



## **Banff Eco-Transit Hub**

### **Intercept Lot Grand Opening - Community Event**

**September 13, 2019 – 10:00 am**

**Jan Waterous, Liricon Capital Remarks**

Good Morning and thank you all very much for being here today at the Banff Eco-Transit Hub. Before I go further, I would like to take this time to acknowledge we are on the traditional territories of the people of the Treaty 7 region—including past, present and future generations of Stoney Nakoda, Blackfoot and Tsuut’ina Nations. Thank you.

I would also like to acknowledge the presence of our 3 very special guest speakers. Firstly, Her worship Karen Sorensen, Mayor of Banff who we all know is a huge champion of mass transit. Second, Dr Joe. Pavelka, Professor of Eco-Tourism at Mt. Royal University, and lastly, Ms. Tracy Lee, Senior Project Manager of the Miistakis Institute, also at Mount Royal University. I will more formally introduce each speaker momentarily.

Four years ago, it would have been absolutely inconceivable for my husband Adam and I to even imagine being as excited as we are today about the construction of Banff’s first-ever, free, intercept parking lot. As many of you know, intercept parking has been official Town of Banff Policy since 1979, and today we finally have one. In fact, we have 2: an intercept lot on the east side of the station that holds up to 500 vehicles, and a 22-stall lot in front of the station that just holds RVs.

And today we get to announce the best news yet: – both lots have been a resounding success. The RV lot filled within hours of it having a “soft” opening on August 3, and our larger lot has consistently had between 200 and 300 vehicles on most days since its soft opening on August 31. Now, you will note that I emphasized the word soft – in that the “pomp and ceremony” that accompanied the grand opening of both lots was –shall we say--pretty low key. Essentially, it entailed Mayor Sorensen and I lifting a construction barrier while a member of the Town’s traffic engineering department snapped a few pictures on his iPhone ---but regardless—it was absolutely awesome! Perhaps the best part was when all of us broke into spontaneous and raucous applause when the first vehicle to enter the parking lot came into

sight. Needless to say, I'm sure we left this driver with the clear impression that Banff is a friendly town indeed.

Most importantly, the success of each parking lot showed us that visitors are in fact prepared to move around differently when they enter a national park. They are indeed prepared to walk an additional 5-6 minutes to Banff Ave. or hop a bus or shuttle to a point of interest around the Park. We were delighted that the "build a better mousetrap and the world will beat a path to your door" adage has worked with this lot. In marketing terms, we call this "proof of concept" and this is particularly good news to those of us in this room that are seeking transformational change in how visitors and personal vehicles move through Banff.

Needless to say, we are very grateful to Parks Canada and the Town of Banff for working with us to make intercept parking a reality. We would also like to thank our whole construction team. We started working with WSP's Jessica Wheatley more than 3 years ago to engineer this lot and Richard Bremner of Bremner Construction has done an amazing job in bringing Jessica's plans to fruition. A particular shout-out to Josh Tarchuk of Tarchuk Construction and Andre Quenneville of Norquay Ski and Sightseeing Resort who have managed the day-to-day construction. And we would also like to thank CP Rail who, for the past 4 years, has supported our vision to reactivate the rail lands so we can support a community goal to manage visitor and vehicle congestion.

As many of you know, our intercept parking lots are just the first step in a far broader vision we have to address the impact of personal vehicles in Banff National Park. Or to put it somewhat differently, we didn't build our first intercept lots so we could JUST improve traffic congestion on a busy long weekend. We took on this project because we believed there was a possibility to do something truly transformational.

As a 22 year resident of this community, we, like so many of you, kept waiting for something "big" to happen in Banff to manage a global trend towards over tourism. But over time, we also saw that, despite admirable initiatives undertaken by both federal and municipal governments to improve mass transit, implement traffic calming measures and refresh popular streetscapes, these groups lacked the real estate and infrastructure in the Park to make a transformational change. So, in 2015, my husband and I lost our minds and jumped into this gnarly, complex hot bed of problems, to see if we could "partner" with others and be part of a broader transformational solution. To this end, we purchased the long term lease for the Banff Train Station with the intention of returning passenger rail service between Calgary Airport and Banff; we purchased the 32 acres of land that surround the station with the intentional of creating 2500 intercept parking stalls, and about 2 years later, we purchased the long term lease for the Norquay Ski Hill with the intention of creating aerial transit from the station to the ski hill.

**Collectively, our goal has been to bring the Banff Train Station “back to the future” and return it to its historic role as an arrival centre and a central gathering place where all visitors to Banff National Park could begin their exploration of the Park. We call this “Banff Starts Here”.**

**While all of these ideas had been around for decades and advocated by many others, the real estate and infrastructure to make them come to fruition had never before been in the same hands. We obviously resolved that issue by purchasing the leases for the aforementioned land and businesses, but we wanted to ensure that the specific solutions to visitor and vehicle management that we envisioned (reinstatement of passenger rail, intercept parking and aerial transit) did in fact enhance the environment and the visitor experience. Because of this, we decided from the “get go” to take a science-based approach to everything we did. And given that we live in a national park, we wanted to make sure that there was broad-base support for these initiatives--not just in Banff, but across the rest of Canada.**

**To this end, we are currently working with a range of universities and research institutes to assess what level of support we have for these and other aspects of our project and today we are going to begin the process of sharing that information with you by hearing from 2 of these experts. First up is Dr. Joe Pavelka, eco tourism expert and Professor at Mount Royal University. Joe's research focuses on destination management (both here in Canada and abroad) and marketing and tourism motivation. Dr. Pavelka is one of Canada’s leading researchers in “over-tourism” and the opportunities that Eco-Tourism presents for communities. Dr. Pavelka’s research has taken him around the world teaching at international field schools. Every other year, he operates a six-credit ecotourism field school course in Peru and has run numerous similar field schools in Belize and Mexico in the past. Joe has also extensively researched the impact of tourism in the Bow Valley.**

**This morning, Dr. Pavelka will share some of the research he conducted in 3 key areas:**

- 1) He explored the question of whether visitors to Banff would view aerial transit to Norquay as an “attraction” that in and of itself, would entice visitation.**
- 2) This past summer and over a 3 month period, Dr. Pavelka conducted research in the Town of Banff and right across Canada to measure support for all 3 aspects of our project:  
passenger rail service from the Calgary Airport to Banff, aerial transit to Norquay and intercept parking.**
- 3) Dr. Pavelka tested Canadians views on what we refer to as a “Car free Banff”.**

**Please join me in welcoming Dr. Pavelka to the podium.**

**Joe Pavelka Takes the Podium**

**Thank you, Joe. Support from 4 out of 5 Canadians for each of our initiatives is massive. For some perspective, in next month’s federal election, if any party gets half that level of support - being 2 out of 5 Canadians - they will form a majority government.**

**Tracey Lee, Miistakis Institute**

**Next up is Ms. Tracy Lee, Senior Project Manager at the Miistakis Institute at Mount Royal University. Miistakis is a leading, non-profit conservation research organization that focuses on projects that have the potential to enhance the environment. A particular area of focus for Miistakis is Human Wildlife Coexistence which often includes determining wildlife needs, assessing human impacts to wildlife habitat and exploring adaptive management for both humans and wildlife. In fact, several of the principals at the Miistakis Institute did the original research for Parks Canada on the Cascade Wildlife Corridor 2 decades ago that led to the removal of several man-made impediments including the Cadet Camp, Buffalo Paddock, and Horse Pasture and restrictions on the Banff airstrip.**

**Ms. Lee worked with her team at the Miistakis Institute to study the potential impact of aerial transit to Norquay – more specifically, the impact of moving the existing parking at Norquay down to the train station and thereby eliminating Norquay visitor vehicle traffic on the 6 kilometre access road that intersects the important Cascade Wildlife Corridor.**

**Please join me in welcoming Tracey Lee to the Podium**

**Thank you, Tracey. For further background on Tracy’s research, we have a link on the Banff Eco Transit Hub website. The report is very long but surprisingly easy to read and clearly speaks to the fulsome nature of the research that was conducted by this group.**

**Before we move on, for clarity, I would like to reiterate a message that I have spoken of many times before – including in March of this year, when I spoke in front of Banff Town Council. Aerial transit serves 2 key purposes for our project. Firstly, as Tracy just showed us, should certain mitigations be put in place, aerial transit to Norquay has the potential to enhance the ecological integrity of the very important Cascade Wildlife corridor. But secondly, aerial transit provides not just environmental sustainability but also economic sustainability for the broader project. It provides a revenue stream that helps to support other aspects of the Eco Transit Hub including the construction of 2,000 additional intercept parking stalls. With this additional parking capacity – which to be transformational, must be offered free of charge—there is an opportunity—for the first time in our National Park’s history, to create a “Car Free Banff”. Or to put another way, Aerial Transit to Norquay provides the opportunity to “de-privatize” 2,500 stalls and open up a range of possibilities in the Park.**

#### **REVEAL NORTH LOT RENDERING**

**While we are steadfast in our belief that the 3 legs of our stool—Passenger Rail, aerial transit and intercept parking—are in and of themselves, transformational, in “tech speak”, these components of our project are, in our mind, analogous to the iphone when it was first introduced in 2007. By this we mean, the iphone, with texting and internet capability changed communication, but it was really the layering on of the apps on the iPhone platform over the last dozen years that truly changed the world. Likewise, while we believe a**

combination of aerial transit, passenger rail and 2500 free intercept parking stalls is a platform that is transformational, it too is a platform that is “ready and waiting” for apps, or other green initiatives, to be layered on to it. “Car free Banff” is one example of an app that, when added to the platform, could truly change Banff National Park and make us leaders in green transit initiatives that other towns and cities across Canada can emulate.

When I spoke to Banff Town Council in March this past year about the Car Free Banff vision, some may recall that I proposed to Council that should the Town of Banff implement a Resident Only Vehicle Pass (an example of an app) then Liricon would provide 2,500 stalls to the Town for 30 years for free when aerial transit to Norquay opens. As a quick refresher, a ROVP would allow hotel visitors to park in hotel lots and only Residents would be allowed to park in downtown lots. In this scenario, day visitors would only be permitted to park at intercept lots. By moving to a ROVP—lots of possibilities open up for our community, including, reducing traffic across the bridge – the holy grail of the Banff traffic department but also closing the 100 and 200 blocks of Banff Avenue to traffic. Of course, whether this option is implemented would have to be determined by Banff Town Council in consultation with various stakeholders, but we do feel it is important to visualize what is indeed possible through the Banff Eco Transit Hub platform:

#### **REVEAL BANFF AVENUE RENDERINGS**

A Second policy option (or app if you will) would be for Parks Canada to move to a Shuttle Only System to Points of Interest around the entire national park (such as Moraine Lake, Johnston Canyon, or Lake Louise). By doing so, Parks would be able to better manage vehicle and visitors and decommission personal vehicle parking lots. In doing so, instead of Moraine Lake looking like this

#### **REVEAL MORAINELAKE photo last MONDAY**

It could look like this.....

#### **REVEAL MORAINELAKE WITH PARKING LOT DECOMMISSIONED**

These are not woo-woo ideas. All of this is in reach. A shuttle only system already exists in other park environments, most notably in European mountain towns like Zermatt or in other national parks like Zion. Their experience tells us that “car free” communities work—as long as the option to not go car free, is removed. Its about creating a new paradigm that has different rules that create different possibilities. Needless to say, we look forward to working with Parks, the Town and our community to explore the apps that can apply to the Eco Transit Hub platform.

Speaking of the Town.....

Since we started these initiatives 4 years ago, we have always realized that we are standing on the shoulders of those that came before us to bring mass transit to Banff. Perhaps no one

**in Banff has been more instrumental in building mass transit than Banff's Mayor Karen Sorenson. Karen has worked tirelessly to support and expand Roam Transit over the last 3 terms and without her efforts, it is very unlikely we would have the shuttle system we have today.**

#### **Karen Sorenson Takes the Podium**

**Thank you, Mayor Sorensen, for those inspirational remarks. We always knew we had to have partners to transform vehicle and visitor management in the Park and you have always stood shoulder to shoulder with us- both literally and figuratively. Thank you.**

**In conclusion, we have always seen the creation of an Eco-Transit Hub as a “necessary but not sufficient” first step; in and of itself, it will help with the collection and dispersion of Banff's 4.2 million annual visitors and in doing so, support the ecology of our national park. But it is our view that the “secret sauce” is in the apps—the “add ons” that you as members of our community can support and create to forever protect the sanctity of the Park itself. Our premise has been that we can't wait around for governments to independently solve big community challenges and there is a big risk in doing nothing or in just making incremental change. In fact, the term “over-tourism” has now become so popular that it was named one of Oxford dictionary's “words of the year” in 2018. We believe that our collective challenge is not to stop the visitors from coming, but to dramatically change how they move and experience the Park once they are here. We have an opportunity to move from “worse to first” and we hope you all come along with us.**

**Thank You**