AUGUST 2022

Expert Advisory Panel on Moving People Sustainably in the Banff Bow Valley

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Introduction

MOVING PEOPLE SUSTAINABLY in Banff National Park is a key priority for Parks Canada to ensure a world class experience for visitors and that the nationally significant resources of the park are maintained, enhanced and become more accessible and inclusive to visitors and residents alike. The current approaches and systems for transporting visitors, workers and residents are not effective to meet the full needs of park visitors and achieve resource protection goals, especially during the busy summer months. Parking lots, urban roadways and access roads to trailheads and day-use areas are beyond capacity and negatively impacting the visitor experience.

A targeted and collaborative effort on moving people about the Bow Valley in a more sustainable fashion can and must contribute to maintaining or improving ecological integrity and greenhouse gas (GHG) emission reduction. If successfully managed, the experience for visitors to the park will be improved, and transportation-related GHG emissions will be reduced – all of which contributes to Banff National Park's reputation as an international tourist attraction.

Visitation in the Bow Valley of Banff National Park has increased dramatically in the last decade. Demand for vehicular parking at key destinations exceeds supply, road systems are beyond capacity, traffic congestion has become common at popular nodes, and there is a lack of infrastructure and access for individuals living with disabilities. Parks Canada has taken steps to reduce car dependency as an access mode to key nodes by implementing public transit solutions for popular areas in Banff National Park, but these measures are proving insufficient to efficiently and effectively manage demand, while also ensuring resource protection and inclusive and quality visitor experiences. Parks Canada remains committed to public transit and is seeking expert advice to build on this work and explore innovative new solutions to

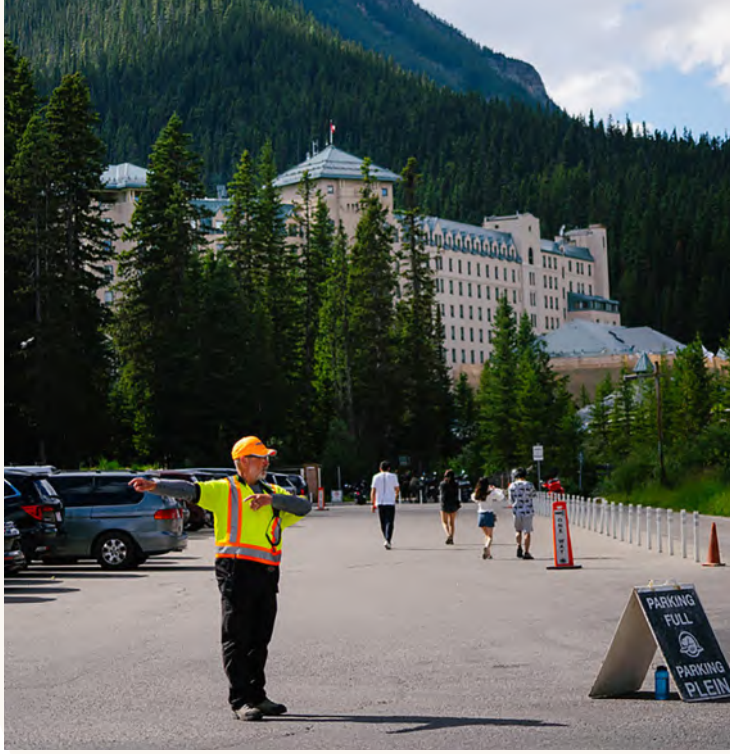

PHOTO CREDIT: PARKS CANADA

The current approaches and systems for transporting visitors, workers and residents are not yet effective to meet the full needs of park visitors and achieve resource protection goals.

INTRODUCTION

achieve and maintain desired conditions. The final section of this report discusses the need to further define these desired conditions to guide ongoing and future management.

In May 2021, Parks Canada established an expert advisory panel to assist with the development of a sustainable people-moving system for Banff National Park. The panel was asked to make recommendations to Parks Canada on how to develop a sustainable people moving framework for the park. The scope of the work included the management and coordination of access, use and infrastructure at key park destinations in, and adjacent to, the Bow Valley in the park. The panel was asked based upon their expertise, and Indigenous, public, and stakeholder consultation to recommend possible innovative solutions for Parks Canada to consider in the development of a people-moving framework.

A Terms of Reference was established for the panel and was subject to Indigenous, public and stakeholder consultation. Collectively, comments from consultation were generally supportive and constructive and informed an improved version of the Terms of Reference *(page 6)*. Comments focused on how to further clarify the panel's role, intent of the project, clear link to the government's 2050 net zero goal regarding GHG emissions and re-affirming the commitment to environmentally sustainable transportation solutions.

The panel met virtually and in-person between June 2021 and June 2022. This report is a result of its discussion and deliberations. It is intended to be a high-level overview and provide recommendations for a future system that is based on the collective experience of the panel.

The scope of the work included the management and coordination of access, use and infrastructure at key park destinations in, and adjacent to, the Bow Valley in the park.

PHOTO CREDIT: BANFF LAKE LOUISE TOURISM / SHANNON MARTIN

Who is the Panel?

The President & CEO of Parks Canada sought individuals to form the panel with knowledge or experience relevant to protected area management or expertise relevant to the challenges and opportunities facing Banff National Park including in the following areas of interest:

- Intelligent Transportation Systems: including traveller information, advanced traffic technologies, smart parking, emerging multi-modal transportation options, MaaS (mobility as a service), transportation wireless communication, and micro mobility;
- Transportation planning: including connecting modes of transportation with each other;
- Transit planning: including links to regional networks, funding mechanisms, scheduling, systems planning, first / last mile planning;
- Accessibility, active modes and inclusion;
- Green transit technology;
- Wayfinding and integration;
- Tourism, marketing and promotion;
- Visitor use management;
- Recreation Planning;
- Behavioral Economics (Specializing in travel behavior and mode choice in leisure context); and
- Communications.

During the consultation period for the Terms of Reference, members of the public were given the opportunity to volunteer to join the panel while identifying their areas of expertise. Several members of the panel were selected in this manner. Some areas of interest however were not represented. The panel secretariat conducted a search process to identify potential individuals to fill these roles. The President and CEO of Parks Canada appointed the following members to the panel:

Leslie Bruce

President & CEO
Banff & Lake Louise Tourism

Dr. Kerri Cahill

Branch Manager
US National Park Service, Denver Service Center

Bill Fisher

Chair
Retired Parks Canada

Kelly Gibson

Town Manager
Town of Banff

Dr. Emily Grisé

Assistant Professor
University of Alberta

Jen Malzer

Transportation Engineer
Canadian Institute of Transportation Engineers

Jamie McCulloch

Executive Director
Rocky Mountain Adaptive

Selby Thannikary

Team Lead, Transp. Planning
Stantec / WSP

Dr. Dan Wicklum

CEO
Transition Accelerator

Panel Goals

TERMS OF REFERENCE

The **Terms of Reference** outlines many considerations to guide development of a sustainable transportation framework. It states that a people-moving framework for Banff National Park will:

- integrate the experience and build on the work of key stakeholders, local governments, regional transit providers and Indigenous partners;
- make efficient use of land and other natural resources, while ensuring the preservation of connectivity, vital habitat and other requirements for maintaining biodiversity;
- promote the use of alternative and renewable energy while reducing waste, fossil fuel consumption, emissions and discharges of contaminants to surface and ground water;
- offer diverse mobility options, giving people more choices as to how they meet their access needs including self-propelled or micro transportation as an alternative to cars;
- build upon Parks Canada's demonstrated commitment to mass transit;
- think beyond transportation modes, and look at other demand management strategies;
- be integrated into existing land use management and not result in cumulative effects that would have significant adverse effects on the quality of the visitor experience, visitor safety or park resources;
- be adaptable and scalable;
- provide value for money and identify and recognize public subsidies (hidden or otherwise) and social, economic and environmental costs;
- offer equity of access;
- ensure options consider private sector alternatives;
- consider research and development of innovative alternative technologies that improve access and help protect the environment and reduce GHG emissions;
- be coordinated with private sector tourism objectives;
- reflect visitor expectations and demographics; and
- be integrated with broader regional transportation networks.

INTRODUCTION

The expert panel have worked to become oriented to the park and have met with officials from Roam Transit, Town of Banff and local park managers and Field Unit Superintendents to better understand their role and how their work supports the goals for the park. Ultimately the panel's goal is to develop an exemplary case study for other parks in Canada and around the world to serve as a model of effective visitor use management in a busy national park.

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TOUCHSTONES

The panel has established a briefer **set of principles as touchstones** to return to when considering various strategies. Our goal is to create a framework that:

- Reduces GHG emissions from people movement in Banff National Park;
- Improves ecological integrity and does not contribute to net impairment of ecological function;
- Makes transportation an integral and valuable part of the visitor experience, key to providing a welcoming, inclusive, and accessible environment for all visitors;
- Improves the level and quality of service across the transportation network;
- Must be efficient and careful with any new development and land use; and
- Must have efficient, effective, inclusive and accessible access for all visitors and residents.

Alignment with the new Banff National Park Management Plan

While the panel was undertaking its work, a new draft Banff National Park Management Plan was completed and presented to Canadians for feedback. The panel was careful to consider the direction of the new proposed management plan in setting the context for its work. Key Strategy 8: Moving People Sustainably, targets the need for a comprehensive people moving plan that considers local, regional, municipal and private transportation offers, existing pathways and trails, key attractions, and current and projected levels and patterns of visitor use. The plan states:

> *For a sustainable future, Banff National Park needs to go beyond accommodating increasing visitor demand with more traffic-related infrastructure. Instead, the strategy is aimed at a system that goes beyond buses and parking lots, to capture the whole experience of being in and enjoying a national park. That is, a system where the ways of getting to places and moving about are as much a part of the national park experience and legacy, as its landscapes, and natural and cultural resources. Rather than relying solely on large-scale mass transit and built infrastructure, it would be comprised of multiple medium and small-scale components that can be assembled, added to, increased or decreased, as visitor preference, circumstances and technology change. It would recognize the unique context of national park exploration and that one approach does not fit all. Such a people-moving system would be an example of how big-picture thinking, comprehensive planning and 'green' transport can help secure an environmentally and economically sustainable future for the park, and solidify Parks Canada's reputation as a leader in environmental protection and a provider of heritage experiences.*

The goal of this strategy is to ensure that current and potential park visitors and residents are able to move about the park comfortably, efficiently, and sustainably, while optimizing accessible and inclusive experiences that are compatible with resource protection. The proposed transport system needs to be resilient and capable of delivering a quality and comfortable experience all year long, both in nice summer months and during harsh Alberta winters. This will involve consideration for infrastructure capacity, visitor experience and ecological objectives, and for reducing potential visitor conflicts and safety issues. The panel was careful to consider its recommendations in the context of the draft management plan. Ultimately the panel sees its work tying directly into the first target of the moving people strategy to build a plan:

> *A comprehensive people movement plan for the park is developed that: sets 10-year goals, objectives and measurable targets, and considers local, regional, municipal and private transportation offers, existing pathways and trails, key attractions, and current and projected levels and patterns of visitor use. As reliability, frequency and affordability are known factors in promoting public uptake of mass transit in lieu of private vehicle use, the plan clearly addresses these factors in its approach.*

The panel believes its work can be a catalyst and inform the creation of a master plan for transportation in the Bow Valley.

What we heard from Indigenous Peoples, public, stakeholders

The Terms of Reference stated that the panel shall determine the consultation plan and the list of interveners with whom it wishes to meet directly, including Indigenous Peoples and a broad cross-section of interested groups, organizations and individuals during its review in order to gain an understanding of issues and opportunities related to its mandate. The panel extended an invitation to stakeholders for written submissions and requested that like-minded groups join efforts to make presentations directly to the Panel.

The panel received 15 written submissions from a range of stakeholders including environmental groups, ski areas, local transit providers, tourism associations and local governments. Four key groups chose to make presentations directly to the panel via video conference. The panel also had access to the comments from the public consultation on the Draft Management Plan. These submissions greatly assisted the panel in better understanding the current issues and management context in Banff National Park. The panel Chair and some panel members have also engaged with Indigenous representatives from most Treaty 7 First Nations and Métis Region #3.

Public comments showed alignment with most of these issues. Additionally, visitors expressed real concern for value for money and being able to have continued access to the places they want to visit.

The panel received 15 written submissions from a range of stakeholders

THEMES

There was much congruence in the stakeholder comments and several themes emerged from their submissions. These included:

- Ecological integrity and protecting the character and nature of Banff National Park must remain the top priority.
- There is a clear need for continued partnership and increased integration among transit providers and tourism operators for more effective and efficient delivery of transportation services.
- The process for designing transit options needs to improve – we must define problems and work toward solutions.
- Parks Canada and all operators need to consider a wider variety of management tools to deal with the complex issues of visitor use management.
- There is increasing need for demand management techniques at various nodes but less desire to see this for Banff in general i.e. use should not be capped at the gate.
- Communications, wayfinding, sense of arrival and signage could greatly improve and would help facilitate behavioural change in visitors.
- The panel needs to consider spillover effects into other jurisdictions and to ensure displacement of visitors doesn't create problems elsewhere.
- A people-moving framework must consider visitor movement year-round.

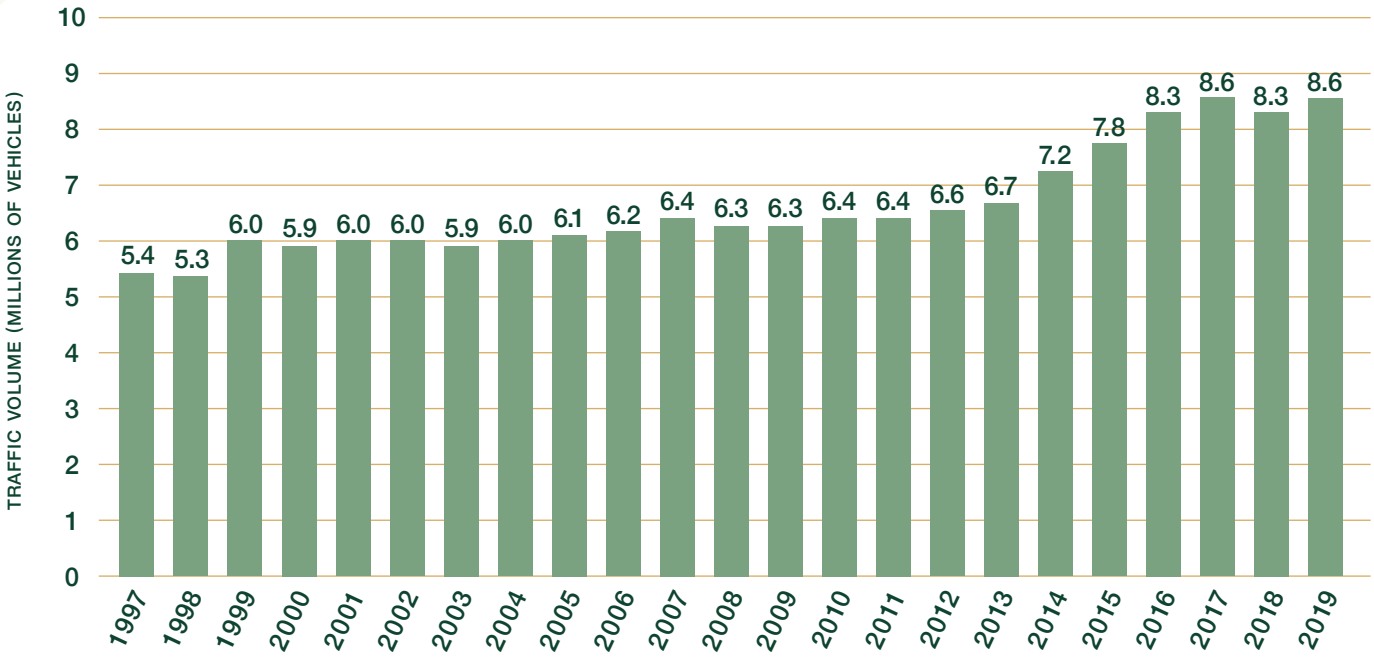
Background of the transportation issues in Banff National Park

BANFF NATIONAL PARK is Canada's most popular national park and one of the country's most important tourism destinations. Over four million people visit the park annually and visitation increases every year. Between 2010 and 2019, there was a 29% increase in visitation.

Banff National Park is a complex land base containing two communities, a national highway and national rail line, three ski areas, a golf course, ten front-country campgrounds, and many outlying commercial accommodations. Most of these spaces are in a relatively small portion of the park. 97% of the park is declared wilderness where development is prohibited. All of this occurs in a landscape with complex ecological issues such as species at risk, invasive species, fragmented wildlife corridors and human wildlife conflict. Banff also hosts a diverse group for visitors from around the globe that experience the landscape in very different ways that continue to change and evolve.

Some roadways in the national park and the Town of Banff have become very congested (e.g. Lake Louise Drive, Mountain Avenue to Sulphur Mountain). With increased visitation levels, the past decade has seen a steady rise in vehicle traffic. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, there were over 8.5 million vehicles on Banff highways. It is estimated that 50% of all traffic on the Trans-Canada Highway in Banff National Parks is through traffic.

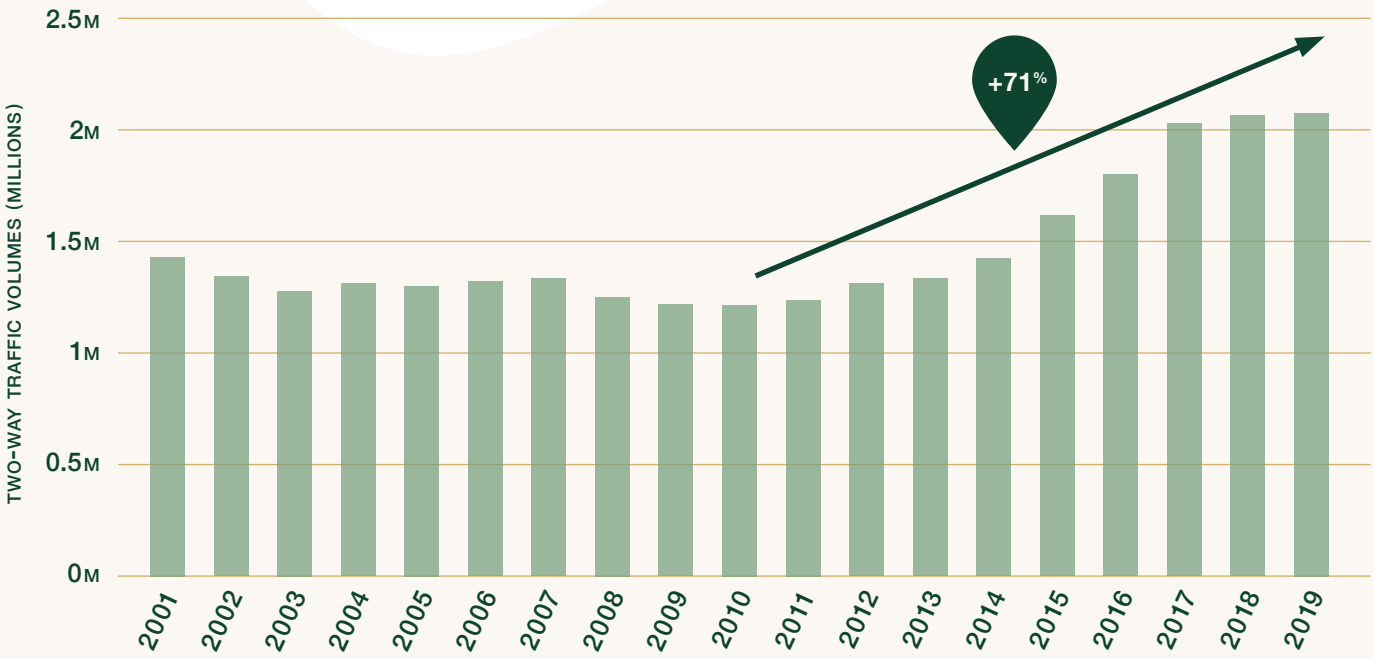
Annual Traffic Volume at Banff East Gate, 1997-2019



This rise is even greater at some of the park's main attractions. At Lake Louise, for example, there has been a 71% increase in traffic volume over the past decade. This has led to significant congestion issues. Parking lots at Moraine Lake and Lake Louise are often full by 7:00 AM from June to September. Motorists will circle the parking lots and drive up and down Lake Louise Drive hoping to eventually secure a spot. This has also led to the proliferation of parking along roadways leading to popular destinations, further negatively impacting the ecological areas along roadways and contributing to roadway traffic congestion. This causes great frustration for visitors, produces GHG emissions, and poor porosity for wildlife moving through the area.

Parks Canada has taken steps to address these issues in various areas of the park. Visitors can ride a paid shuttle system at Lake Louise that allows them to leave their cars in the valley bottom where parking is more plentiful. The Agency has taken steps over the past several years to continually try to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the system such as introducing a reservation system, adding flaggers at significant cost to manage traffic flow, launching paid parking at Upper Lake Louise and moving the intercept lot to the Lake Louise Ski Area in 2022 where there are better facilities and access. The Roam public transit system has also expanded service over the past several years with more routes connecting popular destinations and communities in the Bow Valley. However, the implementation of these measures were in isolation of a broader framework to address the transportation and mobility issues within the park which limited their effectiveness at resolving the underlying congestion issues.

Annual Traffic Volumes along Lake Louise Drive, 2001-2019



A vision for transit in Banff National Park

THE EXPERT ADVISORY PANEL envisions a very different future for seamlessly moving through Banff National Park in 5-10 years. This is a long-term vision that Parks Canada could choose to work towards in incremental stages, adapting its approach as conditions change and feedback is received from the public and partners. However much can be done starting today to make this vision a reality in the near future.

LONG-TERM VISION

Most day visitors arrive in Banff National Park by public transit, without a personal vehicle. They find easy connections from the Calgary airport, downtown or somewhere near the edge of the city. The trip, be it on a train, bus or some other mode is frequent, comfortable, efficient and relaxing. There is room for gear, strollers, mobility devices and other effects and they are able to enjoy the trip confident they'll see the most popular sites without ever needing a private vehicle. Locals and workers also use the system to commute and for recreation. They have the option of having planned their trip in advance or spontaneously, using a centralized information system to help plan aspects of their visit and what to expect when they visit.

Some visitors still choose to drive their vehicles because they know they have parking at their campsite or hotel. They park their vehicles and visit attractions on transit or other active modes. They may have longer and more complex trips that require the convenience of their own vehicle and are willing to pay more to park and know they can still access an integrated public/private transit system.

Visitors arrive at well-serviced hubs – welcome centres to start their trip. These spaces are complete with intercept parking, information services (park staff, ambassadors and self-serve kiosks), visitor infrastructure (gear rental, food services, washrooms, wifi, playgrounds and other services) and educational experiences. There are frequent connections to their next or final destination in Banff National Park. Visitors will return to these hubs and then return to their home, campsite or hotel via numerous options.

Heading out for day trips, most visitors will have more than one option for moving about sustainably. Shuttles, buses, autonomous vehicles, e-bikes, bicycles and others are all on the same flexible payment system – seamless and no hassles, and interconnected. Active mode infrastructure is available for all ages and abilities. Whether they are heading to a ski hill, a popular hiking trail or just a scenic tour, it is simple and convenient to access different options. While different companies may provide these services, visitors access them via a unified pay system and integrated reservations, accessible through a variety of tools and payment options. All facilities, technologies, infrastructure and services used, will be fully accessible making ease of use for everyone.

When they arrive at very popular destinations such as Lake Louise and Moraine Lake they find that opportunities for close connection with nature can be found, and although busy with other people, it does not feel consistently crowded. Private vehicles are no longer able to access these areas and there are no longer congested parking lots. In some cases, the parking lots have been reduced in size and the area restored to a natural state. Smaller hubs and trail heads may not be connected by public transit initially but also promote sustainable transportation through charging stations, secure bike parking, and others. Roadways are quieter and wildlife becomes more visible and abundant.

Key Strategies overview

THE FOLLOWING EIGHT sections provide an overview of the main concepts that the panel discussed while considering the transportation situation in Banff. These are the big ideas that the panel feels can move forward a framework based on its expertise and experience from other jurisdictions. The panel feels this provides a roadmap to a more sustainable future while acknowledging much work remains to be done. The framework can be thought of in three broad categories with key strategies to support each.

Each strategy begins with an overview of the current situation and the issue the panel recommends addressing. This is followed by a discussion of how each strategy can contribute to a more sustainable future. The panel proposes a list of specific actions that Parks Canada and partners could consider to help achieve the overall goal. Finally, there is a brief discussion of feasibility and the relative cost, ease, and timing of implementation.

Much research, planning, consultation and development would be required to advance many of these strategies, especially major initiatives. Others can be advanced sooner or be pilots. Pilots provide an opportunity to introduce ideas to the public and test these initiatives, and then refine them before significant investment is made. Metrics that define success should be outlined in advance with supporting data collection and evaluation to measure their effectiveness of achieving stated goals.

ARRIVING IN BANFF NATIONAL PARK

KEY STRATEGY 1
Reduce private vehicle arrivals

KEY STRATEGY 2
Create mobility hubs

MOVING AROUND THE PARK

KEY STRATEGY 3
Improve & diversify public transportation options

KEY STRATEGY 4
Develop & encourage active transportation

KEY STRATEGY 5
Create a comprehensive and unified transportation service

ENABLING CHANGE

KEY STRATEGY 6
Develop partnerships with stakeholders & Indigenous Peoples

KEY STRATEGY 7
Use pricing as a tool to influence behaviour

KEY STRATEGY 8
Better understand visitor experience & transportation use

1

ARRIVING IN BANFF NATIONAL PARK

PHOTO CREDIT: BANFF TOURISM / DAMIAN BLUNT

KEY STRATEGY 1:

Reduce private vehicle arrivals in Banff National Park

Current situation

The volume of vehicles arriving in Banff National Park during the summer season and on many weekends throughout the year is beyond levels that can be managed sustainably. Traffic congestion within the Banff Townsite is common and severe. Motorists have taken over 90 minutes to traverse from one end of town to another. In places like Lake Louise the traffic on highway ramps can back far onto the main highway lanes creating safety concerns for through traffic. Parking lots at many day use nodes are overflowing with spillover parking stretching for a kilometre or more onto the highway.

Currently there are limited options for travellers who wish to leave their vehicle in Calgary or Banff. There are also not well-defined areas to receive visitors or places where those who do take a vehicle can leave it for the duration of their trip. Additionally, there are also poor options for 'last-mile' connectivity within the park that could get visitors from a transportation hub to their hotel, campground or attraction.

There are also significant constraints for current and future parking options in the park and surrounding areas, and the impacts of congestion to its environmentally sensitive areas. The panel does not see the merit of alienating montane habitat by expanding parking lots at each destination, nor would that approach be consistent with protecting the ecological integrity of the park. Those on overnight stays generally have parking options at their hotels or campground but those arriving as day users do not.

KEY STRATEGY 1

Contribution to a sustainable system

Reducing private vehicle arrivals in the park will be a critical step to achieving a more sustainable system, along with considering the management of the overall system with regards to the pace and flow of visitation. Fewer vehicles entering the park will result in fewer downstream congestion issues and will also reduce GHG emissions.

The actual mode of transportation needs to match the need it is trying to fill and the goals for resource management and inclusive visitor experiences. In this case, the mode would likely involve high-capacity mass transportation services. Today there are currently only two transportation options that can reduce private vehicle arrivals from Calgary, motor coaches/buses and passenger rail. If these transport services are powered by electricity or hydrogen, additional reductions may be realized.

A high-volume transport system must be accessible, convenient and well-priced to encourage sustainable travel and make it a preferred alternative to personal vehicle usage. Offering frequent service at peak periods and spanning across the day is a must for any form of transport. A service must be convenient and accessible for all sorts of visitors and visit purposes. A well-priced service is cost-competitive with driving, a feature all the more essential in this time of high gas prices. Well-priced also means having fare schemes that are favourable to families and people of all abilities.

Further, shared transport providers must understand that their clients are not commuters but rather visitors en route to a national park. The amenities and facilities provided on a train or bus must be designed to accommodate outdoor gear (such as skis/snowboards, large packs, picnic baskets, strollers, bikes, etc.). Even the design and layout of passenger seating should be considered. 'First mile/last mile' connectivity is also key to the success of the system. For day visitors to the park originating in Calgary, access to the mass transit services in the city must be convenient. When visitors arrive at a hub in Banff National Park they will need frequent, convenient and affordable connections to their final destination. This mode of transit will also be an asset to the local workforce if it is designed properly from a routing and service frequency perspective. It will broaden the range of housing opportunities that will be of great value to local businesses.

A high-volume transport system must be accessible, convenient and well-priced to encourage sustainable travel and make it a preferred alternative to personal vehicle usage.

A scalable transit system could also present options for future expansion. A train from Edmonton to Calgary has long been discussed in Alberta and a passenger rail connection to Banff National Park could be an asset. Extending the rail system to Lake Louise could significantly reduce the volume of traffic within the park and provide a quick, easy connection to the most popular destination in the park. Extending transit

ARRIVING IN BANFF NATIONAL PARK

PHOTO CREDIT: BANFF TOURISM / DAMIAN BLUNT

services by bus to Kananaskis Country, Jasper, Yoho and Kootenay national parks and points further west are possible. Needless to say, planning and constructing a transit system would be complex and require a considerable investment. It would involve approval and permitting at all three levels of government including several municipalities. The environmental assessment and associated mitigations would need to address significant wildlife movement concerns and other ecological issues.

There is an opportunity for continuous learning and adaptive management. It is unlikely that a functioning mass transit system such as a train from Calgary to Banff could be designed and built immediately. Rather a staged approach that might involve first buses, dedicated bus lanes or other options could test the viability of the system while utilizing the existing transportation infrastructure. The system should be designed and adaptively managed to ensure the pace and flow of visitation to different areas of the park supports the achievement and maintenance of desired conditions for resources and visitor experiences. Bus service provides the needed flexibility for adaptive planning.

a staged approach that might involve first buses, dedicated bus lanes or other options could test the viability of the system while utilizing the existing transportation infrastructure.

Any system that is designed must accommodate many different types of visitors – international, local, day vs. overnight, activities etc. Ultimately a well-designed system would either provide alternative (non-personal vehicle) transportation modes for a visitor's entire trip, or allow a visitor to arrive in Banff and only park once if they choose to bring a vehicle. An appropriate set of incentives, such as a reduced park pass fee or discounts at other attractions, will need to be offered to convince visitors to take this option.

The panel strongly believes there is an opportunity for the broader community of interests in the Bow Valley to demonstrate leadership and make Banff a showcase for the world. Banff is one of the most popular tourist sites in the country. If we can't do outstanding public transit in Banff, where can we do it?

Summary of potential actions

The panel recognizes that many of these actions may be beyond the current scope of Parks Canada alone. However, Parks Canada could lead a broader conversation with partners on mass transit.

Improve pricing mechanisms →	Pricing plays a critical role in public transit usage and this will be explored further in a subsequent section. It is worth noting here that the cost for the user must make sense and account for equity considerations in order to make the system attractive. This can be achieved with a low enough price point for public transit but also through disincentives for private vehicle usage. Parks Canada could offer variable pricing based on arrival by mass transit or private vehicle. Parking fees could also be raised to a point where public transit becomes a much more affordable option. Park access fees could also be increased for vehicles with solo travellers versus those with passengers to incentivize group travel. Getting the public to shift transportation modes will require different tactics.
Expand current offer where possible →	There are currently transit options such as the On-It Transit system that moves people from Calgary to Banff. At present, there has been positive uptake in ridership yet it has been insufficient to reduce the number of vehicles entering the park. Exploring opportunities to expand a service such as this in line with visitor demand would be a good start to reducing vehicles and providing a meaningful test of a transit system. An adaptive approach to expanding transit options allows planners to better understand and design a future system.
Communicate transit goals →	Communication is a powerful tool for shifting behaviour. A concerted effort should be made to link all the values of mass transit including reduced congestion, improved travel time, improved convenience and GHG reduction as part of an expanded service.

ARRIVING IN BANFF NATIONAL PARK

Consider range of options →

Parks Canada and regional partners should consider the range of options for moving people into and within Banff National Park. The panel is aware of the proposal to build a dedicated passenger rail line connecting Calgary and Banff. If this option proves feasible it could be an ideal solution to reducing vehicles. Train service is efficient, comfortable and environmentally responsible and could remove a significant number of vehicles from the road. There are options for connecting into the system from the airport, downtown Calgary and other areas around the city. However, there may be significant policy, economic, and land use challenges to overcome with building a passenger rail line.

There are other alternatives to a train. Dedicated high occupancy vehicle (HOV) lanes on the Trans-Canada Highway (TCH) could encourage car-pooling and fewer vehicles. An expanded bus service, either public or private, could provide many of the same benefits as a train with lower capital infrastructure costs. Bus service is also a scalable option that can be responsive to market changes. In the future, dedicated bus lanes could be considered within the existing footprint of the TCH and road network within the Park to further increase the attractiveness of a bus service and ensure a timely and reliable service can be provided in the event of highway congestion.

Engage in genuine discussions of public transit options →

Parks Canada should play an active and leadership role in advancing public transit solutions connecting Banff to other places in Alberta. They should engage in genuine conversation with a range of partners, stakeholders, local governments and the public to find a solution that is consistent with Parks Canada's mandate. This may require a shift in thinking for Parks Canada managers. The panel believes that reducing the number of vehicle arrivals in Banff, along with better management of the pace and flow of visitation to different areas, is a critical tool for protecting the ecological integrity of the park, reducing GHG emissions and improving the visitor experience. It will become necessary in the future to change tactics in order to protect the same things.

Consider partnerships →

Parks Canada will not be able to do this work alone. It does not have the capacity to build a fully realized mass transit system that is well beyond its borders. Partnering with others will be critical to making this a reality. Other local governments are interested in expanding services for their residents and visitors. Private operators are willing to invest in new systems. Indigenous Peoples are eager to explore options near Calgary to provide parking and services for a new system. These partnerships should be actively pursued and fostered.

KEY STRATEGY 1

Feasibility

The proposed recommendations may be challenging for Parks Canada to implement but they are fundamental to reducing traffic congestion. Some elements of the proposals are long-term in nature and complex from a land-use and ecological conservation perspective. While some may consider these actions beyond the scope and mandate of Parks Canada, they are for the long term protection of the park and Canadians experience of the park. They cover multiple jurisdictions and pose significant environmental and policy challenges. However, Parks Canada is best positioned to create and lead a discussion with partners. Changing visitor expectations and behaviour will be challenging but this is achievable. With higher gas prices, younger generations with lower vehicle ownership rates, and with an excellent public transit system, we can be optimistic that people will make use of it. Parks Canada can be an active voice at the table and encourage a broader conversation around mass transit from Calgary and must participate fully.

Changing visitor expectations and behaviour will be challenging but this is achievable.

FUTURE VISITOR SCENARIO

Linda & Louise

DATELINE: OCTOBER 5, 2024

Linda and Louise are notorious last-minute planners. In their mid-40's, their work shifts rarely line up, so finding some time to relax and go hiking or snowboarding together in the mountains is always a challenge. Linda has switched a shift and would like to go hike to Sentinel Pass in the Moraine Lake area tomorrow to see the larch trees. Louise says it might be busy. Linda scoffs and says, "we'll get an early start." Linda and Louise get up early and the weather sounds perfect for an autumn hike. As they enter Banff National Park, a digital sign advises that the Moraine Lake parking lot is full and all timed ticket entries and shuttle seats are full. After a heated discussion, they decide to continue on to Moraine Lake Road but upon arrival note that access is indeed restricted to shuttles only and passengers must have a reservation. They bump into a Parks Canada staff member who advises them that there are other options. The attendant opens a mobile app and notes there are multiple timed-entries available at Bourgeau Lake, Boom Lake and Rockbound Lake if they are still interested in going for a hike today. She also notes that there are several openings to Sentinel Pass later in the week and adds that the larches are a bit late turning this year. Linda and Louise vow to be better planners and are quick to download the app.

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ARRIVING IN BANFF NATIONAL PARK

PHOTO CREDIT: BANFF TOURISM / NICK FITZHARDINGE

KEY STRATEGY 2:

Create mobility hubs

Current situation

Banff National Park does not currently have well defined welcome hubs. Most visitors will pass through an entry gate but there are few services, limited information and no connections to other services at the entry gates. Hubs do exist at the Parks Canada information centres in Banff and Lake Louise. However, neither is particularly well located to welcome and provide multiple services, including intercept parking.

Hubs can be thought of as welcome centres; places for information, opportunities for education, to access a washroom, to find easy connections to your next or final destination.

KEY STRATEGY 2

Contribution to a sustainable system

A transportation hub is an efficient way to centrally locate services. Hubs can be thought of as welcome centres; places for information, opportunities for education, to access a washroom, to find easy connections to your next or final destination.

Many jurisdictions are trying to create effective transportation hubs. The new Union Station in New York City is an example where new infrastructure was constructed to support a variety of transportation modes. The facility connects incoming train users with a variety of transportation modes and an extensive network of walking connections. Areas of downtown Calgary can be thought of the same way where transit stations connect with buses, e-scooters, the plus 15 network, walking paths and others.

Banff already has what can be thought of as a distributed network of mini-hubs that would include places like hotels and campgrounds. These areas allow for parking of personal vehicles but then do require the need for first and last mile connection into the broader system.

Banff already has what can be thought of as a distributed network of mini-hubs that would include places like hotels and campgrounds.

Hubs would provide a variety of services, suited to destinations, that could include:

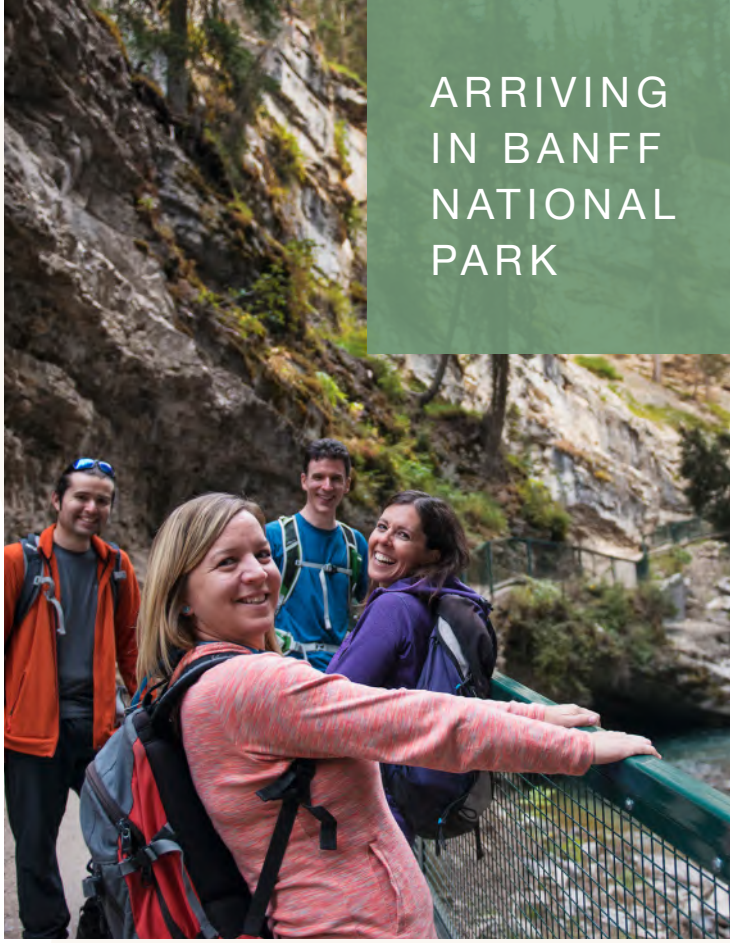
- Options for access to multi-modal forms of transit (buses, shuttles, on-demand vehicles, autonomous shuttles, etc.);
- High capacity parking options;
- Connectivity with active transportation options such as cycling and hiking;
- Be fully accessible in line with the *Accessible Canada Act* and be able to educate visitors on all the accessible options and opportunities around the whole park;
- Connectivity with private sightseeing and guiding companies;
- Educational and orientation information readily available from park staff, ambassadors and self-serve kiosks;
- Wifi hotspots;
- Appropriate shelter in all seasons;
- Become part of the user experience – hubs are pleasant places to be and set your trip up for success;
- A variety of amenities such as washrooms, playgrounds, commerce and potentially food services;
- Electric charging services for vehicles and e-bicycles;
- Gear hubs and rental services for activities such as biking, paddle boarding and even camping equipment. Food services, gear rentals, and other commercial amenities would have to respect any relevant commercial development caps.

KEY STRATEGY 2

ARRIVING IN BANFF NATIONAL PARK

Transportation hubs provide unique options for future management planning. There are many day-use parking areas that struggle with demand exceeding supply. Effective transportation hubs should have the ability to increase and decrease levels of service to accommodate surges in visitors interested in going to and returning from areas such as Johnson Lake, Johnston Canyon and Helen Lake. In fact, there are innovative options for strategically managing the pace and flow of visitation to certain trailheads and destinations that can be considered. Namely, some of these high use areas could be accessed only by public or private transit at busier times of year through reservations that deliver the appropriate volume of use to achieve desired conditions. Although not a perfect example, accessing Lake O'Hara in Yoho National Park requires some pre-trip planning and reservations for most users.

Over the last two years, the eastern section of the Bow Valley Parkway has seen seasonal closures to vehicle traffic as a response to visitor congestion and crowding at Johnston Canyon during the pandemic. The panel is aware that Parks Canada is conducting a two-year pilot to further explore options and gain a better understanding of how visitors responded to this change and how this strategy influenced visitor experiences to the area and the achievement of resource protection goals.



JOHNSTON CANYON / PHOTO CREDIT: PARKS CANADA

some of these high use areas could be accessed only by public or private transit at busier times of year through reservations that deliver the appropriate volume of use to achieve desired conditions.

Summary of potential actions

Create vision for hubs →

A short-term action would be to create a vision for what these transportation hubs should look like. This could be a multi-stakeholder process (e.g. design charette) to explore options for where hubs could be located and what would make an effective hub. Having a vision for hubs can lead to design work and eventually building the temporary and permanent pieces to make a functional hub. A fully realized hub will likely have many businesses and partnerships involved so early collaboration will improve the likelihood for success. Piloting designs and amenities can help test user priorities and accelerate behaviour change.

Develop hubs in two locations →

The panel sees two areas being particularly well positioned to serve as transportation hubs:

Banff Townsite Area:

- While ecological constraints will be a factor, it would be advantageous to consider a large transportation hub at the north (Mt Norquay Road) or east (Banff Avenue) end of town. This hub would ideally be co-located with public and private mass transit from Calgary either by train or bus.
- Banff also presents many options for 'decentralized hubs' or parking areas. Hotels, Outlying Commercial Accommodations, hostels, campgrounds, and others can be considered 'mini-hubs' if the connectivity is good within the park. Ideally visitors will be able to leave their vehicle where they sleep and have linkage into the broader transportation system.

Lake Louise Area:

- The hub can be thought of as the broader Lake Louise Area, with the Lake Louise Ski Area as the main intercept parking lot. The lot currently contains space for 1,800 vehicles but will be expanded to accommodate 3,100 vehicles under the approved Long Range Plan. There are already many services here in terms of washrooms and food services that could be expanded to support active modes and transit.
- The Parks Canada Park and Ride location east of Lake Louise on the Trans-Canada Highway was not an effective or cost-efficient intercept parking lot. It lacked services, clear wayfinding signage and was difficult to access from the highway. The panel supports the relocation to the Lake Louise Ski Area. The former Park and Ride area should be rehabilitated.

Develop hubs in two locations →
(continued)

- If rail connectivity is made available in the future, the train station could be another link in the system.
- The hub provides connectivity options to all the main sites in the area including the hamlet/Samson Mall, Upper Lake Louise, and Moraine Lake. Modes of transit will be determined by the needs and engineering feasibility. This transit hub also offers potential connections to other areas in the future such as Emerald Lake and Takakkaw Falls in Yoho National Park, and popular hiking destinations along the Icefields Parkway.

Make gradual infrastructure improvements to support future hub →

There are universal pieces of infrastructure that are required regardless of the mobility options from hubs. There will be a need for access roads, pathways, lights, power, water among others regardless of exactly how a hub is intended to function. The panel recognizes the work Parks Canada has done in places like Lake Louise where incremental steps have been taken to improve arrival areas, bus stops, off-ramps, etc. that could support a variety of modes in the future. With a clearer vision for an overall hub design, even better decisions could be taken in the mid-term. Similar efforts are being made in the Town of Banff, with the approval of intercept parking at the Banff Train Station, paid parking zones and signage to encourage visitors to take a bus to the Sulphur Mountain attractions.

Expand available modes from each Hub →

Part of the overall goal will be to increase mobility options from each hub. Of particular interest are larger people moving options that fit the context and include options like buses, trains, autonomous vehicles and aerial transit. These pieces should all connect into the hubs and offer visitors options for accessing key destinations.

But hubs will also need connections for smaller scale and active modes of transportation. Pathways should connect from the hubs so that visitors can walk or ride to the same destinations accessed by motor vehicle. Hubs should then offer services to rent modes such as bicycles, e-bikes, scooters or whatever other technology might be appropriate.

ARRIVING IN BANFF NATIONAL PARK

Work on first and last mile connectivity →

While hubs can be very effective at centralizing user amenities, there still needs to be first and last mile connections to key destinations and overnight accommodations to truly make them viable and functional for visitors. This is challenging in Banff National Park as some of the connections may not truly be 'last mile' but the last 5-25 miles. If a visitor travels to a transportation hub like the Town of Banff or the Hamlet of Lake Louise, how do they then get to a trailhead like Bourgeau Lake or Helen Lake? Will there be on-demand public or private services, chartered shuttles or scheduled drop off and pick up times?

The panel recommends that Parks Canada focus on connecting the most popular areas first (e.g. Lake Louise, Moraine Lake, Johnston Canyon, Minnewanka Loop) where traffic congestion and visitation is most pronounced. As the visiting public becomes more comfortable with "giving up the keys" and accustomed to using a variety of public transit and other options then the more complicated "last mile" challenges can be examined. By experiencing tiny nudges, creating a culture of how to move sustainably in Banff National Park will have a greater chance of success.

Access to and from Sulphur Mountain during many weekends and most days in the summer is particularly challenging. Parks Canada needs to continue working with the Town of Banff and impacted stakeholders to encourage visitors to leave their private vehicles at an intercept parking lot, hotel or campsite and take advantage of other forms of transit to access the attractions on the mountain.

Adaptively manage modes from each hub →

The panel recommends taking a measured and adaptive approach to any new modes of transit that might be considered from a hub. Currently in the Lake Louise area, buses are relatively effective at moving people. This service could likely be expanded and lessons learned in the process, particularly as it relates to the appropriate volume and frequency of buses to support visitation needs, and related influences on both resources and visitor experiences from the pulsing of visitation at drop off/pick up points. Eventually it may make sense to consider moving to autonomous shuttles, aerial transportation or some other large people-mover system.

KEY STRATEGY 2

Feasibility

Visioning and planning for hubs in a collaborative manner is a critical first step and this work should begin immediately. Within the Banff townsite a comprehensive review of potential locations along Banff Avenue or Mt Norquay Road will be required and can begin once some initial visioning is done. The Lake Louise area may be easier as the intercept lot moves to the ski area.

Once a vision and plan are established, medium term actions could include constructing infrastructure pieces to support the long-term plan. This could include not only the physical assets but also potentially piloting various modes of transport from each hub.

FUTURE VISITOR SCENARIO

Fiona & Angus

DATELINE: SEPTEMBER 15, 2028

Fiona and Angus are fulfilling a long-awaited dream to visit Banff National Park. They left the United Kingdom a week ago today – their itinerary included five days with a group tour and then a further five days of independent travel options. Upon arriving in Calgary, the tour group had a short walk through the airport to the new passenger rail service to Banff. For the next four days, they had the opportunity to visit popular attractions – all ably managed by the tour company. Angus was surprised to see that restoration work was underway at a number of former large parking lots. Their tour guide stated that with restrictions on private vehicle use, Parks Canada was in the process of restoring these areas to a more natural state. The number of visitors coming to these locations was similar to past years but the congestion and traffic snarls were happily gone.

Fiona and Angus have been building their own itinerary for the next few days. The Banff Lake Louise Tourism website had links to multiple options. Reservations and payments were seamless and secure. The hotel concierge, information staff and local volunteers also provided some great tips to enhance their visit. After dinner tonight, they plan to enjoy a concert at The Banff Centre. Tomorrow they will spend the day with an Indigenous guide and explore the latest exhibits at the Whyte Museum.

PHOTO CREDIT: BANFF TOURISM / DAMIAN BLUNT

KEY STRATEGY 3:

Improve & diversify public transportation options

Current situation

Significant progress has been made toward developing public transportation options in Banff National Park. Presently, there are a variety of motorized transportation options that cater to visitors, residents, and commuters, however these offers largely come as one-off modes of transportation that have no interconnection with one another, making it difficult for users to use one to access another in a seamless fashion. The On It system connects Calgary to Banff, Roam transit provides service around the Bow Valley and Parks Canada runs shuttles to Upper Lake Louise and Moraine Lake. These services have expanded and improved in ways such as increased service hours, expanded routes, reservable shuttles for Lake Louise and offering electric bus service on Roam.

These services are divided between private and public sector providers that currently lack any concerted effort to collaborate and work together. Because of the disconnected nature of the current public and private transportation systems, it leaves little room to motivate individuals to completely replace the use of their own vehicles as a more convenient and consistent travel mode. In order to change this, there needs to be an integrated and accessible system that provides an incentive to get visitors out of their cars and conveniently connects them to the systems available to reach major destinations.

Public transit is not yet at its full potential. The diversity of users and related needs are not fully considered. The current system does not have capacity

for all visitors to Banff, and has not been fully planned in coordination with private vehicle access to deliver the appropriate pace and flow of visitation to different areas throughout the park. Some areas of the park are not serviced by public transit and experience significant congestion. While Parks Canada has made significant improvements to its service it is not best positioned to operate a public transit system in the future. The current hybrid model of paid parking at Lake Louise and public transit has not eliminated traffic congestion and is an expensive system to operate annually.

There is no one solution for moving people around the park but rather a variety of options based on their needs. User needs should always dictate the actual mode of transportation chosen for any given area.

Contribution to a sustainable system

The panel recommends that Parks Canada takes an approach where mass transportation becomes the de facto way of seeing the busiest places in Banff National Park. In places like Upper Lake Louise and Moraine Lake, eliminating personal vehicle access combined with an effective and appropriately managed public transit option, would be a significant step toward reducing congestion, improving the visitor experience and ecological integrity. This concept has applicability in other areas of the park and may become necessary in more areas as time passes.

In the future, there should be a diversity of seamless and accessible options for moving around Banff once you have arrived as well as accessibility of knowledge of these options. There is no one solution for moving people around the park but rather a variety of options based on their needs. User needs should always dictate the actual mode of transportation chosen for any given area. The panel has developed a table that can help guide which mode might work best in various situations and locations (*Appendix 1*). Planners can use this table to help inform recommendations for each area and as a tool to be used in an iterative way for future planning.

In order to support an integrated system of transportation that motivates users to get out of their private vehicles, there needs to also be a system of amenities in place that supports users in their desired activities. For example, if a paddler wants to go to Two-Jack Lake, they are unlikely to take public transportation if they have no ability to take their watercraft. Therefore, gear share programs, or pop-up amenities to support a wide variety of activities also needs to be taken into account. Research indicates that changing family structure (i.e. having kids) is a pivotal point for transitioning adults to using public transportation. Transit with children (strollers, gear, etc.) poses unique challenges that must be addressed in transportation infrastructure design.

Summary of potential actions

Articulate that public transportation becomes the way to visit busy places →	This recommendation is conceptual but would represent a significant step toward a new framework for Banff. Acknowledging that private vehicle access in many places is not sustainable from an ecological, visitation and GHG emission perspective, would be a shift in thinking with implications for other places in Banff and across the country. It could help set the context for future planning and expansion of a transit system. This shift in thinking may require a broader discussion with Canadians as it could fundamentally change the way many people experience national parks.
Eliminate parking in some areas →	The current system of allowing paid parking in places like Lake Louise while simultaneously running a shuttle is not sufficiently reducing congestion in the area. This is compounded by the fact that presently the relative price for parking and the shuttle does not incentivize the use of the public system. Moreover, given the choice, many people will continue to use parking to access the lake regardless of the cost. Over time, the panel sees a shift of vehicle access restricted to the intercept lot or transportation hub with no private vehicle access to Moraine Lake and Upper Lake Louise. This may become necessary to adequately protect these environmentally and ecologically sensitive areas.
Examine feasibility of new modes of transit →	Parks Canada should be open to considering new and emerging modes of transportation such as autonomous (on-demand) shuttles and aerial transport. These modes could be considered long-term options, especially in places such as Lake Louise. If part of a larger system that is managed to deliver the appropriate pace and flow of visitation, the panel sees these options as effective modes of moving large volumes of people, not as attractions in and of themselves. Any new service that limits private vehicle ownership would need to be affordable to maintain access for visitors. Aerial transportation such as gondolas can easily adjust their capacity and frequency, are efficient and have small footprints as compared with roads. This mode of transportation is widely used across the world, including in many Asian, European and Latin

Examine feasibility of new modes of transit ➔ (continued)

American countries such as China, Singapore, Columbia, Bolivia, Mexico, Austria, Switzerland and France. Aerial trams exist in Portland and New York City and aerial transit systems are being considered in Toronto, Vancouver, Edmonton, Chicago, London and Boston. There are a number of benefits to the use of urban gondolas and other forms of aerial transit. They have been shown to be efficient, relatively easy to install, reduce staffing needs, and can be powered by green energy. Additionally, gondolas are more accessible and inclusive for all users and people of all abilities, and provide opportunities for education and interpretation. In certain areas, gondolas may also have the potential to improve ecological integrity by reducing vehicle, cycling and pedestrian disturbance at ground level but also have impacts from structure placement. There are three gondolas currently operating in Banff National Park (Sulphur Mountain, Lake Louise Ski Area and Sunshine Village) along with numerous chairlifts in the three ski areas.

Lake Louise is one area within Banff National Park that may be particularly well suited to the use of a gondola system. Lake Louise sees a very high volume of visitors that results in significant congestion on roadways in the area, often spilling out to the Trans-Canada Highway. This high volume of traffic poses significant barriers to wildlife. An aerial transit mode offers a way of removing vehicles from the system allowing for a more porous wildlife corridor. Additional wildlife crossing structures are already planned for the Whitehorn corridor as part of the Lake Louise Ski Area's Long Range Plan.

The primary purpose of this gondola is as a people-moving mode of transit. However, there are additional benefits. The gondola would provide an opportunity for interpretation, education and a high quality visitor experience. A gondola could provide connectivity with the hamlet and Upper Lake Louise but could also incorporate train service if this could be extended to the Lake Louise area. It also offers a truly unique way for visitors to experience the park's majesty.

Examine feasibility of new modes of transit ➔ (continued)

Moraine Lake would still likely require its own mode of transit such as autonomous vehicles or buses. There are many examples of autonomous/driverless vehicles being tested in closed loops and real traffic situations world-wide. The panel has noted that there may be some situations where an autonomous shuttle could transport visitors along a particular route safely. There is potential to mitigate demand for parking and minimize operational costs. However, a private driverless vehicle likely has a similar impact on traffic congestion as a family sedan with a driver and it still requires a space to occupy in a parking lot. There also remain gaps in federal guidance on the future of autonomous vehicles such as the ability of private citizens to own them as opposed to companies and fleet operators. It is also unclear if they will be allowed on all roads or what criteria will be established for their deployment and unclear what supporting infrastructure may be required and where it would need to be installed.

Expand services adaptively ➔

Parks Canada and partners should learn from each step they take toward advancing public transit and the related improvements and influences on resource protection, GHG reduction, goals and providing inclusive and high quality visitor experiences throughout the park. Over the past several years, incremental steps have been taken to improve the delivery of bus service in Lake Louise. It is possible that this system could be continually expanded and no additional modes of service are needed. While a gondola may prove in the long run to be an effective solution, an improved bus service may be adequate. A robust research and monitoring of the system will improve long-term decision making.

MOVING AROUND THE PARK

Transit service coordination →

The current public transit offers are managed as separate entities and they are not interconnected in scheduling, cost, ticket purchase mechanisms or destinations. To appeal to a variety of user groups, and dissuade use of private vehicles, there is a need for a singular system for use of transportation, booking, and associated user and visitor experiences. In doing so, this type of system would work towards a more coordinated delivery of the pace and flow of visitation throughout the park to achieve desired conditions, and a seamless experience for users, reducing the stress of deciphering multiple systems and how to connect them, and providing more incentive for use.

Expand 5G services →

Autonomous and connected shuttles are expected to rely on 5G network technology in order to communicate in real time with other vehicles, road alignments, traffic signals, etc. According to industry promotions, small cell base stations, a major feature of 5G networks, are designed to blend in with the existing landscape, take up minimal real estate, and are distributed in clusters in device-dense areas to provide continuous connection and complement the macro network that provides wide-area coverage. The cells rely on many small antennas that transmit and receive data from many devices.

Visitors and travellers through Banff National Park often assume that there is a reliable mobile network. The existing networks are not complete, extensive or dependable. Many tourist attractions (e.g. Moraine Lake) are at the end of a lengthy road with no mobile network and electrical power is “off-grid”. Some visitors enjoy the lack of mobile network access and accept that as part of the experience of visiting more wild and remote locations while others simply assume there is always cellular service.

KEY STRATEGY 3

Feasibility

Much of the ground work has been laid for improving public transit. Roam transit has done excellent work in expanding local services and is well positioned to expand its role as a regional transit operator. The above mentioned actions are long-term planning actions that will likely require partnerships. Design and consultation portions could begin in the short-term.

FUTURE VISITOR SCENARIO

Amara & Bruni

DATELINE: MAY 19, 2027

Amara and her three-year old son Bruni, arrived in Canada nearly two years ago. Sponsored by a local community group, they now rent a small fully accessible apartment in a bedroom community outside of Calgary. Amara has significant mobility challenges and requires the use of a wheel chair when outside her home. She has secured employment and Bruni is adapting to a nearby day-care. Through her sponsors, Amara has an opportunity to take Bruni on a trip to Banff National Park with a group of recent arrivals to Canada. The community group applied to Parks Canada for a significantly reduced entry fee for the group based on its equitable access program. The regional transit authority, several businesses and the municipality of Banff have partnered with Parks Canada to provide a first-hand tour of the park, complete with a bag lunch and any necessary gear suitable for the season. Amara has been reassured that the buses and shuttles they will be boarding and the public and private facilities and attractions they will use in the park all meet or exceed the requirements outlined in the Accessible Canada Act *and its regulations. What began as a pilot program is now offered on a weekly basis, year-round and on varying days of the week to accommodate work schedules and family commitments.*

4

PHOTO CREDIT: BANFF TOURISM / DAMIAN BLUNT

KEY STRATEGY 4:

Develop and encourage active transportation

Current situation

Banff National Park is very large and all trailheads, picnic areas and other attractions have been designed and built primarily around automobile access. Active transportation means using your own power to move around the park. Active transportation networks are not well developed, linked or understood. There is limited information and promotion of opportunities. The focus is currently on active modes as ends unto themselves in terms or cycling or hiking, but not as ways to move about the park.

There is a desire from many user groups to use active modes of transport such as walking or cycling. Existing infrastructure limits these options. For example, currently the Minnewanka Loop is a two-way road open to all modes of traffic (i.e. bus, private vehicles, RV's, cyclists, pedestrians). It is a highly desirable destination for all user-types, however the current traffic system is limiting to pedestrians and cyclists, largely due to safety considerations with other traffic modes within the limited right-of-way.

KEY STRATEGY 4

Contribution to a sustainable system

The use of pathways to connect destinations within the Banff Bow Valley would open options to a diversity of users and audiences, and increase year-round connectivity across multiple destinations. The panel would like Parks Canada to consider the following concept: “if you can drive there, there should be an adjacent path there” (if resource conditions and safety considerations allow). For the purpose of this concept, pathways are paved routes, as opposed to hiking trails, and are accessible to a variety of personal mobility devices (ex. Scooters, wheel chairs, strollers, bicycles). They are safe and separated from vehicles and are guided by a minimum design standard.

BIKING IN THE BOW VALLEY / PHOTO CREDIT: PARKS CANADA

Pathways should be considered as a complementary mode of movement alongside roads.

Pathways should be considered as a complementary mode of movement alongside roads. The use of pathways can act as a link into the current system of hubs and existing paths, including those within the Town of Banff. When implemented correctly, users should be able to easily interchange their mode of transport from pathways to buses/gondolas and vice versa. This could be enhanced by the addition of pop-up amenities such as equipment rentals and drop-offs and food and beverage options. As previously mentioned, the Lake Minnewanka loop/ area is an ideal location to pilot a new pathway system in Banff National Park and connect it to adjoining pathway systems such as Cascade Ponds, Vermilion Lakes, the Legacy Trail and the Town of Banff.

Parks Canada has already seen strong public reactions by introducing and now piloting active transport on the eastern section of the Bow Valley Parkway and restricting private vehicle access.

Summary of potential actions

Accessibility review of Banff National Park facilities →

An accessibility review of current Banff National Park facilities would highlight areas where immediate and future improvements could be made. This review would look at the current options for active transport in Banff and how they function for various abilities. This should be a review of the four-season offer.

Expand infrastructure that supports active transport →

Infrastructure improvements can be made, where appropriate given resource conditions and safety conditions, that help support an active transport network. In the short and medium term, investment can be made in things like bicycle, e-bike and scooter rentals. This can be facilitated through partnerships with local businesses. With these additions there will be a need for supporting infrastructure such as racks and e-bike charging stations.

A longer term action could involve the development of separate pathways for active transport. This can take a variety of forms. One such strategy is already happening in Banff with the closure of a road to allow a non-motorized experience for part of the year. New pathways could be considered such as the Legacy Trail that connects Banff townsite to Canmore. There are also designs that could allow separation of motorized and non-motorized modes within the current footprint. The panel is aware that the Minnewanka Loop, for example, has been considered for physical separation of bikes and vehicles with a potential one-way traffic flow. Speed limit reductions and traffic calming options could also be considered on some of the secondary roads to make the experience friendlier to active transport.

Improve way-finding and education →

Communicating routes and options for active transport will help to increase appeal for these activities and build constituency. Many visitors would choose active transport modes if they knew they were available and meant they could avoid congested roadways and parking lots. Routes could be better signed and mapped in brochures and on-line resources. Education campaigns could encourage visitors and residents to leave vehicles behind and use more active methods. Group events could be conducted to draw attention to these modes and engage new users.

Explore four-season opportunities →

Active transport can happen year round and does not need to be restricted to the summer season only. Trail networks could support fat biking and Nordic skiing for example. Winter maintenance could allow other routes to be kept snow free to allow for walking, strollers and wheelchairs.

KEY STRATEGY 4

Feasibility

Expanding active transport is one of the more immediate and least costly ways to make gains in reducing vehicle traffic. Some of the network is in place but could benefit from enhanced communication, public engagement and links between existing pathways. Working with partners to add more supply of active transport options can also begin quickly and with low investment. Planning can also commence for longer term solutions such as more pathways or separated access.

Providing commercial amenities such as gear rentals at popular day-use destinations will involve policy discussions around the pros and cons of providing such services vs. private vehicle use and associated parking congestion.

5

PHOTO CREDIT: BANFF TOURISM / DAMIAN BLUNT

KEY STRATEGY 5:

Create a comprehensive and unified transportation service

Current situation

As previously discussed, there are currently multiple options available for public ground transport within the Banff Bow Valley (i.e. Roam, Pursuit, Parks Canada). However, these are managed as separate entities and they are not interconnected in scheduling, cost, ticket purchase mechanisms or destinations. To cohesively manage the pace and flow of visitation, appeal to a variety of user groups, and dissuade use of private vehicles, there is a need for a singular system for transportation, booking, and associated user and visitor experiences. In doing so, this type of system would work towards a seamless experience for users, reducing the stress of deciphering multiple systems and how to connect them, and providing more incentive for use.

there is a need for a singular system for transportation, booking, and associated user and visitor experiences.

KEY STRATEGY 5

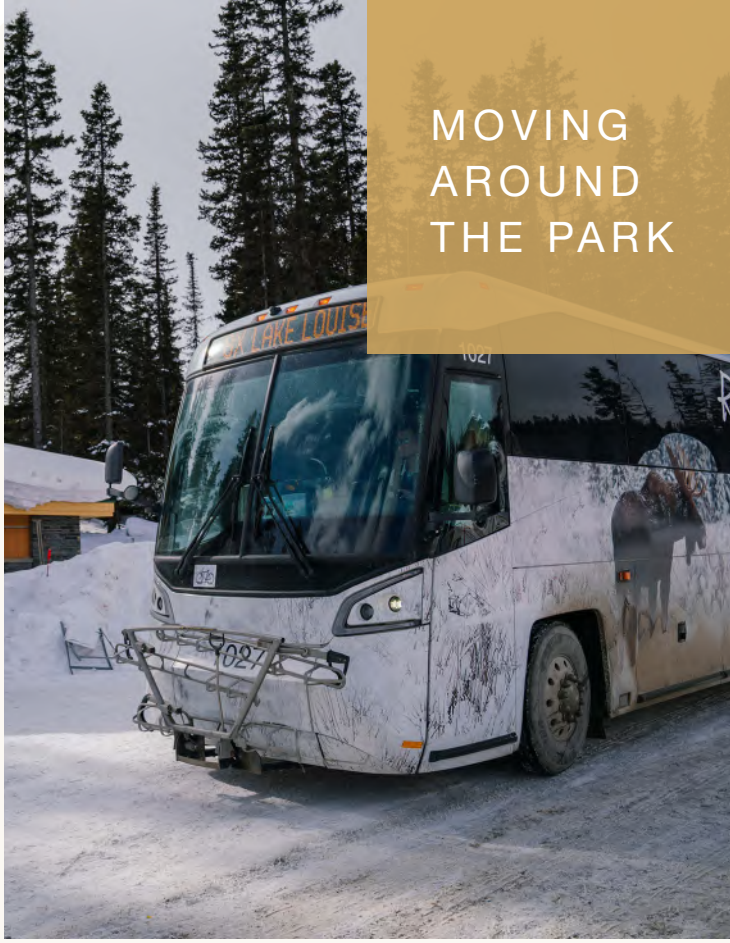
Contribution to a sustainable system

A unified transportation network would be a significant step forward in the Banff Bow Valley. An effective, coordinated and unified transit system would be very attractive to most visitors and increase its usage. It is an essential piece of the puzzle in removing vehicles from the system. Planners should think about the entire trip cycle and relate back to the vision at the beginning of this document. Regardless of how visitors arrive in Banff National Park, if they can connect into a seamless system that gets them to the places most want, it would be a huge leap forward.

In order to achieve a successfully unified system, it will require consideration of an overarching agency or joint collaboration among multiple private and public sector parties to manage all connected transportation options in Banff National Park and regionally. This would result in the need to consider a number of factors, including:

- Who would be required to be involved in such a collaboration, and how/who decides who is responsible for overseeing management?
- How are costs allocated and revenues shared?
- How do you make a singular system cost effective to promote equality among user groups, and make public transit attractive to users, encouraging less use of personal vehicles?

In addition to joint collaborations to manage transportation, it is essential to also create opportunities to create partnerships with private businesses to carry out the systems to support an overarching unified system. For example, gear sharing amenities at hubs and food and beverage opportunities. As a result, there is an additional requirement to identify how such contracts would be formulated and what needs could be met.



ROAM TRANSIT SERVICE / PHOTO CREDIT: PARKS CANADA

it will require consideration of an overarching agency or joint collaboration among multiple private and public sector parties to manage all connected transportation options in Banff National Park and regionally.

Summary of potential actions

Build vision and partnerships towards a new agency →

The panel sees the first step in this process as a visioning exercise with partners to determine what might be possible in the future. This would include not just the major public transit providers but also private operators like the ski areas, hotel shuttles, private shuttles, and private guiding services among others. This could be lead by a transit planning contractor. This expertise is not held within Parks Canada and an external contractor, with experience in this field, could facilitate advancing a unified strategy. Other regions have seen some success in this field (e.g. public transit in the Washington, DC area) and there is no need to reinvent the wheel.

Create or modify a standalone agency →

To further support the development of a unified system, it will require either a standalone agency or overarching regulator to be responsible for the bigger transit system, and who has the authority to oversee and enforce regulations. Parks Canada is not well positioned as an agency to take on this role but would be an important partner. For example, a unified system might include multiple modes of transit including roadways, pathways, bus use, and aerial transit. Having a regulator in place would ensure legislation such as the *Accessible Canada Act*, among others, is implemented and enforced. For this specific example, this would ensure that public transit fits a wide variety of users and caters to all ability levels. Further, while several independent operators may be contracted to deliver service, a regulator would ensure that each operator adheres to uniform fare policies, branding, and service quality levels.

It may not be necessary to create a new agency but rather consider a scope change for the Bow Valley Regional Transit Services Commission (BVRTSC). The BVRTSC operates the Roam bus service and is well positioned with many of the partners already at the table. It may be possible to consider a 'revamp' of operations and strategy to coordinate with Parks Canada shuttle service and explore opportunities for other private operators such as the shuttle services operated by the ski hills to join the regional transit service.

A future system may allow some partners to completely relinquish operation of their own transit systems and instead contribute financially to a unified system. This may be an attractive option for some private operators to focus solely on their own operations and not having to also move their customers. There are likely efficiencies that can be achieved with fewer providers and a more centralized means of scheduling and coordinating service.

Build new digital tools →

To further support a unified transit system, proactive support systems must be put into place and be utilized to further ease use of the system for users and increase the appeal. Tools such as an app or website where all information is stored centrally and is available to the user, and where bookings can be made through a central connected reservation system, would remove the multiple steps that users are currently required to undertake to plan their trip. In addition, a one card/one app system where all payments are centralized for the user would also reduce the fatigue on users when making bookings. The challenge here, however, is deciphering when and how those payments are made and allocated where they need to be, and if this type of system is possible without the need for an overarching regulator. Accessible digital systems are needed for full inclusivity of experience.

An overarching goal of creating a unified system is to create a world-renowned experience that resonates with users and circulates via word of mouth and other outlets. This "word of mouth" experience would empower all user types to make good choices and choose the preferred experience (ex. using public transit) based on the experiences of other users they can relate to. To achieve this, the quality of the products and experiences available to the user needs to outweigh the quantity. This can be achieved by easing the burden on users in making decisions on how and when they are going to arrive/depart, what products and experiences they will partake in, and reducing/removing the stress that can take away from their overall experience.

Digital tools can also benefit the park by providing insight into future demand periods, based on booking information and usage. This will allow service providers to proactively "ramp up" in anticipation of future peak activity periods to maintain a positive visitor experience, as opposed to the reactive environment of the current operations. This includes quickly enhancing mobility service offerings, and staffing as needed. Over time, this will allow Parks Canada to improve the predictability and growth of visitation and allow for future mitigation measures to be implemented to continue to preserve the ecological environment while also increasing park visitation. It also allows Parks Canada to understand future demand for specific areas within the park and modify the strategy accordingly - from specific locations within the

Build new digital tools → (continued)

park, to amenity usage and mobility preferences. For example, future bookings may suggest an increase in demand for an aerial transport service this weekend, allowing the vendor to pre-emptively increase services in anticipation of the anticipated demand, minimizing wait times and delays for park visitors when they arrive.

Align stakeholders →

The panel believes there are advantages of developing a unified transit system that provides a variety of options and amenities to a wide range of user groups in order to more effectively and efficiently move people around the Bow Valley and Banff to achieve a shared vision and support desired conditions for resources and visitor experiences. To do this, it is essential that the proper steps are taken, and an adequate amount of time and detail is spent listening to and understanding the specific needs and wants of those groups, and that no demographic of user is left out. Specific questions that need to be asked are:

- What does it mean to live and travel in Banff National Park, Canmore and regionally, and how can this be or does this need to be considered when implementing changes to how people move around?
- What types of opportunities will allow users to make more meaningful connections with the Banff Bow Valley and as a result lead to better quality experiences?
- Where are the current gaps in equity and what solutions can be pursued to close them?
- How can regional recreation opportunities and connections, and other gateways, support development and infrastructure, and economic and transportation patterns?
- How do we engage with Indigenous Peoples to best understand whether and/or how they would like to be involved from an economic, cultural and social perspective?
- What challenges need to be overcome to achieve full and equal inclusivity and accessibility
- How do we collectively support the management of visitation to achieve desired conditions?

KEY STRATEGY 5

Feasibility

The creation of a single provider with coordinated services is a long term goal. This effort will take years to build and execute in a meaningful way. Work could commence in the short term to start building a vision and bringing partners together.

FUTURE VISITOR SCENARIO

Preeya & Raj

DATELINE: AUGUST 22, 2026

Preeya and Raj are avid campers. Retired a few years ago, they used to enjoy making a summer camping tour of the mountain national parks but traffic jams and parking congestion in Banff National Park have prompted them to avoid the park … until now. Preeya made all the camping reservations through the new "unified reservation and payment system". As their travel plans came together, Preeya went back in to their trip itinerary folder and reserved a private sector shuttle company and a timed ticket entry at the Helen Lake trailhead for the two of them plus their daughter and her family who are coming out to join them. Preeya's daughter is choosing to drive her private vehicle from Calgary and will meet her parents at the Lake Louise mobility hub. She knows that parking is limited at the trailhead and with her Mom's timed ticket entry and decision to use a private shuttle service, they do not have to worry about being turned away at the Helen Lake trailhead. The private shuttle company will take the entire party up to the trailhead and then pick them up four hours later. Preeya and Raj will enjoy the evening at their campsite while their daughter and her family travel further west to their condo in Golden.

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PHOTO CREDIT: MICHELLE MACULLO

KEY STRATEGY 6:

Develop partnerships with stakeholders and Indigenous Peoples

Current situation

A common theme through this report, highlighted in different sections, is the missed opportunity of more coordination with stakeholders and Indigenous Peoples. There are services and opportunities that would be much better provided by private operators. Indigenous Peoples are also not significantly involved in moving people in Banff National Park and have much to contribute.

A common theme through this report ... is the missed opportunity of more coordination with stakeholders and Indigenous Peoples.

KEY STRATEGY 6

Contribution to a sustainable system

Partnerships will be key to an effective transportation system. Parks Canada cannot create a sustainable transportation system on its own. Genuine coordination among a range of providers will result in the best experience for visitors and residents of the Bow Valley. There are also unexplored opportunities for working with Indigenous Peoples. Indigenous Peoples have lived on these lands for millennia and offer a unique perspective on how to maintain them for generations.

PHOTO CREDIT: MICHELLE MACULLO

Indigenous Peoples have lived on these lands for millennia and offer a unique perspective on how to maintain them for generations.

REPLACE IMAGE OF INDIGENOUS BANFF

Summary of potential actions

Engage with third party providers →

While this has already been part of previous recommendations, the panel encourages Parks Canada to pursue partnerships for a range of opportunities. This can be from something as simple as the provision of e-bikes at transit nodes to more complex issues such as a passenger train connection between Banff and Calgary.

Although the panel has not spent much time considering funding, it is anticipated that some recommendations in this report will require multi-party investments from all or some levels of government and private sector sources.

Explore the range of Indigenous partnerships →

The panel chair and members met with several Indigenous Peoples and were struck by their knowledge and deep connections to the Banff area. There were interesting discussions regarding potential economic development opportunities although they were less focused on investment or ownership of transportation related initiatives. Indigenous Peoples see real employment possibilities given the current staffing challenges in the Bow Valley and the need for their members to find employment off reserve. A train or bus commuter service between Banff and Calgary might help encourage people in Calgary to consider employment in Banff National Park. Some of the First Nations near Calgary also see potential partnership opportunities where their lands could be part of staging areas for transportation services. They also believe there are opportunities to share their history and culture through mass transit solutions.

Indigenous Peoples are interested in continuing the conversation about sustainable transportation with Parks Canada as this work advances. They were appreciative in discussing their interests with the panel but feel the long term conversation needs to continue into the future with parks officials. They believe there are real opportunities and true partnerships to be realized through dialogue and working together.

Feasibility

The panel is confident that Parks Canada will continue to see the value of its role in creating, and as importantly, maintaining long-lasting relationships with a variety of partners. The panel acknowledges that Parks Canada also has a regulator role. Nevertheless, the panel encourages Parks Canada to engage with potential partners and clearly state how it can play a participatory role but may also have to make decisions related to policy and regulations. Continuing and expanding this is very feasible. This work can begin immediately and is not costly. Pathways for conversation with Indigenous Peoples are already in place through mechanisms such as the Indigenous Advisory Circle.

FUTURE VISITOR SCENARIO

Tom

DATELINE: FEBRUARY 2029

Tom has been working in Banff for the past nine months. He graduated from a Tourism and Hospitality program and is enjoying the variety of roles he has experienced. A career in the tourism industry interests him as does remaining close to his Indigenous family living in Calgary. A few years earlier that would have been impossible but now he can commute, either by train or bus. The commute is still over one hour one-way but it does provide him with a chance to relax, work on a correspondence class and not worry about having to drive nor purchase a vehicle. Tom's employer and his First Nation subsidize his commuting costs.

PHOTO CREDIT: BANFF TOURISM / NICK FITZHARDINGE

KEY STRATEGY 7:

Use pricing as a tool to influence behaviour

Current situation

The current pricing system in Parks Canada does not properly reflect operating costs nor does it incentivize desired action. For example, it costs more for a family to ride the shuttle in Lake Louise than it does to park a car at the upper Lake Louise parking lot. With this pricing scheme there is little incentive for visitors to ride a public transit system than to attempt to park at the upper lake. The current pricing strategy also does not consider income levels, which can create equity issues and discourage lower income persons from experiencing the park.

Pricing also does not reflect the impact of different types of visitation on the park. A solo visitor arriving with a large SUV or motorhome pays the same as one arriving by bus. Activities within the park follow a similar pattern. There is no difference in entry fee costs to someone moving through the park by active transport, public or private vehicle.

Pricing is also not coordinated among different providers. Different modes of transit, both private and public, have very different pricing schemes.

KEY STRATEGY 7

ENABLING CHANGE

Contribution to a sustainable system

Based on the panel's research and expertise, one of the most powerful tools for addressing congestion is influencing visitor behavior, expectations, and supporting management tools. One approach to influencing a change in behavior is to examine the total financial cost of an individual or family visiting the park. The panel recommends a critical review of the Parks Canada entry pass. There are many technological innovations (license plate readers, location-based services (cellular) data, Strava data, traffic data via mobile phone GPS, unified payment systems, mobile applications and QR code readers) that could eliminate the hang tag park pass and potentially eliminate the need for entry kiosks where backups and delays occur. These systems could also provide alternate compliance approaches. This type of technology also affords an opportunity to collect social science information that can help build a better understanding of visitors and therefore the opportunity to build a better experience. The panel also realizes that there are public concerns about general access to data gathered from mobile phones, however providers routinely anonymize this data to address privacy concerns, and a multitude of industries are already using this type of technologies to improve service offerings.

A revamped park pass could also be used as a tool with multiple benefits. Some tourist destinations are employing a pass that has multiple benefits. Your park pass not only allows entry to the destination but can be the key for your hotel room, entry on to a transit system or admission to an attraction. The pass could even assist with timed ticket entry and help manage the pace and flow of visitation in particularly highly congested areas. For example, you could use your pass to book a time slot to hike a popular trail such as Helen Lake. Information kiosks can also be used to download educational information to passes, allowing visitors to "bring home" a piece of the park and extend their visitor experience long after their visit. This can enhance their appreciation of the park, share it with others and incentivize them to return again in the future. Similar kiosks are being used at some of the Smithsonian museums in downtown Washington D.C.

PHOTO CREDIT: PARKS CANADA

Pricing should make public transit more attractive and personal vehicle use less so.

The panel recommends that Parks Canada look at the pricing scheme to see where pricing can better incentivize and de-incentivize certain behaviors. Pricing should make public transit more attractive and personal vehicle use less so. It is a key motivator that drives behavioral change. Proper pricing is key to the success of the system overall.

Summary of potential actions

Examine pricing policy and legislation →

While Parks Canada has recently amended its pricing structure, the panel encourages a further review of existing policy and legislation to understand where additional flexibilities may exist. There may be other options for Parks to consider in the implementation of fees, including amending or no longer using the *Service Fees Act*. As an Agency, Parks Canada has more ability to control its fee structure than other government departments and a thorough review of legal responsibilities, authorities and accountabilities could be productive.

Reflect true costs in pricing →

The panel recommends looking at a range of variable pricing schemes. One important principle would be to have the cost of a visitor's access to the park reflective of their impact. For example, a person arriving by public transit and only using the coordinated system within the park would pay substantially less than a person arriving by private vehicle. This could be reflected in the park pass or day entry fees. It could also be reflected in the cost for tickets for whatever mass transit option from Calgary exists in the future.

Variable pricing could also be used to incentivize behaviours that will help reduce congestion. Pricing could be changed based on dates and times of visits (e.g. weekends vs. weekdays or summer vs. shoulder season).

Pricing should also be adjusted for parking fees. In Lake Louise for example, it is cheaper for two people to attempt to park at the lake than it is to ride the transit system. Implementing variable rate pricing mechanisms would allow the price to change to reflect the true cost of the convenience of parking there. Prices could be increased until the lot always has some empty spaces. This additional fee collection would also help offset the cost of running the system.

The panel feels it would be useful for the Agency to demonstrate what proportion of operational and capital costs in Banff National Park are covered by an entry fee vs. what is covered by taxes. In other words, Parks Canada could demonstrate the level of taxpayer burden associated with a visit to Banff National Park. This may help make the case to create a separate class of fees specifically for Banff National Park given the congestion challenges it faces.

Reward advance planning →

Advance planning will likely need to become more common on trips to Banff in the future. The Lake Louise shuttle has demonstrated the value and acceptability of using reservations and has reduced wait times making trips more enjoyable. Expanding reservations will help make trips more predictable and gives Parks Canada another tool to manage volumes. Reservations can ensure that no more spots are available once a venue is considered full.

Communication will be key to new reservation systems. It will be a shift in culture and planning for many visitors, especially those in the local area.

Technology for pricing →

There are new technologies that could simplify the annual pass and eliminate the need for hang tags and potentially park entry gates. Licence plate readers and mobile apps can replicate the function of the park pass. This is more in line with typical customer experiences and could be a more efficient delivery mechanism for Parks Canada.

A new park pass would also offer an opportunity to develop a one-pass system that connects with other components of the transportation system. For example, a digital pass could also provide a visitor access to transit from Calgary, shuttle buses within the park, and even access to rental bikes or other mobility modes. It could also be used to book access to high use nodes or trails that require reservations. This would provide a seamless experience for visitors and help facilitate the unified transportation system.

Partnership with private sector →

Building partnerships with private operators could expand the functionality of a new pass system. A digital tool could be used just as easily to access everything from hotel rooms to private shuttles and rentals.

KEY STRATEGY 7

Feasibility

Parks Canada has the enabling powers in the *Parks Canada Agency Act* to develop the most appropriate pricing mechanisms. To enable these powers, regulatory changes to remove Parks Canada from the *Service Fees Act* are required. This should not be perceived as a reason not to seriously and aggressively explore and implement pricing solutions. Legislation and regulations are not immutable, they are a reflection of conditions and context when they are created. If the context changes, governments have a responsibility to update to ensure efficient and responsible operations and service provision.

FUTURE VISITOR SCENARIO

James & his extended family

DATELINE: JULY 15, 2025

James and his family, along with his parents and his brother's family are interested in coming out to Banff National Park for a picnic. In discussions since April, they finally agreed on a Saturday in late July. If everyone can make it there will be 14 coming out from Calgary. James has been to Banff National Park a few times but always finds it difficult to find a place to park. His 20-year-old son mentioned that his social media feed from Banff Lake Louise Tourism was promoting the use of a new bus rapid transit service from their C-Train station in Calgary direct to the Banff mobility hub. The cost of the bus fees and entry fees to the park are less than driving two vans out to the park with seven adults and seven children. Further, James can get his parents on a regular Roam transit bus to Cascade Ponds for free. His son adds that he can rent a cargo e-bike at the Banff mobility hub to transport their picnic supplies and the younger kids can rent bikes as well. Although still skeptical, James says it is worth the adventure.

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PHOTO CREDIT: BANFF TOURISM / DAMIAN BLUNT

KEY STRATEGY 8:

Better understand visitor experience and transportation use

Current situation

While the social science program in Parks Canada was robust in the past it now focuses mainly on broad market research and understanding visitors on a park wide scale. There are no dedicated resources within Banff National Park to collect social science information. Attendance factors are well out of date having not been updated since 2003. There is often insufficient information to understand visitor patterns of use, motivations and behaviours.

There is a lack of current data and user information to draw upon in working to identify user preferences. The lack of current social science data is cause for an examination of the existing Parks Canada/Government of Canada policies regarding collection of social science data, and a need to utilize resources such as mobility apps to collect data and provide information that will feed into park user information to inform the recommendations being made.

There are no dedicated resources within Banff National Park to collect social science information.

KEY STRATEGY 8

Contribution to a sustainable system

Current, accurate information is critical to understanding current and potential visitors, and their preferences, needs, and expectations that will result in better designed systems and adaptive management needs. In addition to utilizing sources of data and user information, exercises—such as a cost comparison of transportation options and associated group dynamics—should be completed to determine what is most economical for the user. There will also be a need to develop metrics to help evaluate and guide the implementation of the plan to ensure that goals are being achieved. Good social science information is critical for monitoring, testing pilot programs, and adaptive management.

CREDIT: PARKS CANADA

In addition to utilizing sources of data and user information, exercises—such as a cost comparison of transportation options and associated group dynamics—should be completed to determine what is most economical for the user.

Summary of potential actions

Develop a social science strategy ➔

While Banff National Park would benefit from an overall social science strategy, one specific to development of a long-term plan for moving people sustainably would be very beneficial. This would involve a review of existing data sources to understand what Parks Canada and partners are already collecting to support better delivery of transportation solutions. Then a plan can be developed with a structured format to fill gaps. The following questions can guide the development of the framework:

- What do we know about current visitation as it relates to the scope of the project: **amounts, types, timing, and spatial distribution**?
- What do we know about visitor characteristics as it relates to the scope of the project: **group size, origin, demographics, use history**?
- What information do we have about the **quality of current visitor experiences** as it relates to the scope of the project?
- What do we know about **audiences we aren't fully reaching** as it relates to the scope of the project?
- What information do we have about **how current visitor use is influencing natural and cultural resources** in relation to the scope of the project?
- Based on the previous questions and needs/opportunities of the specific project, **does new data need to be collected, or will existing data suffice for decision making**? If new data is needed, can it be collected with existing resources, or will outside or technical assistance be required?

An initial review and suggested strategy is presented in *Appendix II*.

Pursue partnership opportunities →

Parks Canada does not need to fill all the gaps in knowledge alone. There are likely willing partners who are already collecting some of this information or who could tailor their work to help fill gaps. This task is made easier with a well constructed guiding plan. Local marketing organizations, businesses and NGO partners all have a stake in collecting this information. Banff National Park is a unique, high profile case study and would be attractive to academic partners and new sources of research funding. Parks Canada should be prepared to engage in partnerships by developing formal data sharing agreements to support data collection.

Explore new methods of data collection →

There are many innovative and cost effective new methods for Parks Canada to explore. Some of these are beyond the traditional realm of social science but can provide quality information on people movement. Bluetooth counters are starting to be employed by Parks Canada for these purposes. There is also a wealth of cell phone data that is becoming more readily available and cost-effective. Companies such as Streetlight and Cellint are a couple of the larger companies offering these services.

KEY STRATEGY 8

Feasibility

Social science research is critical for the Park to deliver sustainable transportation solutions, and the park's mandate. Parks Canada currently collects basic visitor information and developing a broader program is very feasible. By building partnerships and making some financial investments, the agency could significantly advance its research program and further enhance the visitor experience.

By building partnerships and making some financial investments, the agency could significantly advance its research program and further enhance the visitor experience.

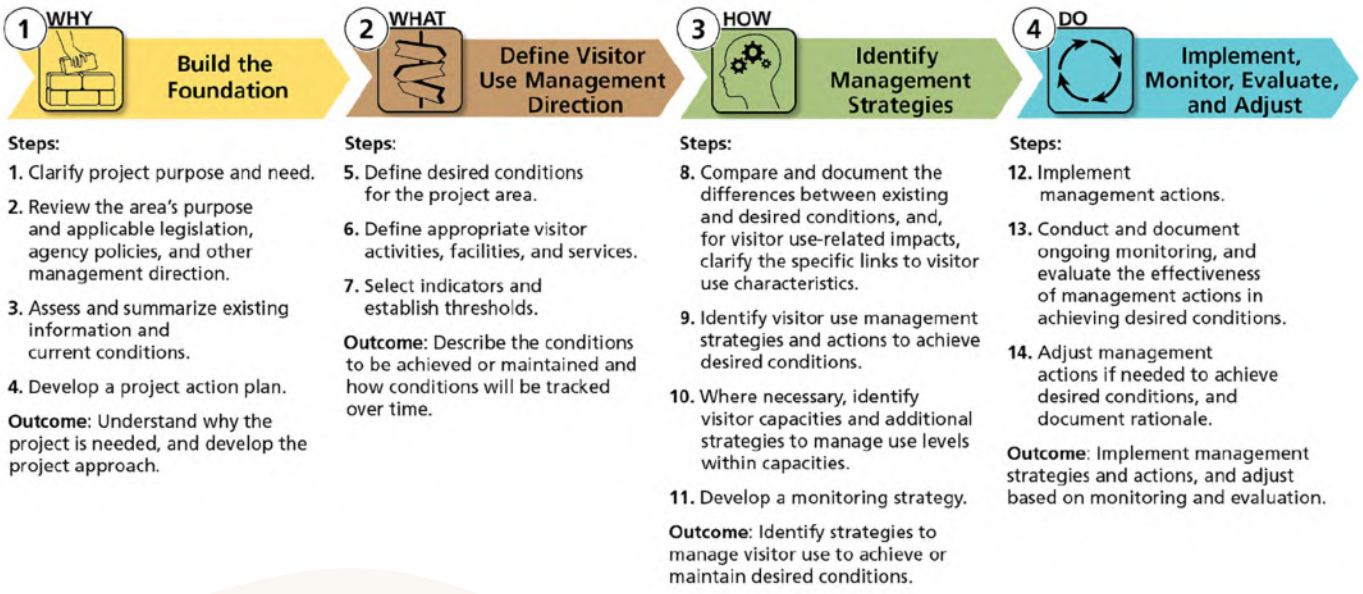
Managing for success

THE PANEL HAS provided a broad structure for a framework to move people sustainably. It is intended to generate further discussion and exploration of some concepts. Further research will be required to test the validity of some of the ideas. In order to achieve success, there are steps Parks Canada can take to move from concept to concrete action. There are planning frameworks for protected areas that may prove helpful as the work advances

Many of the previous sections have highlighted the concept of taking an adaptive management approach. This approach involves trying new management strategies, monitoring the results and then adjusting actions going forward. Six federal agencies that manage visitor use and recreation in the United States formed the Interagency Visitor Use Management Council and have collaboratively developed a planning framework that builds on these concepts. Given the dynamic nature of visitor use management, the shared *Visitor Use Framework* is a tool to guide discussions, identify issues and desired conditions, and look for creative and appropriate management solutions, along with continual monitoring to inform adaptive management. It could serve as a useful method to further the discussion on sustainable transportation.

The Visitor Use Management Framework uses four major elements for analyzing and managing visitor use. These can be seen in the diagram below (IVUMC, 2016). Managers use the framework to understand the existing conditions, define objectives, identify management strategies and then implement, monitor, evaluate and adjust those strategies. The program is scalable and adaptable to a range of management issues. Additional guidance is available on best practices for specific elements of the framework, including monitoring and also for identifying visitor capacities. Parks Canada has begun adopting this framework in some locations and is finding success with its application.

Visitor Use Management Framework (IVUMC, 2016)



MANAGING FOR SUCCESS

The United States National Park Service is actively integrating the Visitor Use Management Framework into its planning and management efforts. In addition, the NPS has also identified many unique management strategies to deal specifically with congestion needs in national park units and implemented numerous congestion assessments to identify the appropriate strategy for different locations and issues.[1]

The panel believes there should be a shift to focus from managing to accommodate demand to managing to enhance the quality and inclusiveness of the visitor experience when planning a people-moving framework. Collaboratively setting desired conditions for resources and visitor experiences, and using those to guide evaluation and implementation of management strategies will provide a shared vision and roadmap for a successful outcome. This applies to both visitor experience and ecological integrity.

CREDIT: PARKS CANADA

The panel believes there should be a shift to focus from managing to accommodate demand to managing to enhance the quality and inclusiveness of the visitor experience when planning a people-moving framework.

[1] https://www.nps.gov/orgs/1548/upload/Congestion_Management_2021-508.pdf

Visitor experience

The panel recognizes that the visitor experience to Banff National Park is world class and should begin even before the arrival to the park. From planning through to execution, providing high-quality and inclusive experiences, it is essential to understand what contributes to a 'high quality visit' for a diversity of people. One of the biggest challenges here is that a high quality visit may not look the same to every user, leaving a need to fulfill a variety of desired experiences and modes of travelling to desired destinations within the park. The panel is aware of the need for better and more detailed information collected through public consultation processes, observational studies, and visitor surveys and the need to continue to build upon these to better understand what the current and potential user wants and how best to provide a welcoming and inclusive environment for all, regardless of physical ability, financial means, or cultural tradition.

ELEMENTS CONTRIBUTING TO A QUALITY EXPERIENCE

Elements that have been identified as contributing to a quality experience fall under a broad variety of categories. These include (but are not limited to):

- Weather
- Safety
- A hassle-free experience
- Convenience
- Accessibility
- Physical satisfaction
- Mental satisfaction
- Spiritual satisfaction
- Meets and exceeds expectations

From planning through to execution, providing high-quality and inclusive experiences, it is essential to understand what contributes to a 'high quality visit' for a diversity of people.

In considering how to deliver high quality and inclusive visitor experiences while moving people around Banff National Park, it is essential that it be done so in a way that continues to protect and enhance the park's natural and cultural resources.

Ecological Integrity

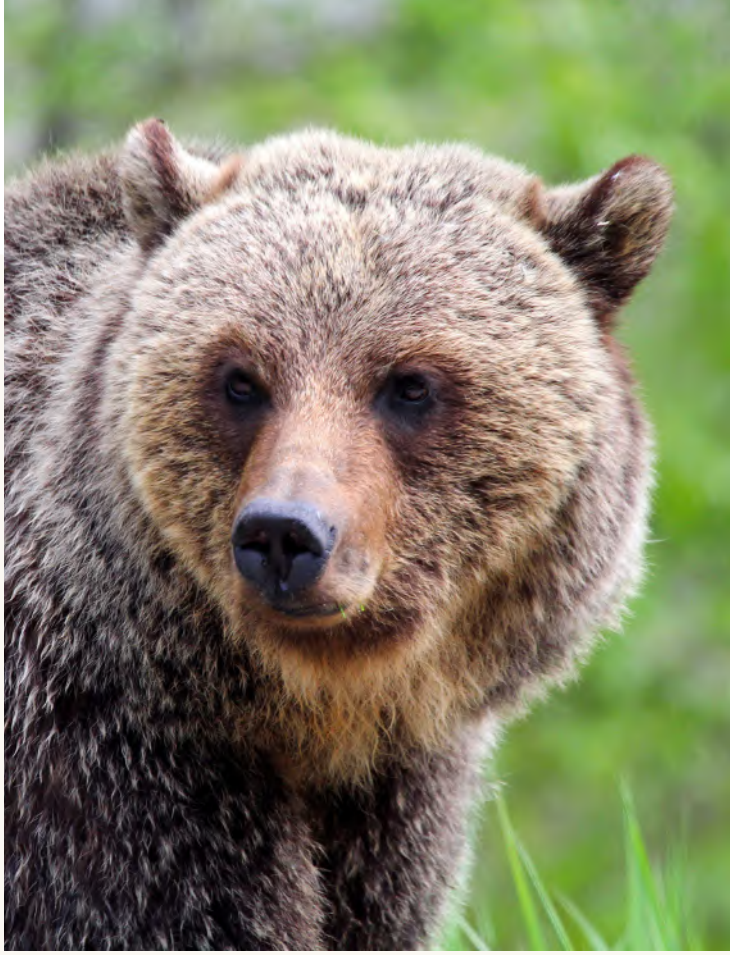
The panel recognizes that ecological integrity and protecting the character and nature of Banff National Park must remain Parks Canada's top priority.

KEY CONTRIBUTIONS TO ECOLOGICAL BENEFIT

The key contributions to ecological benefit that have been identified are:

- Disturbed areas are returned to a natural state
- Wildlife corridors are functioning better
- Presence of people and vehicles on the landscape is predictable
- Invasive species (both plants and animals) are reduced and ultimately eliminated
- Native biodiversity is healthy and thriving
- Species at risk receive special attention

Keeping this in mind, the recommendations from the panel are taking into consideration the limited capacity that the park has to withstand use, and that the cumulative effects of human use and facilities should not be a strain on that capacity. Further research will be required into the impacts of a new framework on wildlife movement, aquatics, vehicle/animal collisions, hazardous spills, and noise among other variables.



CREDIT: A. DIBB

Further research will be required into the impacts of a new framework on wildlife movement, aquatics, vehicle/animal collisions, hazardous spills, and noise among other variables.

Conclusion

TODAY'S MOBILITY OPTIONS cause issues like traffic congestion. Efforts to address this challenge have had limited success in Banff National Park. Visitors come to the park for many reasons – sightseeing, hiking, skiing, camping or enjoying a picnic with family and friends. Their ideal experience does not include being caught in traffic jams and long searches for parking. Simply expanding parking lots may provide relief for a few years but it is not sustainable, prudent over the long term, nor practical in some locations. Further, in a national park loved by millions of visitors, and cherished by Canadians, is it appropriate to have future generations lament "they paved paradise and put up a parking lot" (lyrics from Big Yellow Taxi, Joni Mitchell)?

The expert advisory panel has spent the last 12 months examining the challenges, both on-site and by reviewing public input and listening to comments and suggestions from local Indigenous Peoples, stakeholders and Parks Canada officials. The collective expertise and dedication of the panel members and secretariat have culminated in a final report to Parks Canada as per the panel's Terms of Reference. The observations, analysis and recommendations are wide ranging, bold in some cases and they should be subject to public consultation and an appropriate level of environmental assessment. The panel will leave those processes to Parks Canada to consider and ultimately execute.

Although the panel focused its work on how to move people sustainably in the Banff Bow Valley, many of the recommendations have application at other busy protected areas in Canada and possibly elsewhere around the globe. The panel benefitted from access to the soon to be approved Banff National Park management plan. That plan underwent significant public consultation and review. Concurrent with the panel's work, a new Tourism Master Plan for Banff National Park is being developed. Some panel members have been involved in its early stages. Both of these planning processes have helped inform the drafting of the Moving People Sustainably report.

> **The greatest challenge in implementing many of the recommendations in this report involves changing the behaviour of visitors, stakeholders, residents and staff of Parks Canada itself.**

The greatest challenge in implementing many of the recommendations in this report involves changing the behaviour of visitors, stakeholders, residents and staff of Parks Canada itself. While the current infrastructure and services for moving people about in the Banff Bow Valley are effective in off-season periods, those periods are becoming shorter every year. Moving people sustainably requires innovative solutions and those solutions will only be successful if they are implemented in a collaborative and collective effort year-round - learning, adapting and responding to the feedback and monitoring from ecological and social indicators. It may take 5-10 years to implement a few of the panel's recommendations but the panel is confident that other work can and must begin immediately

CONCLUSION

(e.g. more focused social science data collection and analysis). Changing behaviour at an individual, corporate and society level will also take time and will be uneven. There are numerous behaviour change models to explore and the panel urges Parks Canada to examine appropriate models and consider the potential interventions in policy, pricing, communications, incentives, etc. that have been recommended in this report. Although Parks Canada needs to take the lead in advancing some of the recommendations, it must also be prepared to be a willing and active partner. Indigenous Peoples, stakeholders, visitors and residents all have much to offer in building a more sustainable "people moving" system in the Banff Bow Valley and beyond. Multi-party funding arrangements and governance structures will need to be negotiated and/or existing ones expanded. There are numerous references to transit services in this report, but the panel does not believe that Parks Canada needs to operate any of those services.

CREDIT: PARKS CANADA

Banff National Park has faced many challenges over the past 137 years. Its creation and development have impacted Indigenous Peoples and its history is a reflection of Canadian society and values as they have evolved over the decades. A new challenge - how to move people sustainably in the Banff Bow Valley – is now before us. It is now time for Parks Canada, its stakeholders and Canadians to tackle this new challenge head-on, with courage and an open mind to try new and innovative solutions. The international reputation of Banff National Park as a spectacular protected area and major tourism destination will be diminished if actions are not taken to address traffic congestion. No animals, no plants, no visitors and no residents will benefit from maintaining the status quo.

The panel wishes to express its thanks to Parks Canada for the opportunity to develop a framework and recommendations for how to move people sustainably in the Banff Bow Valley. It involved many stimulating and lively discussions. Some of the panel's recommendations are bold and the panel is confident they are doable. The panel looks forward to how Parks Canada responds to the report. This is yet another opportunity to demonstrate that Banff National Park is dedicated to the people of Canada for their benefit, education and enjoyment and the park is to be maintained in such a manner and made use of so as to leave it unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations.

Acknowledgments

THE PANEL REACHED out to a variety of individuals and groups to help us gain a better understanding of the "people moving" issues and also hear their comments and suggestions about how to address the challenges. We thank you for your input and interest in this project.

The panel also benefitted from presentations, field trips and discussions with Parks Canada staff. Without their insights, it would have been impossible for the panel to fully understand the breadth and depth of some challenges and how staff, on the ground, are working to resolve these issues. The panel would also like to acknowledge the many staff who provided logistical, administrative and financial support to us over the past 14 months.

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Appendix I: Modes Table

ATTRIBUTE	SHARED MOBILITY MODE							PRIVATE MOBILITY MODE						
	SMALL BUS / SHUTTLE	STANDARD BUS	MOTOR COACH	PASSENGER OR HIGH-SPEED TRAIN	GONDOLA / AERIAL TRAM	TAXIS / RIDE SHARE	CAR SHARE	PRIVATE CAR / TRUCK / VAN	MOTORCYCLE	SCOOTERS	PERSONALLY OWNED BICYCLES	SHARED BICYCLE FLEET	E-BIKES	WALK / RUN / SKI
OVERALL APPLICABILITY TO SUBJECT AREA (E.G. ENTIRE PARK, DAY-USE AREA, PARKWAY, ETC.)														
GREEN POWERED CAPABILITY TODAY														
GREEN POWERED CAPABILITY IN 2-3 YEARS														
DRIVERLESS / AUTONOMOUS														
Timing														
SHORT-TERM HORIZON IMPLEMENTATION (1-5 YEARS)														
MEDIUM-TERM HORIZON IMPLEMENTATION (6-10 YEARS)														
LONG-TERM HORIZON IMPLEMENTATION (10-20 YEARS)														
Pre-Trip Planning														
DOES THIS MODE OFFER GEAR-CARRYING CAPACITY?														
IS IT WINTER-FRIENDLY?														
HOW MUCH ADVANCE TRIP PLANNING IS REQUIRED TO USE THIS MODE?														
Arriving in Banff National Park														
CAN THIS MODE BE USED TO CONNECT BANFF NATIONAL PARK FROM CALGARY FOR A MAJORITY OF USERS?														
CAN IT BE IMPLEMENTED INDEPENDENTLY OF ADDITIONAL PLANNING / INFRASTRUCTURE / COORDINATION WITH CALGARY?														
CAN IT BE USED BOTH TO ARRIVE IN BANFF NATIONAL PARK AND GET AROUND?														
IS IT A SERVICE THAT REQUIRES A USER TO RETURN / DROP-OFF EQUIPMENT?														

APPENDIX I

ATTRIBUTE	SHARED MOBILITY MODE							PRIVATE MOBILITY MODE						
	SMALL BUS / SHUTTLE	STANDARD BUS	MOTOR COACH	PASSENGER OR HIGH-SPEED TRAIN	GONDOLA / AERIAL TRAM	TAXIS / RIDE SHARE	CAR SHARE	PRIVATE CAR / TRUCK / VAN	MOTORCYCLE	SCOOTERS	PERSONALLY OWNED BICYCLES	SHARED BICYCLE FLEET	E-BIKES	WALK / RUN / SKI
Moving Around Banff National Park														
DOES THIS MODE ENHANCE OR PROVIDE ACCESSIBILITY NEEDS?														
WHAT IS ITS RELATIVE MOBILITY RANGE?														
IF HIGH SERVICE FREQUENCY IS NOT PROVIDED, IS RIDERSHIP AFFECTED?														
DOES THE MODE HAVE A HIGH PEOPLE-CARRYING CAPACITY?														
IS IT EASILY SCALABLE TO MEET HIGHER DEMAND PERIODS?														
Making It Happen / Structural Barriers to Overcome														
DOES THIS MODE REQUIRE A NEW ROADWAY OR RIGHT-OF-WAY?														
DOES THIS MODE REQUIRE CELLULAR OR 5G WIRELESS NETWORK WITHIN BANFF NATIONAL PARK TO FUNCTION?														
DOES THIS MODE REQUIRE NEW INFRASTRUCTURE (E.G. PARKING) OR ADDITIONAL LAND?														
WHAT ARE THE CONSTRUCTION / ACQUISITION COSTS?														
ARE THERE LOCAL OR REGIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT BENEFITS TO SUPPORTING THIS MODE?														
WHAT ARE THE OPERATING COSTS?														
DOES IT REQUIRE FEDERAL POLICY CHANGES TO IMPLEMENT?														
DOES IT REQUIRE SUPPORT FROM PARKS CANADA, TOWN OF BANFF AND/OR NEIGHBOURING MUNICIPALITIES?														

APPENDIX I

ATTRIBUTE	SHARED MOBILITY MODE							PRIVATE MOBILITY MODE						
	SMALL BUS / SHUTTLE	STANDARD BUS	MOTOR COACH	PASSENGER OR HIGH-SPEED TRAIN	GONDOLA / AERIAL TRAM	TAXIS / RIDE SHARE	CAR SHARE	PRIVATE CAR / TRUCK / VAN	MOTORCYCLE	SCOOTERS	PERSONALLY OWNED BICYCLES	SHARED BICYCLE FLEET	E-BIKES	WALK / RUN / SKI
Visitor Experience Benefits														
CAN THIS MODE CONTRIBUTE TO A "WORLD CLASS" VISITOR EXPERIENCE?														
DOES THIS MODE REFLECT "MOUNTAIN CULTURE"?														
CAN THIS MODE ENHANCE INTERPRETION AND INFORMATION SERVICES?														
CAN THIS MODE ENHANCE INDIGENOUS TEACHINGS?														
HOW EASY COULD IT BE FOR USERS TO LEARN OR USE?														
Ecological Benefits														
WHAT ARE TYPICAL GHG EMISSIONS FROM THIS MODE?														
WILL THE ONGOING OPERATIONS OF THIS MODE HAVE AN ECOLOGICAL BENEFIT?														
WILL THE ONGOING OPERATIONS OF THIS MODE HAVE AN ECOLOGICAL IMPACT?														
IS IT A CLEAN ENERGY OR SUSTAINABLE MODE?														
DOES CONSTRUCTION FOR THIS MODE CREATE AN ECOLOGICAL IMPROVEMENT?														
DOES CONSTRUCTION FOR THIS MODE CREATE AN ECOLOGICAL IMPACT?														

Appendix II: Potential Social Science Framework

INFORMATION NEED	HOW IT HELPS	EXISTING AND POSSIBLE NEW METHODS
Visitation at Unit		
• Amount • Type - Vehicular, pedestrian, bike; permitted, recreation activities, commercial vs. noncommercial • Timing - temporal distribution throughout the day, week, month and year • Spatial distribution	• Understand current conditions (i.e. Improve understanding amounts of use, types of use, visitor behaviors, characteristics of visitor use) and issues • Establish baseline & monitor trends over time • Inform the development of desired conditions • Inform possible management strategies and estimating their effects • Identify new and emerging uses	• Permit/Use data • Partner use or financial reports • Monitoring data (including field staff observations) • Site history (i.e., number of users to a websites) • Social media platforms (e.g., twitter, Strava) • Additional trail or road counters • Cameras (e.g., game cameras) • Self-registration check points • Patrol Reports • Consider additional voluntary/required reporting from partners
Visitor Characteristics		
• Group Size • Visitor Origin/Home Location • Demographics • Personal Use History	• Inform the development of desired conditions • Inform possible management strategies	• Visitor surveys • Social media platforms (e.g., twitter, strava) • Permit/Use data • Commercial use reporting • E-commerce i.e. park pass purchase and/or reservation system work flow • Partnership with local marketing organizations and governments

APPENDIX II

INFORMATION NEED	HOW IT HELPS	EXISTING AND POSSIBLE NEW METHODS
Visitor Experience Characterization and Quality		
	• Understand current motivations, expectations, and desired experiences	• Visitor surveys • Focus groups • Social media
Visitor Safety		
	• Impact Risk • Identifying leading causes of visitor injury/deaths so the park can prioritize which hazards to address • Identifying type of visitor (e.g. gender, age, state and country of residence) with the highest risk of experiencing injury and/or a fatal injury so prevention efforts can be targeted	• Track types, nature and locations of calls for service that law enforcement respond to - specific to park • Law enforcement citations, warnings, visitor assists • Visitor Injury Data • Annual Park Reports • Validated complaints
Staffing & Budget Levels		
	• Impact Risk • Compare historic visitation levels to historic staffing and budget levels over time	• Funding and revenue • Number of full time and seasonal employees

APPENDIX II

INFORMATION NEED	HOW IT HELPS	EXISTING AND POSSIBLE NEW METHODS
Transportation		
• Traffic counts, parking lot usage, parking turnover rates • Wait times - entrance station, shuttle stops • Origin information of visitors & mode of transportation (potentially also methods of travel available or considered by visitors) • Insight on Roam usage (beyond ons and offs) & OD pairs • Mobility once within park: modes used and modes visitors *would* use such as shared mobility services (e-scooters or e-bikes) or on-demand transit services	• Understand current visitor use patterns • Understand intensity of use • Understand changing mode choice of visitors to the parks • Could estimate GHG emissions associated with traveling to park if detailed vehicle information were collected (make & model & year of vehicle) • Understand who uses Roam services, how, and where people travel (local travellers vs visitors, bringing strollers on bus, families vs single users, etc) • Consider a business case for mobility services in town of Banff such as e-Scooters or e-Bikes providing a way for visitors to seamlessly travel within town for short trips OR expand Roam transit to include On-Demand transit services • GHG emissions and reduction trends	• Deploy traffic counters • License plate study • Monitor wait times by placing an object at a meaningful point and documenting when line is past that point • Intercept surveys at park entrances, key park attractions, Roam bus stops, and key destinations within town- can consider academic partnerships to collect data • Cell phone data (advantages: large sample size, longitudinal sample is possible, disadvantages: lack of socio-demographic information, *traditionally costly*) • Internet surveys to engage with recent visitors and the general public about various transport-related topics (advantages: cost-effective and can reach both visitors and non-visitors & collect a wide range of information, disadvantages: sample can bias towards younger and more tech-savvy crowd (although this is changing)
Facilities		
	• Impact Risk • Legal Requirements	• Water Usage • Energy Usage

APPENDIX II

INFORMATION NEED	HOW IT HELPS	EXISTING AND POSSIBLE NEW METHODS
Interpretation, Education and Volunteers		
	• How funding and staff time are allocated to provide Interpretation and Education Programs - includes number of visitor contacts • Documents and datasets related to natural and cultural resources in the park	
Natural and Cultural Resources		
	• International data collection effort on 'when and where' species occur - necessarily requires a visitor to record the species and is therefore a record of visitors and species	
Gateway Community Socioeconomic Conditions		
	• Understanding economic and social context • Predicting the effects of management decisions beyond park boundaries	• Bow Valley municipalities • Bow Valley Chamber of Commerce • Banff Lake Louise Hospitality Association • Banff Canmore Community Foundation
Visitation at Surrounding Recreation Opportunities		
	• Provide a regional view of the importance of park visitor experiences • Informing possible management strategies (e.g. coordinated dispersal)	• Alberta Provincial Parks / Kananaskis Country • BC Parks • Jasper, Yoho & Kootenay national parks

APPENDIX II

INFORMATION NEED	HOW IT HELPS	EXISTING AND POSSIBLE NEW METHODS
Recreation Activity Participation and Trends		
	• Describe current conditions (e.g. visitor experiences currently desired by local residents, historically excluded visitors, and others) • Inform management strategies to increase relevancy, diversity and inclusion • Inform the development of desired conditions • Anticipate trends	
Regional Tourism Trends		
	• Improve awareness of park relationships to regional travel patterns; understand visitor characteristics	• Banff Lake Louise Tourism • Tourism Canmore Kananaskis • Calgary Tourism • Tourism Jasper • Travel Alberta • Destination BC • Destination Canada