

# **A Proposal for Public Transit**

**This Business Plan Produced for:**

**The Municipality of the District of Lunenburg, and  
The Towns of Lunenburg, Bridgewater, and Mahone Bay**

**August, 2007**

**Produced by:  
Citizens for Public Transit**



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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The need for a rural public transit system in Lunenburg County has been identified frequently by community groups and local businesses, through formal research and by citizen participation at public meetings.

*Citizens for Public Transit* is a community group of concerned individuals originating in 2006 expressly to promote the development of a public transit system in Lunenburg County. Committee members take great pleasure in presenting this Business Plan for a three year pilot project to establish a system of rural public transit which is affordable, accessible and efficient.

The initial core route proposed is the loop connecting Riverport, Bridgewater, Mahone Bay and Lunenburg. Two buses would operate Monday through Saturday on a set schedule, stopping at established locations and running five (5) times per day in both directions along this route.

The transit system's success would depend on a partnership of the Municipal Councils. Significant financial or in-kind resources are anticipated from Community Services. Additional commitment is being explored with the Federal Rural Secretariat, Green Municipal Fund, and through the Federal Public Transit Capital Trust.

It is proposed that the contract to run the Transit services would be put out to tender to established firms.

The public bus system will have widespread benefit for local business, senior citizens, students, tourists, and rural families currently lacking affordable transportation. Expected outcomes include economic growth and the improved physical, mental and social status of residents. Access to affordable transportation is a key factor in attracting families to move to our communities, and is a primary force in retaining residents, especially young families, youth, and senior citizens within this rural region.

*Citizens for Public Transit* proposes that a meeting be called for Councilors of the Towns of Bridgewater, Lunenburg and Mahone Bay and the Municipality of the District of Lunenburg to discuss and consider the merits of supporting the following Business Plan.

## RATIONALE

### ***THE ECONOMICS OF TRANSPORTATION:***

The largest cost for Nova Scotia households is not health, not housing, not food but **transportation**.<sup>1</sup>

- The average Nova Scotian spends \$3,036 a year in direct transportation costs. This includes the cost of vehicle ownership and operation, transit fares and parking.<sup>2</sup> The costs are familiar to all of us: cost of fuel, car payments, insurance, registration fees, vehicle repairs, etc.
- There are indirect costs to transportation as well. On average, Nova Scotians spend another \$4,562.00 annually on costs such as transportation-related taxes, accident-related health costs, and the environmental cost of air pollution and carbon emissions. As for the individual, the mental stress of time spent behind the wheel is difficult to estimate, but is nonetheless real.
- Clearly, transportation costs result in significant financial, social and environmental impact for both the individual and society.

**There are also substantial economic rewards from PUBLIC TRANSIT.** A U.S.A. Department of Transport study found a three-to-one benefit/cost ration for investment in rural public transit. Benefits included increased employment, increased mobility, and growth of the local economy.<sup>3</sup>

### ***DEMOGRAPHICS:***

The population groups most frequently affected by a lack of public transportation are seniors, students, and the disabled.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Sustainable Transportation in Nova Scotia*, Report released by G.P.I. Atlantic (Genuine Progress Index), Nov. 29, 2006.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid. Sustainable Transportation in Nova Scotia*.

<sup>3</sup> *Assessment of the Economic Impacts of Rural Public Transportation*. TRCP Report No. 34. Transportation Research Board, U. S. National Research Council 1998.

<sup>4</sup> Kings Transit presentation to Café Canada, Mahone Bay, March, 2006

***The Aging Population:***

- In 2001, 13.9% of the residents of Nova Scotia were 65 years of age or older. In Lunenburg County, by comparison, this figure was 17.5%.<sup>5</sup> In selected areas of the County, the population of seniors was even higher (Mahone Bay – 27.9%, Lunenburg – 24.5%)
- By the year 2026, seniors are projected to be 25% of the total population of Nova Scotia.

***The Disabled Population:***

- Nova Scotia has the highest provincial disability rate in Canada, with 17.1% of people age 15 years and older having physical difficulties.<sup>6</sup> Of these, approximately 50% are seniors (65 years and older). According to a 1991 survey, the rate of disability on the South Shore is 24.2% of the population, well above the provincial average.<sup>7</sup>

***Students:***

- Students are one of the prime users of a transit system, according to statistics collected by Kings Transit, the successful rural transit system in the Annapolis Valley.<sup>8</sup>
- There are 450 full-time and 400 part-time students enrolled in the Lunenburg County campus of the Nova Scotia Community College in Bridgewater. Many of these students live well outside the town's boundaries, beyond walking distance of the campus, and would benefit from a public transit system.
- From 100 – 150 students from Park View Education Centre attend after-school activities, and need transportation to get home. This represents approximately 15% of the student body.

***SURVIVAL OF RURAL COMMUNITIES***

- In the year 2000, the average income for coastal rural residents, age 17 years and older was \$22,269.<sup>9</sup> The percentage of families classified as low income on the South Shore in that year was 12.4%.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Nova Scotia Community Counts, Statistical Summary for N.S. and Lunenburg County

<sup>6</sup>2001 PALS Profile of Canada's Disabled Population

<sup>7</sup> Health Activity Limitation (HALS) Survey, Nova Scotia, 1991

<sup>8</sup> Presentation by Kings Transit, March 31<sup>st</sup>, 2006, Café Canada, Mahone Bay

<sup>9</sup> Statistics Canada, 2005

<sup>10</sup> South Shore Health Annual Report Card, 2004-2005

<sup>11</sup> *The Rural Policy Challenge* – April 2006, Rural Communities Impacting Policy (R.C.I.P.) Project

- In 2004, rates of participation in the labor force of Southern Nova Scotia were 60.9%, while unemployment was 11%.
- Nova Scotia shows the greatest rural - urban income disparity in Canada due to economic decline over the past 10 years in communities dependent on fishing, farming and mining.<sup>11</sup>
- Lack of mobility is a major factor causing migration from rural areas to cities. As costs of fuel inevitably rise, those with marginal ability to operate a vehicle are forced to consider moving to urban areas unless public transit can provide a practical alternative. Unemployed and low income families can scarcely support the expense of maintaining a car. If the wage earner needs a vehicle for his work, other family members have NO means of transportation. Rural isolation restricts activities while enforcing a dependency on others for rides.
- **Forward-thinking municipal governments in rural areas have invested in public transit to encourage residents to stay in their rural communities.**

## ***BENEFITS OF PUBLIC TRANSIT***

### ***Benefits for Business:***

- Businesses and services in towns would benefit from access to an increased volume of potential customers who would now be confident of being able to keep their appointments and do their shopping.
- Potential employees who do not have a vehicle could apply for work, secure in the knowledge they have an affordable, reliable means of transportation.
- Tourists to the Lunenburg County would be delighted to take public transit which would give them a very pleasant orientation to the area while bringing them close to shops, beaches and the ferry.

### ***Benefits for Seniors:***

- The possibility of not being able to drive is greatly feared by Seniors. As a result, they may continue to drive even when their abilities are
-

compromised, putting themselves and others at risk. They may become isolated and depressed or begin to feel they must move from the community to a more urban setting in order to be “close to the hospital” etc.

- A public transit system would enable seniors to go to town, shop, visit with friends, etc. without feeling beholden to others for a ride. Persons with problems of vision, hearing, or limited physical mobility would be able to ride the bus to attend appointments, to pay bills, etc.

### ***Benefits for Youth:***

- Students and young adults who are too young or cannot afford a car are often forced to curtail or avoid activities, to take a cab or hitch-hike. Lack of transportation forces them to wait long periods for a family members or friend to arrive, at some inconvenience to all.
- On occasion, students succumb to the need for a ride home from a party even though the driver may have been drinking. The risks are known, but there is no other option!
- A public transit system would particularly assist those students attending the Nova Scotia Community College in Bridgewater. Students who live beyond walking distance often face transportation difficulties to attend classes.

### ***Benefits for Families:***

- Parents could take children to medical visits, shopping, to the museum or library, and feel less isolated in their rural setting.
- People would be more inclined to volunteer if they had a formal transit system, and reliable, affordable transportation.

### ***Benefits for Active Living:***

- Many newer buses have external bike racks for transporting bikes. Cyclists who encounter bad weather, or who otherwise require the “back-up” of a transportation system, may use the public transit.
- Walkers could also combine a walk/ride program, using the bus to try alternate new routes.

### ***Benefits for the Environment:***

- Currently, Canada has the second highest transportation energy consumption in the world, 70% above the average of the 30 O.E.C.D. countries.<sup>12</sup>
- In Nova Scotia, 38% of all energy consumption is required for transportation.<sup>13</sup> Light trucks, minivans and pick-up trucks are some of the least fuel efficient vehicles on the highway. Between 1990 and 2002, the use of these vehicles rose by 49% in Nova Scotia.<sup>14</sup>
- **As indicated in the table below, if well utilized, buses are the method of transportation with the lowest rate of carbon emissions.**

Method of Transport	Unit of Carbon Emissions/Per Person/ Per Kilometer
Plane (at 70% full)	63.9
Car (average of 1.56 passengers)	36.6
Train (at 70% full)	5.2
Bus (40 passengers)	4.3

(Source: George Monbiot; *Heat, How to Stop the Planet Burning*; Penguin, 2004)

- Reduced traffic, less air pollution, less wear and tear on secondary highways and a reduction of land area given over to vehicular traffic are all benefits of reducing vehicle traffic through public transit. These benefits are valued by rural residents, increasingly aware of the need to protect the environment.

### ***Benefits for Health***

- Nova Scotia has the second highest rate of asthma in Canada with more than 50,000 children and 80,000 adults suffering from the disease.<sup>15</sup> Respiratory disorders are the leading cause of emergency admissions for children up to 11 years of age (37%) and for 12 - 20 year olds (40%)<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid., *Sustainable Transportation in Nova Scotia*

<sup>13</sup> Ibid. *Sustainable Transportation in Nova Scotia*

<sup>14</sup> Ibid. *Sustainable Transportation in Nova Scotia*

<sup>15</sup> Nova Scotia Lung Association, 2005

<sup>16</sup> Nova Scotia Community Health Status Report, 2002

According to one estimate, vehicle emissions cost the provincial health care system more than \$200 million annually.<sup>17</sup>

- People who cannot seek medical attention or keep an appointment due to lack of transportation may develop advanced symptoms, or suffer unwarranted discomfort. The availability of a transit system would allow more people timely access to health services appropriate to their need.
- The availability of a public transit would enable social services agencies in the County to buy bus passes for clients requiring transportation. This is a more cost-effective option than the transportation subsidies currently provided for individual clients.

## PROJECT BACKGROUND

The following events culminated in the formation of Citizens for Public Transit, and the development of this proposal:

1. September, 1999: Research study on public transportation conducted by St. Mary's University Business Development Centre for the Lunenburg County Steering Committee for Regional Public Transportation (LC-SCRPT)
2. October 12, 2000: LC SCRPT Business Plan, prepared by St. Mary's University Business Development Centre
3. March 31, 2006: Presentation by Kings Transit on the running of a successful rural transit service, sponsored by Café Canada at the Mahone Bay Centre.
4. April, 2006: Citizens for Public Transit (C.P.T.) formed with representation from the Lunenburg County Community Health Board and concerned residents of the County. Monthly meetings begun.
5. March, 2007: Production of brochure and business plan by C.P.T.

## PROPOSAL

The Citizens for Public Transit proposes that:

The Municipality of the District of Lunenburg, the Town of Mahone Bay, the Town of Bridgewater, and the Town of Lunenburg meet together and jointly establish a

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<sup>17</sup> Hughes, L. et al. , *Proposed Highway 101 Twinning Environmentally Sustainable Alternatives*, Whale Locke Research Institute, 2000

sustainable, affordable public transit system to serve a significant percentage of the residents of their municipalities.

The Municipal Councilors could delegate responsibility to a Coalition Steering Committee, acting as a separate board to establish and oversee the transit system.

### ***Goals for the Transit Service:***

1. To establish a transit route connecting Bridgewater, Mahone Bay, Lunenburg and Riverport, as indicated on the attached map. The service will include set routes and fares, with an established frequency of service.
2. To expand the service area to include other communities within the Municipality of the District of Lunenburg. This would be achieved in the long term, assuming initial route proves cost-effective. For example, service to New Germany area could be considered, perhaps on a twice weekly basis.
3. To provide a service to the community on a cost recovery basis. Established successful systems, such as Kings Transit, are able to attain 60-65% cost recovery from fares. Initially, revenue generated from fares is expected to cover 20% of operating expenses.<sup>18</sup> **The shortfall between revenue generated and total costs would be made up, as in all public transit systems, by Municipal subsidy and federal/provincial grants.**

### ***Objectives for the Transit Service:***

1. To ensure the transit system is managed on an efficient and cost-effective basis
2. To undertake annual review as to the effectiveness and financial viability of the system
3. **Objective for ridership: To establish ridership of 100 passengers per day per bus, (200 per day total) by the third year of operation. This would equal annual ridership of 62,000 riders per year (based on 310 days of operation).**

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<sup>18</sup> Discussion with Management of Kings Transit, 2006

### ***Proposed Initial Service***

- **Route:** The initial route proposed is the loop comprised of Bridgewater, Mahone Bay, Lunenburg, Riverport. It is proposed to run two buses, one in each direction around the route.
- **Frequency of service:** The loop is 67 km in length. At an average speed of 50 km./hour, this will allow frequency of service of two hours.
- **Days of operation:** Buses would run Monday through Saturday. Sunday would be a maintenance day.
- **Fare:** \$2.50/passenger/trip. Other pricing strategies, including daily and monthly passes, will be considered.

### ***Operating Assumptions for Transit Service:***

- **Staffing:** Trained, appropriately licensed drivers would be employed.
- **Management Fee:** The cost for management/administration of the service is estimated at \$30,000 annually (refer to Budget, Appendix 1).
- **Buses:** The appropriate size bus would be a 25-passenger coach style diesel bus, equipped for wheelchair access. Other considerations are:
  - new or used vehicles
  - outright purchase or lease**The recommended option, illustrated in the attached budget (Appendix I), is to lease three used buses with buy-out after three years.**
- **Stimulation of Local Economy:** Wherever possible, local businesses will be utilized to support the bus service (for repairs, etc.)

### ***Sources of Revenue:***

#### ***Federal Funding:***

- Federal funding for capital costs are available, such as the Federal Public Transit Capital Trust. This program provides funding based on ridership, so could be applied for after a year or two of operation.
- Other sources of federal funding are likely to be available with the emerging environmental agenda of the federal government.

*Provincial Funding:*

- Bus passes for selected pre-approved clients (NS Dept. of Community Services).
- Community Transportation Assistance Program (C.T.A.P.) for operating funds, and Accessible Transportation Assistance Program (A.T.A.P.) for capital funds. Each of these funds is administered by Service Nova Scotia.

*Community Funding:*

- Passenger fares
- Paid advertising on the buses and bus shelters
- Municipal funding: **Each Municipal partner in the Coalition would pay a proportion of the operating costs commensurate with the service provided within their municipal unit**

*Corporate and Private Donations:*

- Businesses and private individuals will be approached for donations, or in-kind contributions.

*Other Available Sources of Funding:*

- Federation of Canadian Municipalities Green Fund
- The Ecology Action Centre Green Mobility Fund.

### ***Options for Operating Transit:***

#### ***A: Length of Project: Short Term (6 Months) vs. Longer Term (3 Years)***

		<b><i>Strengths</i></b>	<b><i>Weaknesses</i></b>
<b><i>1.</i></b>	<b><i>Short term project (6 months)</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Short-term trial – quick sampling of public use of bus.</li> <li>-Decreased financial commitment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Insufficient time for public to learn of service</li> <li>-Public wary of depending on short-term service</li> <li>-Significant start-up investment for short- term benefit delivered</li> <li>-May be more difficult to hire staff for short term</li> <li>-Insufficient time to evaluate service (changes in service due to seasons)</li> </ul>
<b><i>2.</i></b>	<b><i>Long term project, (3 years)</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Predictable and reliable: public will feel confident of service continuing</li> <li>-Sufficient time to evaluate service through all seasons</li> <li>-Sufficient time to build service and gauge public demand for service more accurately</li> <li>-A better option for attracting an established transit company, if decision made to contract out service.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-More Expensive</li> <li>-Longer time commitment in face of changing priorities</li> </ul>

***Please note: Option 2 (Long Term project) is recommended by Citizens for Public Transit***

***B. Options for Management of Service: Self-Managed by Municipal Coalition versus Service Contract with an Established Transit Company***

		<b><i>Strengths</i></b>	<b><i>Weaknesses</i></b>
<b><i>1.</i></b>	<b><i>Self-Managed by Municipal Coalition</i></b>	-Municipalities would gain experience should they wish to operate service in long term.	-High cost of initial outlay -More difficult to access federal capital grants without established service -Municipality has no previous experience operating public transit
<b><i>2.</i></b>	<b><i>Service Contract with Transit company</i></b>	-Municipalities do not absorb liability for service -Established transit companies have more access to federal capital grants -Established transit companies with proven track record will promote public confidence -Staffing and initial start-up administration is responsibility of Contractor. No additional administrative support required by Municipality -Contractor could keep separate budgets for each Municipal partner.	Dependence on contract company for continuance of service

***Please Note: Option 2 (Service Contract with Established Transit) is recommended by Citizens for Public Transit for the Style of Management***

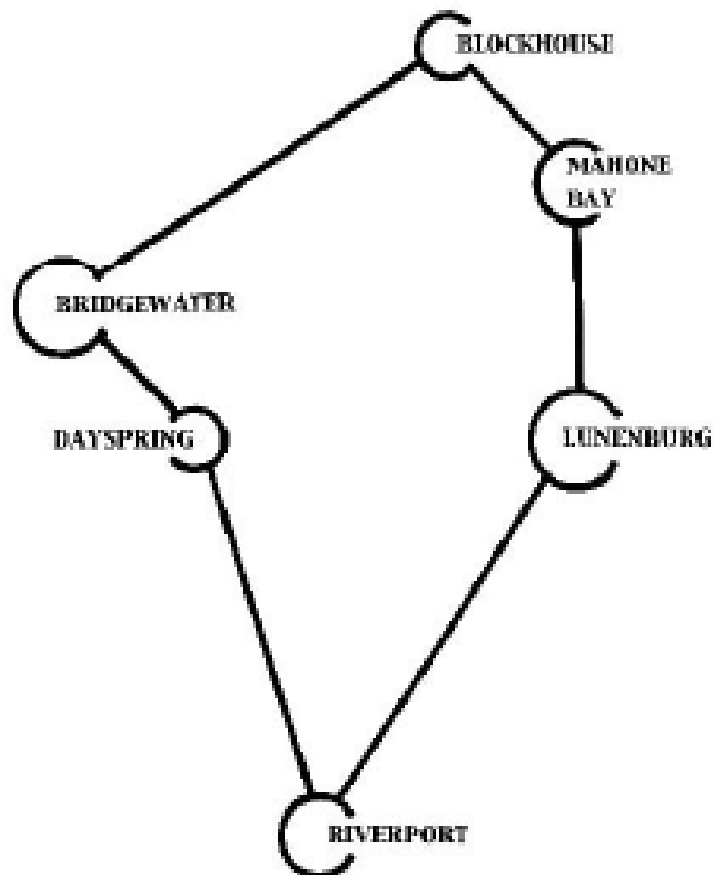
## RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1. A public rural transit system be established in Lunenburg County, initially to link Bridgewater, Mahone Bay, Lunenburg and Riverport. As with every successfully operated transit system in Canada, the system should be operated on a 'break-even' basis, with subsidization as necessary by the Municipal partners involved.**
- 2. To establish public transit within Lunenburg County, a three year contract be established with a recognized transit company to offer the service in this area. A potential company is Kings Transit from the Annapolis Valley.**
- 3. The Municipal Councilors could assign representatives to a Coalition Steering Committee which will consider the details of this proposal and appropriate follow-up action, including making application for appropriate funds. The Citizens for Public Transit are prepared to assist with this endeavor in any way possible.**
- 4. If a Contract with a transit company were to be established as described, the system could be governed by an independent Board of Directors appointed by the funding partners. The General Manager would oversee all company operations.**

## APPENDIX I

### MAP OF PROPOSED ROUTE

# AREA TO BE SERVED



### OPERATING BUDGET

	Year of Operation	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 5 (Higher Ridership)	Formula
<b>ASSUMPTIONS FOR OPERATING BUDGET</b>								
1	Operating days p.a.	310						
2	Number of buses operating	2						
3	Spare Bus	1						
4	Bus operating hours per day	10						
5	Bus operating distance per operating day (km)	350						
6	Bus rate of Fuel consumption (litres/km)	0.25						
7	Preventive Maintenance and Repairs per bus p.a.	\$15,000						
8	Driver hourly wage	\$15						
9	Inflation Rate	3%						
10	Assumed price per used bus	\$70,000						
11	Annual Lease per bus (at 5%)	\$22,000	\$22,000	\$22,000				
12	Lease Term in years	3						
13	Cost of Buyout per bus (Note 1)	\$20,000						
14	Average fuel cost per litre (10% inflation)	\$1.30	\$1.43	\$1.57	\$1.73	\$1.90	\$1.90	
15	<b>Fares/day/bus</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>110</b>	<b>175</b>	<b>260</b>	
16	Fare (average including bus passes)	\$2.50	\$2.50	\$2.50	\$2.25	\$2.25	\$2.25	
17	Total fares per annum	39,680	49,600	62,000	68,200	108,500	161,200	lines 1 x 2 x 15
<b>OPERATING EXPENSES (with 3% inflation)</b>								
		Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 5 (Higher Ridership)	Formula
<b>Staffing</b>								
18	Assistant Manager Wages (Half time)	\$20,000	\$20,600	\$21,218	\$21,855	\$22,510	\$22,510	
19	Drivers' Wages and Benefits (includes spare driver half-time)	116,250	119,738	123,330	127,030	130,840	130,840	
20	Employer's CPP & EI Contributions	8,138	8,382	8,633	8,892	9,159	9,159	
21	Workers' Compensation	5,813	5,987	6,166	6,351	6,542	6,542	
22	<b>Total Wages</b>	<b>150,200</b>	<b>154,706</b>	<b>159,347</b>	<b>164,128</b>	<b>169,051</b>	<b>169,051</b>	

OPERATING EXPENSES (continued)								
		Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 5 (Higher Ridership)	
	<b>Operations</b>							
23	Management Fee	40,000	40,000	40,000	40,000	40,000	40,000	
24	Annual Lease cost of two buses	44,000	44,000	44,000				
25	Buyout of two buses				\$40,000			
26	Purchase, Refurbish, Paint used bus as spare	15000			\$15,000			
27	Insurance	13,000	13,390	13,390	13,390	13,390	13,390	
28	Preventive Maintenance and Repairs	45,000	46,350	47,741	49,173	50,648	50,648	line 7 x 3
29	Fuel (10% Inflation)	70,525	77,578	85,335	93,869	103,256	103,256	
30	Cell Phones	1,500	1,545	1,591	1,639	1,688	1,688	
31	Advertising (Various media, plus placards and schedules)	10,000	10,300	10,609	10,927	11,255	11,255	
32	Bus Signs	750	773	796	820	844	844	
34	Bus Storage	6,000	6,180	6,365	6,556	6,753	6,753	
35	<b>Total Operating Expenses</b>	<b>\$395,975</b>	<b>\$394,821</b>	<b>\$406,666</b>	<b>\$418,866</b>	<b>\$431,432</b>	<b>\$431,432</b>	<b>Sum of lines 22 thru 34</b>
INCOME								
36	Fare Revenue	\$99,200	\$124,000	\$155,000	\$153,450	\$244,125	\$279,000	
37	Bus Advertising (buses inside and outside)	10,000	10,000	10,000	10,000	10,000	10,000	
38	<b>Total Operating Income</b>	<b>\$109,200</b>	<b>\$134,000</b>	<b>\$165,000</b>	<b>\$163,450</b>	<b>\$254,125</b>	<b>\$289,000</b>	
39	<b>Municipal Subsidy Required</b>	<b>\$286,775</b>	<b>\$260,821</b>	<b>\$241,666</b>	<b>\$255,416</b>	<b>\$177,307</b>	<b>\$142,432</b>	<b>line 35 - line 38</b>
40	Fare Revenue/Total Operating Expenses	0.26	0.33	0.40	0.39	0.60	0.65	line 36 divided by line 35
SUMMARY								
		Year	1	2	3	4	5 (Higher Ridership)	
42	<b>Total Operating Expenses</b>		<b>\$395,975</b>	<b>\$394,821</b>	<b>\$406,666</b>	<b>\$418,866</b>	<b>\$431,432</b>	line 35
43	<b>Total Income</b>		<b>\$109,200</b>	<b>\$134,000</b>	<b>\$165,000</b>	<b>\$163,450</b>	<b>\$254,125</b>	Line 38
44	<b>Shortfall/Municipal Subsidy Required</b>		<b>\$286,775</b>	<b>\$260,821</b>	<b>\$241,666</b>	<b>\$255,416</b>	<b>\$177,307</b>	Line 39
	<b>Notes</b>							
1	(Residual Value assuming 35% annual depreciation)							