

# Victoria County Transit Coming this summer!



## Frequently Asked Questions

These questions were asked during the community engagement sessions held in all eight Districts across Victoria County. Thanks for asking such great questions! We hope these answers help to shine more light on the service.

You may notice that some of the answers in this document are different than those you heard during the session. In many cases we have incorporated your feedback and requests around the service to try a new approach (e.g. weather cancellations, ferry costs, etc.) so thanks for your helpful feedback.

As this is a pilot that is designed to be tailored to the needs of residents in Victoria County, the answers on this document are not set in stone. We will continually update this document as we refine and adapt the service!

### Payment / Cost

**1. Can the drivers issue receipts?** Yes

**2. If you are getting dropped or picked up at the airport, do you have to pay for the route both ways?** Typically the charge is a full fare for the leg you are riding on and then half fare for the route we are empty.

**3. How do you know how much an out-of-county route is going to cost if people are being added to the route after you book?** When you book we will give you the maximum price for the trip. If additional people book afterwards, the driver will adjust the amount owed, which will always be a reduction in price, and let you know when you enter the vehicle.

**4. Is it possible to have discounted rates for essential services (medical, grocery, etc.) and more expensive rates for non-essential services (events, etc.)?** We are not interested in altering our fare structure at the moment. We will see how the flat rate \$5.00 within the municipality and the \$0.55 / km once you leave the municipality works. If after the pilot project we feel a

change should occur, we will assess at that time and will have to go to the Utility and Review Board to request this change.

**5. Is there any existing connection to First Nations and Inuit Health Services for assistance with payment for medical travel?** Not at this time.

**6. How do people pay for the booking?** Cash given to the driver each trip or by email money transfer.

**7. What would it cost to go from Middle River to the Regional Hospital in the CBRM for one person on the route and for two people on the route?** For one person this trip would be \$29 one way; two people can split the cost of \$34 one way (\$17 / per person).

**8. Do passengers have to cover the cost of the ferry or is that included in their fare price?** We are looking into getting a vehicle pass for the ferry for both vehicles so that passengers do not have to incur the ferry fee when they are travelling.

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## Bookings

**1. Is it possible to have reminders sent about bookings, especially if you book a long way in advance?**

Unfortunately this is not possible at this time as there are too many bookings for the Coordinators to call and remind riders.

**2. Is there a fee if you cancel a booking or forget?**

If you cancel within 24 hours, there will be no charge. If you cancel later than that you will be charged for the full fare.

**3. For community events and festivals, does each person have to book individually or can you accept group bookings?** It depends on the event.

**4. Can you book the service to just go on a drive?**

Yes, though typically we would have a destination in mind even if the drive is part of the experience, such as taking folks for ice cream in the summer.

**5. Is there a toll-free number to call the Coordinators in Port Hawkesbury?** We are in the process of getting a toll-free number.

**6. What happens if multiple people are going to the doctors on the same day? Do they all have to wait until everyone is finished with their appointment or can the driver take some of them back if they are done earlier?** This will

depend on what times passengers are booked in for. We try to not have passengers waiting around for long periods of time, but it really depends on the day.

**7. Will VCT be listed on 211?** Yes.

**8. There will probably be lots of people who work at the fish plant who'd like to use the service. They don't know their schedule for the next day until the day before and often have to start their shifts at 4:00 in the morning. Can the service accommodate them?** We need to have all bookings in by 2:00pm for travel the following day to allow us to have schedules done for drivers. If the demand is high for fish plant workers, we can certainly look into providing travel.

**9. If the service picks you up after work can you ask them to stop so you can buy groceries on your way home, or if you go to a doctors' appointment and then need them to stop at the pharmacy to fill a prescription, how does that work?** Because we are not a taxi, you would have to pre-book and pay \$5 for each stop you make. It becomes very difficult to schedule travel, if we do not know how long / how many stops people are wanting to make.

**10. What are the general service hours for routes in the SAT district?** SAT's route hours are typically Monday - Friday between 5:30 am - 5:00 pm, with limited service on the weekend for regular travel. The benefit of having a flexible schedule will allow us to better assess the demands in Victoria County, and set hours of operations accordingly.

**11. Can you make a recurring booking?** Yes, we have lots of passengers at SAT who call each week to provide a schedule (if it changes) or others who call just once with the days they need to travel each week.

**12. If someone calls to book for travel, when do they receive confirmation about whether or not their ride request is confirmed?** They typically receive confirmation while on the phone with our dispatch team during their initial call. If we are unable to confirm immediately, a call will be made to them before end of day to confirm travel.

**13. If I go to a doctors' appointment how do I schedule a return trip if I do not know how long I will have to wait?** We typically allow for one hour for a regular doctors' appointment. If you know your appointment will be longer than that, just let the dispatcher know. We understand that sometimes appointments run late so try to be flexible to ensure wait times for returns are as short as possible and that no one gets left behind.

**14. If I go to get groceries will I have to wait a long time for the return trip and then the groceries will spoil?** With the pre-booked system, if you know you are simply going for groceries, your booking would reflect that. You can let the dispatcher know when you book what time your preferred pickup is at the grocery store and we can work that into the schedule.

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## Demand

**1. What are the hours that the service will run for rides?** We will offer 60 hours of service per week. The benefit of this service is that it will allow us to be flexible. We can adjust buses and times as we see most appropriate. It is a pre-booked service so we will need to have people book a minimum of 24 hours in advance.

**2. Is the 60 hours a week for service hours for the entire county or for both vehicles?** The 60 hours / week of service hours is for the entire county, so split amongst the two vehicles.

**3. What if there is a lot of demand in one area of the county, will the other vehicle be limited in its ability to book rides?** If the demand increases in one area of the county, we can switch to a larger vehicle from the Strait Area Transit's (SAT) fleet. Our hope is to keep both vehicles close to their original destinations (Neil's Harbour and Baddeck).

**4. What happens if tourists take up all the seats and locals can't get on the bus?** Partnering with SAT could allow us to switch out VCT vehicles for a larger bus, if necessary. Because the service is pre-booked, we will know the day prior how many passengers will be travelling.

**5. Is it first come first serve for bookings?** Yes, if the entire 60 hours have been used for the week and additional requests come in, we will try to work with passengers on fitting in with existing trips so that we are being efficient with the service hours. This will be a learning process. If we note that the first week of every month we are only using 20 hours a week, for example, those hours would carry over to the following weeks. So, at high-demand times, we may be able to offer additional service hours in a week.

## Riders

**1. Age limit for children travelling alone?** 12 years old.

**2. Can youth under 12 travel alone if they have a permission slip from parents?** No.

**3. Do users need to bring their own car seats for small children travelling?** Yes, users must bring their own car seats but they can be stored in the vehicle for their return trip.

**4. What if someone wants to get on the bus who has been drinking?** It is typically left to the drivers discretion. If the driver believes they can get the passenger home safely without interference to other passengers, we will allow them to travel.

**5. Can pets travel on the vehicles?** Yes, but we ask that pets are contained in carriers.

## Charter Service

**1. Can Strait Area Transit charters come down to service Victoria County?** At this time, no. We will apply to the Utility and Review Board with our license to see if we are able to offer charters starting in Victoria County.

## Vehicles

**1. What type of vehicles will be used?** There will be two vehicles for the initial service in Victoria County. One van will be based in Baddeck and one will be based in Neil's Harbour.

**2. How many seats are in the buses? Does this decrease if there are wheelchair passengers that must be accommodated?** We can accommodate 6 passengers plus 2 wheelchairs. Having wheelchairs does not reduce the space. Strait Area Transit has larger vehicles, so if a larger vehicle is required, we can accommodate.

**3. Can the vehicle step be lowered for getting in and out?** No.

**4. Can the vehicles accommodate those who need to store walkers or wheelchairs for the drive?** Yes, we can have passengers transfer from wheelchair or walker to a van seat. Storage is available in the back for wheelchairs and walkers.

**5. Do the wheelchairs lock into the back for those who are riding in wheelchairs?** Yes.

**6. Are there storage areas in the vehicles for groceries or luggage?** Yes, there is a significant amount of space for groceries and luggage.

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**7. Will vehicles be outfitted with the attachments on the front of them to put bikes on?** We will not have attachments on the vehicles initially, but if demand proves they would be beneficial we would look into getting those installed. In the meantime, bikes can be stored inside the vehicles.

**8. Do the vehicles have seatbelts?** Yes.

**9. Do the vehicles have four-wheel drive?** No.

**10. Can the vehicles travel on gravel roads or just paved roads only?** They can travel on both gravel and paved roads.

## Coverage

**1. Can you pick someone up across the bridge in Grand Narrows (as these residents are technically part of the CBRM)?** Yes, but we will have to charge the out-of-county mileage rate for the kilometers traveled outside of the coverage area.

**2. Going from Iona to Baddeck you cross the county line into Inverness County for approximately 4 kms, would you have to add the additional mileage rate?** No, the \$5 flat rate will apply in this circumstance.

**3. Can Meat Cove be included in the VCT service (technically part of Inverness County but Victoria County includes them in most of their services)?** Yes, the \$5 flat rate will apply in this circumstance.

**4. Can someone take the bus to the county line and then call to get a pick up from SAT to travel within Inverness or Richmond counties so the out-of-county travel is less expensive?** Yes, as long as transportation is pre-booked, so that the schedule with both providers can reflect the transfers between vehicles.

## Weather

**1. What happens if different schools are closed in the area? Can the southern vehicle follow the southern school closures and the northern vehicle follow the northern school closures?** Yes.

**2. How will people know if the service isn't running because of weather so their trip for that day is canceled?** We will post on our Facebook page as well as contact radio stations.

**3. What happens if you go to pick someone up and they have a long gravel road that is not plowed?** If you can make it to the end of the road (to a road that has been plowed) we can pick you up. If no roads are clear, or you cannot make it to the end of the road, we will call and reschedule your travel.

## Drivers

**1. What type of license will the driver positions require?** A minimum of a Class 4.

**2. How can you ensure that drivers are safe to drive?** We will require a driver's abstract, criminal record check (with vulnerable sectors as well), and child abuse registry check. We will also do random drug tests for drivers. We will have potential drivers train with SAT's lead driver to ensure they are able to follow the rules of the road.

**3. What if a driver is sick, do all the routes for that day get canceled?** We hope to hire spare drivers to ensure that if someone is sick their route will still be covered. Also, as there will be two regular drivers assigned to each vehicle, the other regular driver can jump in to help with a route if the other regular driver is unexpectedly not available.

**4. Are you looking to hire drivers?** Yes. We have a couple of drivers already hired for the vehicle in Baddeck but we need two more regular drivers for the vehicle that will be based in Neil's Harbour.

**5. What is the hourly rate that drivers make?** \$15 / hour