



PARKS CANADA EXPERT PANEL ALIGNS WITH BANFF ECO-TRANSIT HUB VISION

Dec. 5, 2022, Parks Canada shared the final report from the Expert Advisory Panel on Moving People Sustainably in the Banff Bow Valley. The report was informed by member's expertise and consultation with Indigenous Peoples, public feedback and stakeholder input. Banff Eco-Transit Hub can accelerate the Expert Panel's long-term vision.

Banff Eco-Transit Hub designed to deliver Expert Panel's main concepts:

The Banff Eco-Transit Hub will be a shuttle centre for buses and passenger train services for the planned Calgary Airport Banff Rail project. As an integrated arrival centre, the Hub will provide access to multiple transit options, micro-mobility gear (bicycles, scooters), food and beverage outlets, and be a venue for learning opportunities. Approximately 1,000 intercept parking stalls would be available for visitors arriving by personal vehicle.

ARRIVING IN BANFF NATIONAL PARK

Report recommendation: 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."

Report recommendation: Work on first and last mile connectivity

"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."

Report Strategy: Contribution to a Sustainable System

"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."

Report recommendation: Consider range of options

"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."

– EXPERT PANEL REPORT

How the Banff Eco-Transit Hub can support these recommendations:

The Hub will be able to host multiple transit options. By providing intercept parking, the Hub allows visitors to leave their vehicle at the Train Station and take transit to Sulphur Mountain, reducing congestion in downtown and the Bow River Bridge chokepoint. The Hub will be terminus of the planned Calgary Airport Banff Rail project, with potential to be extended to Lake Louise in the future.



MOVING AROUND THE PARK

Report recommendation: 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."

"Aerial transportation such as gondolas can easily adjust their capacity and frequency, are efficient and have small footprints as compared with roads."

"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."

"An aerial transit mode offers a way of removing vehicles from the system allowing for a more porous wildlife corridor."

– EXPERT PANEL REPORT

How the Banff Eco-Transit Hub can support these recommendations:

The Hub will have the potential to host multiple modes of emerging forms of transit, including hydrogen-powered passenger rail, driverless shuttles and aerial transit, including serving as a gondola terminus to Norquay. Any potential gondola would be subject to a separate regulatory approval process led by Parks Canada.

ENABLING CHANGE

Potential action: Engage with third party providers

"(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."

"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."

Potential action: Explore the range of Indigenous partnerships:

"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, ... potential partnership opportunities where their lands could be part of staging areas for transportation services ... (and) opportunities to share their history and culture through mass transit solutions."



Potential action: 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 ... 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."

– EXPERT PANEL REPORT

How the Banff Eco-Transit Hub can support these actions:

The Hub is designed to serve as a platform for public-private-partnerships, including creating passenger rail services to the Calgary Airport and expanding the existing partnership whereby Norquay provides intercept parking free of charge to the Town of Banff. As an arrival centre for the town and the park, Norquay looks forward to working with the Town of Banff and Parks Canada on how pricing can be used to incentivize visitors to use mass transit.

Through the Banff Eco-Transit Hub, Norquay, Liricon Capital, and partners are committed to make the investments needed to accomplish the goals of Parks Canada, the Town of Banff, and various stakeholders. In our next ad, we'll share how the Hub vision supports the Banff National Park Management Plan.

Visit banffecotransithub.ca for more information or to find a link to the report: Expert Advisory Panel on Moving People Sustainably in the Banff Bow Valley.

THE LONG-TERM VISION SUMMARY

- Day visitors arrive in Banff National Park by public transit, without a personal vehicle
- The trip, be it on a train, bus or some other mode is frequent, comfortable, efficient and relaxing
- Locals and workers also use the system to commute and for recreation
- Visitors arrive at well-served hubs ... complete with intercept parking, information service, visitor infrastructure, and educational experiences
- Frequent connections to their next or final destination in Banff National Park
- Heading out for day trips, most visitors will have more than one option for moving about sustainably.

– EXPERT PANEL REPORT

Visit banffecotransithub.ca for more information or to find a link to the Expert advisory panel

