltrt.ca

Présentez-vous

Les questions suivantes nous aident à comprendre les communautés et leurs besoins spécifiques en matière de transport.

1. Quel âge avez-vous ? Veuillez sélectionner une réponse.

- 18 ans et moins
- 19-29
- 30-39
- 40-49
- 50-59
- 60+
- Préfère ne pas répondre

2. Où habitez-vous ? Veuillez sélectionner une des régions suivantes dans laquelle vous vivez ou dont vous êtes le plus proche.

- Alnwick
- City of Miramichi
- Doaktown
- Esgenoôpetitj
- District rural du Grand-Miramichi
- Metepenagiag
- Miramichi River Valley
- Natoganeg
- Upper Miramichi
- Autre

3. Quelle est la meilleure description de votre situation professionnelle actuelle ? Veuillez sélectionner une réponse.

Note : Le terme « employé » inclut les travailleurs indépendants.

- Employé à temps plein (30 heures ou plus par semaine)
- Employé à temps partiel (moins de 30 heures par semaine)
- Étudiant
- Sans emploi
- Aidant familial à temps plein/parent au foyer
- Retraité
- Préfère ne pas répondre
- Autre

4. Identifiez-vous comme une personne en situation de handicap qui influe sur votre capacité à utiliser les transports en commun, ou comme une personne ayant des limitations de mobilité ?

- Oui
- Non

Votre expérience des transports en commun

Les questions suivantes portent sur les transports publics et les services disponibles dans la région du Grand Miramichi. Les fournisseurs de services actuels sont les suivants:

- *Miramichi Transit* (service de transport en commun à itinéraire fixe dans la ville de Miramichi),
- *Miramichi Accessible Transit* (aussi connu sous le nom de MATbus, qui fournit un service de transport adapté à la région), et
- *Community Transportation Program* (service de transport porte-à-porte à domicile fourni par la Commission des services, axé sur la fourniture d'options de transport dans les zones rurales et autres zones limitées).

5. Utilisez-vous actuellement, ou avez-vous utilisé par le passé, l'une des options de transport en commun disponibles ? Veuillez sélectionner toutes les réponses qui s'appliquent.

- Oui, Miramichi Transit
- Oui, Miramichi Accessible Transit (MATbus)
- Oui, the Community Transportation Program
- Oui, Maritime Bus
- Non, je n'ai pas utilisé les transports en commun

6. Si vous avez répondu « oui » à la question 5, veuillez nous faire part de votre expérience des transports en commun et de votre sentiment sur les affirmations suivantes.

	Tout à fait d'accord	D'accord	Neutre	Pas d'accord	Pas de tout d'accord
Le service est fiable	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Le prix est juste	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Il est facile à utiliser	<input type="checkbox"/>				
J'aimerais utiliser le service encore	<input type="checkbox"/>				
J'aimerais utiliser le service en dehors des heures d'ouverture actuelles	<input type="checkbox"/>				

7. Si vous avez répondu « non » à la question 5, veuillez nous indiquer les raisons pour lesquelles vous choisissez de ne pas utiliser les transports en commun. Veuillez sélectionner toutes les réponses qui s'appliquent.

- Je ne savais pas qu'il existait
- Je ne réponds pas aux critères requis
- Les heures d'ouverture sont trop limitées
- Les services sont trop cher
- Je préfère conduire
- Je ne sais pas comment utiliser le service
- Réserver à l'avance n'est pas pratique
- Les temps d'attente sont trop importants
- Je n'ai pas l'impression que le service répond à mes besoins en matière d'accessibilité
- Autre, veuillez spécifier : _____

Vos Besoins de Voyage

Nous voulons mieux comprendre où vous voulez aller afin que le plan régional de transport reflète les besoins de déplacement des résidents. Pour ce faire, nous voulons en savoir plus sur les déplacements les plus fréquents (en transport en commun ou non) que vous effectuez et sur les endroits où vous souhaitez vous rendre.

8. Quel est le but de votre voyage le plus fréquent ? Veuillez sélectionner toutes les réponses qui s'appliquent.

- L'école
- Lieu de travail
- Loisirs/Social/Divertissement
- Accompagner/transporter quelqu'un
- Affaires personnelles (par exemple, rendez-vous, banque, médecin, bénévolat, etc.)
- Faire les courses, y compris les courses alimentaires
- Autre

À quelle fréquence quittez-vous votre communauté locale (p. ex. Little Bartibog, St. Margarets, Blackville, etc.) Veuillez choisir l'énoncé qui correspond le mieux à vos besoins de déplacement.

- La plupart de mes déplacements et de mes courses se font au sein de ma communauté locale.
- Beaucoup de mes déplacements et de mes courses sont effectués au sein de ma communauté locale, mais je me rends ailleurs pour travailler ou aller à l'école.
- Je me déplace au sein de ma communauté locale, mais je me déplace également à l'extérieur pour accéder à d'autres commodités/services.
- Je voyage fréquemment à l'extérieur de ma communauté locale, vers d'autres endroits dans la région du Grand Miramichi.
- Je voyage fréquemment à l'extérieur de la région du Grand Miramichi
- Autre

9. Quel est votre principal mode de transport ? Veuillez sélectionner une réponse.

- Véhicule personnel
- Transport en commun
- Taxi
- Marche à pied
- Covoiturage
- Autre

10. Pourquoi utilisez-vous un véhicule personnel ? Veuillez sélectionner toutes les réponses qui s'appliquent.

- C'est abordable
- C'est pratique
- Il n'y a pas d'autres options
- Je préfère conduire
- C'est là quand j'en ai besoin
- C'est fiable
- Mon temps de trajet est minime
- Autre

Plan Régional de Transport

Dans le cadre du développement d'un plan régional de transport et de l'examen de solutions de transport appropriées pour la région du Grand Miramichi, nous voulons mieux comprendre vos priorités et vos points de vue sur ce que sont des services de transport en commun efficaces et utiles. Les prochaines questions visent à comprendre vos priorités en matière de transport en commun.

11. Que vous utilisez ou non les transports en commun, veuillez classer par ordre de priorité les caractéristiques suivantes des services de transport en commun en fonction de ce qui est important pour vous. Pour établir un ordre de priorité, veuillez utiliser les chiffres 1 à 7, 1 étant votre priorité la plus élevée et 7 la moins élevée.

- ____ Je n'attends pas longtemps le bus (Fréquence)
- ____ Le bus circule quand j'en ai besoin (Heures d'ouverture)
- ____ Le prix du bus est raisonnable (Service abordable)
- ____ Il est facile de comprendre comment réserver/utiliser le service (Facilité d'information)
- ____ Les bus s'adaptent aux limitations physiques (Accessibilité)
- ____ Les bus sont respectueux de l'environnement (Durabilité)
- ____ Je sais que je peux utiliser le bus pour arriver à l'heure à ma destination (Fiabilité)

12. Si les options de transport public dans la région sont élargies, quelle est la probabilité que vous essayiez de les utiliser ?

- Très probable
- Assez probable
- Ni probable ni improbable
- Assez peu probable
- Très peu probable
- J'utilise déjà les transports en commun

13. Avez-vous d'autres commentaires à formuler concernant le plan régional de transport ou les transports publics dans la région ?

MERCI!

Nous vous remercions d'avoir pris le temps de nous faire part de vos commentaires.