



Antigonish Community Transit Society

133 Church Street, Unit 3

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REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL – BUSINESS PLANNING SERVICES

Overview: **Antigonish Community Transit Society** is inviting qualified consultants/firms to submit a proposal to help develop an updated business plan for the evolution and expansion of our rural transportation service in Antigonish, Nova Scotia. Based on consultation with the staff, board, volunteers and community stakeholders, the business plan will include recommendations and specifications (in areas of finances, staffing, vehicle fleet, service menu and governance strategy) for development over the next five years to protect sustainability and better meet the needs of our residents and partners.

Submission Information and Evaluation: Proposals to undertake this work will be received until September 13th, 2019 at 5:00 p.m. AST. Proposals must be submitted in PDF format via email to antigonishcommunitytransit@gmail.com, and confirmation of receipt will be sent within 1 business day. Proposals should contain a schedule of work to be undertaken and a detailed cost estimate based on per diem rates, including professional services, expenses and HST. Note that the project will begin no earlier than October 1, 2019, with a draft report and budgets to be completed by November 29th for a final project completion date of no later than January 31st, 2020.

Proposals will be evaluated based on: experience and references; knowledge and understanding of project objectives; technical approach and work plan; consulting services cost and value of work proposed. *ACTS reserves the right to negotiate changes to the successful respondent's proposal to more fully meet the Association's needs.*

Project Development Context: After five years of operations where our model and systems have evolved reactively based on the needs of riders as they are presented, we are determined to transition to become a more proactive organization. We recognize and embrace that transportation has no real value beyond how it helps people connect with opportunities and services. We believe an important basis of proactivity is having a place at the planning table with the key providers of those services and opportunities and helping them to succeed by making sure those that will most benefit from the work they are doing are able to access it.

Primary Deliverables:

1. Develop tools for engaging current and potential partners in the planning process:

During our first five years of operations, community organizations and services have been required to tailor their use of Antigonish Community Transit Society to what we already offered. Now we want to move toward updating our fleet, licensing, fares, staffing and service menu to fit the community's actual needs and how we could help them succeed if we evolved to better serve them. (**5-year goals:** having the capacity to form and sustain service contracts without limiting user-level service provision; capacity to handle a dramatic increase in referrals to user-level service by partners.) **Could include:** a general (short) electronic survey that could help identify key partners that staff and board members could be resourced to engage one-on-one.

2. Analysis of user-level service: We need concrete action steps to help meet our goals of:

a. Revising our fare structure to balance sustainability with affordability

b. Providing equal access to service in the town and county (and increasing ridership in currently low-stat municipalities)

c. Expanding our service menu to better meet the needs of individual users

d. Increasing efficiencies (i.e. increasing total ridership while decreasing total mileage through grouping and stacking trips, reducing deadhead km, etc.)

e. Increasing awareness and dispelling myths in the general community about who we are and what we do

3. Analysis of staff and volunteer experience: As we will need to support a growing staff and driver team in order to build capacity, we need guidance in examining staff wages in the context of providing sustainable and affordable service users.

4. Developing goals for strategic governance: The board of directors is responsible to ensure that the organization is focused on meeting its strategic goals and has the resources it needs to do so. "Next steps" should include recommendations for the board of directors on areas of big-picture strategic focus and the board-level systems and processes that need to be developed or improved to support them.

While the board and staff can be communicated with by email, phone, or in person individually or in small groups to gain information needed, it has been requested that any full board/team sessions should limit introductory and orientation exercises and be focused more on facilitating and resourcing/equipping for DECISION-MAKING and ACTION.

Reporting Requirements: Rural transit organizations in Nova Scotia receive significant funding from the province through programs administered by the Department of Communities, Culture and Heritage (CCH). CCH requires that funded organizations update their business plans every five years, and submit a document that includes the following components (as quoted directly from CCH):

1. "Organization/Management Structure review (is the current governance structure working effectively?) and opportunities for change
2. Community and stakeholder consultation (or evaluation). Determine if the service is meeting the current and future needs of target clientele and opportunities for enhancement or growth
3. Identify current and emerging demands, issues, service history and successes, demographic trends within the designated service area and propose potential opportunities/risks for service and potential responses/solutions
4. Service analysis of current model and identify current and anticipated needs (i.e, staffing, fleet and operational requirements)
5. Financial analysis, including current funding, fare structures, fundraising and exploration to identify potential new sources for funding, and recommend any adjustments to the fare structure. Must include 3 year budget, analysis of fare revenue sensitivity based on potential demand and opportunities to reduce overhead and service costs
6. Identify any policy/regulatory issues
7. Develop strategy for marketing and communication to increase public awareness and increase ridership
8. List recommendations (by objectives), and
9. Develop next steps with and timeline for implementation."

Payment Terms: Payment terms will be considered as net thirty (30) days from the date of the successful project completion, upon verification that the materials meet the specifications in accordance with the requirements of the Nova Scotia Transit Research Incentive Program and to the satisfaction of the Association. No work shall be carried out which results in additional costs. The consultant must ensure that the cost estimate in the proposal is realistic and that the work is completed within the maximum estimated cost and the time frame specified. Travel expenses are to be in accordance with the Provincial Government travel regulations and should be included in the initial quote.

ANTIGONISH COMMUNITY TRANSIT SOCIETY

FACT SHEET

133 Church Street, Unit 3, Antigonish, NS B2G 2E3 antigonishcommunitytransit@gmail.com
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MISSION: “Our mission is to provide a green, sustainable, multifaceted, community based transit strategy that provides accessible, efficient, reliable and safe travel for all residents and visitors in Antigonish town and county”

OVERVIEW:

- Antigonish Community Transit Society is a community-based rural transportation initiative serving the town and county of Antigonish, providing transportation locally for any purpose. Our priority is helping residents access essential services.
- ACTS was incorporated in October 2013
- We are a member of RTA-Rural Transportation Association (ruralrides.ca), which networks rural transportation services in Nova Scotia.
- We are a registered not-for-profit that relies on community partnerships and government funding.
- We provide transportation to residents who have a transportation barrier, including but not limited to: Seniors who no longer have their licenses; Individuals that for whatever reason cannot safely operate a vehicle; Individuals that cannot afford to own or operate a vehicle; Individuals requiring wheelchair accessible transportation; Single vehicle families; Organizations whose clients have transportation barriers.
- Staff drivers operate our 4 fleet vehicles (14 passenger wheelchair accessible bus, accessible minivan, 7 passenger van, and 3 passenger car) licensed by the Utility and Review Board (UARB).
- We offer our bus for charter services within Antigonish county to community groups.
- The Nova Scotia Department of Communities, Culture and Heritage provides significant funding to rural transit groups like ours. The three funding programs are:
 - NS-TRIP (Nova Scotia Transit Research Incentive Program) – funding for business plans, start-up costs, and systems development
 - CTAP (Community Transit Assistance Program) – funding for established services
 - ATAP (Accessible Transportation Assistance Program) – funding for vehicle purchase
 - PTAP (Public Transit Assistance Program) – funding for fixed-route services
- Along with our fixed-flex town bus route, we also offer a DOOR-TO-DOOR, PRE-BOOKED service: booking request must be received by 1pm the day prior to the service being required and we will pick up at their doors to be delivered directly to their destination. They may also access the fixed bus route at no extra charge while they are in the town.
- We strive to be an affordable service: While we collect fares in order to remain sustainable and partially cover our costs, we do our best to not deny anyone access to essential services based on a genuine inability to pay. We are committed to providing internal fare subsidies (through grants and fundraising) or helping clients connect with external funding programs to assist with transportation costs.