

## **ALBERTA COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP PROVINCIAL GRANT FUNDING REQUEST – REGIONAL PASSENGER RAIL FEASIBILITY STUDY**

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### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Council support is requested for participation in a provincial grant funding application to the Alberta Community Partnership Program for the Bow Valley Passenger Rail Feasibility Study. The managing partner in the application is the Town of Banff. Other partner municipalities include Town of Cochrane, Town of Canmore, and Improvement District No. 9 (Lake Louise).

### **ADMINISTRATION RECOMMENDATION(S)**

That Council resolves to support The City of Calgary's participation in the Bow Valley Passenger Rail Feasibility Study as per requirements of the Provincially-funded Alberta Community Partnership grant program.

### **PREVIOUS COUNCIL DIRECTION / POLICY**

None.

### **BACKGROUND**

The Provincial government recently launched the Alberta Community Partnership Program (ACP) with the objective "to improve the viability and long-term sustainability of municipalities by providing support for regional collaboration and capacity building initiatives". Key program outcomes include:

- New or enhanced regional municipal services;
- Improved municipal capacity to respond to municipal and regional priorities; and
- Effective inter-municipal relations through joint and collaborative activities.

Alberta Municipal Affairs is responsible for administering the ACP. The Intermunicipal Collaboration component of the program provides funding to partnerships of two or more municipalities to develop or expand regional municipal service delivery. The maximum grant funding per project is \$350,000.

The Town of Banff will be leading a feasibility study to investigate reinstating passenger rail service on existing tracks between Calgary and the Bow Valley. Similar Council resolutions are being sought in the municipalities of Banff, Canmore, Cochrane and Lake Louise. The resolutions are required to be in place by 29 February 2016.

### **INVESTIGATION: ALTERNATIVES AND ANALYSIS**

A requirement to apply for the Alberta Community Partnership Intermunicipal Collaboration grant is that all partner municipalities must pass Council resolutions in support of the project identified in the application.

The ACP creates an opportunity for a municipal partnership to mitigate financial and operational risks and maximize opportunity.

Through the partnership and feasibility study, led by the Town of Banff, project roles and responsibilities for each partner would be determined with respect to: ownership, cost-benefit analysis, rail infrastructure and maintenance, operations, fleet, provisions of passenger rail

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stations and maintenance, operating licenses, liability insurance, span or service, marketing, scheduling and customer service.

Passenger rail will be explored as a sustainable alternative to automobile travel and a means of addressing the impacts during peak travel periods. There is significant congestion on the roads surrounding Banff particularly through the summer months. This congestion has resulted in concerns regarding emergency response. Other key issues include increased vehicle volumes (driving the need for potential capacity improvements), erosion of the visitor experience, economic growth and environmental sustainability.

### **Stakeholder Engagement, Research and Communication**

In preparation for the grant application, the Town of Banff engaged the municipalities of Lake Louise, Canmore, Cochrane and Calgary to partner in the project. The ACP application is attached with this report. Further stakeholder communication and engagement would occur as part of the feasibility study.

### **Strategic Alignment**

This report is aligned with the following long-term plans: Calgary Transportation Plan (CTP) and Municipal Development Plan (MDP, 2009), RouteAhead: A Strategic Plan for Transit in Calgary (2013) and the Calgary Metropolitan Plan (2012). Reinstating passenger rail would help serve principal goals of providing sustainable transportation options for the region, improving highway safety and enhancing opportunities for economic growth through tourism.

### **Social, Environmental, Economic (External)**

The feasibility study will identify social, environmental and economic benefits. Passenger rail has the potential to increase sustainable travel and reduce the use of private vehicles, achieving improvements in road safety, reducing congestion, reducing greenhouse gas emissions and stimulating regional economic growth as direct results of the candidate infrastructure investments.

### **Financial Capacity**

#### **Current and Future Operating Budget:**

The support of this motion will enable the Town of Banff to apply for grant funding of \$350,000 to pay for the feasibility study. There are no matching funds required. The commitment of time and staffing from City of Calgary staff can be accommodated within Calgary Transit's regional transit planning activities with no additional request for funding. The feasibility study will identify potential future capital and operating costs.

#### **Current and Future Capital Budget:**

None associated with the participation in the feasibility study. The feasibility study will identify potential future capital and operating costs.

### **Risk Assessment**

There are no significant risks associated with the recommendations of this report.

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**REASON(S) FOR RECOMMENDATION(S):**

Alberta Municipal Affairs requires a resolution from Council confirming support for the project as part of the grant application process.

**ATTACHMENT(S)**

Application to the Alberta Community Partnership Collaboration Program