

FEB 8 2020

CBS TOWN HALL
ON TRANSIT

A PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN THE SOCIAL JUSTICE
COOPERATIVE NL AND HAPPY CITY ST. JOHN'S

FUNDED BY THE ATLANTIC COUNCIL FOR INTERNATIONAL
COOPERATION

WITH HELP FROM JOSH PITTMAN AND SOLANGE FUEKANG

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WHY THIS TOWN HALL?

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Happy City St. John's and the Social Justice Cooperative have been working together in St. John's to advocate for better public transit. Since transit is an issue that goes beyond municipal boundaries, however, a solution for St. John's (or any other municipality!) has to be one that includes people who commute to the city from surrounding areas, or who visit St. John's or its surrounding areas for all kinds of reasons - from important medical appointments as well as recreation. People move between municipalities and our transit systems have to reflect that.

In hosting this event, funded by the Atlantic Council for International Cooperation, we hoped to gauge local interest in a transit system and imagine what that might look like. We also wanted to offer our own skills and experience in facilitating this kind of discussion. We hope that this will be the first of many events like this in the region, and that the next ones will be led by local transit champions!

This public town hall was designed to gauge how a public transit system could serve the communities of CBS.

WHY PUBLIC TRANSIT?

Yes, public transit can help us do our part to fight the climate crisis. But that's not the only reason affordable public transit is a real investment in communities of all sizes. It keeps our communities healthier by encouraging active transportation to and from transit stops. It offers independence and opportunities to the many people in our communities who cannot or do not drive. A well-functioning transit system prevents road accidents by keeping speeds low and impaired drivers off the road. These are a few reasons that our organizations see transit as an opportunity for our communities.

GETTING AROUND IN CBS

ACCORDING TO
RESPONDENTS TO
THE 2016 CENSUS

77

PERCENT

COMMUTED
OUTSIDE OF
CBS FOR
WORK

90

PERCENT

DROVE A CAR
TO WORK

79

PERCENT

SPENT MORE
THAN 30
MINUTES
PER DAY
COMMUTING

WHAT WE DID

Approximately 25 people attended the town hall on Saturday, February 8th at St. John's Church in Topsail. There were students, senior citizens, and working professionals, as well as politicians, business owners present.

After a short presentation on public transit from Neria Aylward (Social Justice Cooperative), the town hall was turned over to the town hall participants. Sitting in groups of 4 to 5, participants addressed the following questions, facilitated by Jen Crowe (Happy City St. John's):

1. Why does CBS need a bus?
2. Where should it go?
3. What should our next steps be?

Overwhelmingly, the participants were enthusiastic about public transit. That said, that is probably why they came out to the town hall. Since this was only the beginning of the discussion, that wasn't too much of a problem. But any future project would have to involve a much larger number of people!



WHAT WE HEARD

Why participants were excited about transit in CBS

QUALITY OF LIFE Many participants noted the high quality of life in CBS, and suggested that a bus might make it even better. Some reasons included that a bus could be another way to access to CBS's outdoor attractions, or to access recreation facilities in St. John's. Families might be free to own and maintain fewer cars, and less time spent in cars might encourage socializing and community building.

INDEPENDENCE Most participants brought up how hard it is to live in CBS for people who cannot or do not drive - including seniors, people with disabilities, people with lower incomes and children. A bus system could be transformative for these populations. Those who cannot drive are currently forced to rely on family, friends and taxis to make trips that require driving, including trips to access essential services like specialist appointments. Without a car, moreover, participants noticed that individuals with limited mobility often feel isolated from their communities.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT Some participants argued that an investment in public transit could increase local revenue and save money elsewhere. A working transit system connected with St. John's might make living in CBS a viable option for those who work and study outside the municipality. It would make CBS livable for those who do not drive, including, perhaps, families who have recently immigrated to Canada. It would also make CBS's many attractions, including Manuels River, Topsail Beach, and the TRailway more accessible to visitors from St. John's and beyond.

POSSIBLE ROUTES Participants expressed a need for good local service within CBS - including stops at grocery stores, recreation facilities, and key town centres - as the municipality is very large and spread out. Many participants also argued that the service should link up with the St. John's transit system. To balance the needs for comprehensive local service and quick service to St. John's, several groups suggested an "express" route with fewer stops in addition to the regular fixed route. Others suggested that an "on-demand" service had worked well in similar-sized municipalities elsewhere in Canada.

WHAT'S NEXT?

Everyone agreed that for any public transit system to succeed in CBS, it would require **buy-in from the community**: it would require people being excited enough about a bus to leave their cars at home from time to time. This would require **public support and involvement** at every stage of the process, including **more town halls** like this one. Some participants suggested holding this workshop in communities that could be most positively affected by a bus, including retirement communities and high schools.

JOIN

JOIN THE GROUP: [CONCEPTION BAY SOUTH RESIDENTS FOR PUBLIC TRANSIT](#)

ADVOCATE

CALL YOUR MP, MHA AND TOWN COUNCILLORS EXPRESSING YOUR INTEREST

ORGANIZE

ORGANIZE A TOWN HALL OF YOUR OWN: EMAIL THE SOCIAL JUSTICE COOPERATIVE NL TO FIND OUT HOW