

Calgary Region's New Regional Transit System: On-It or Love-It?

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By Richard White, Guest Contributor

Calgary Region's newest transit service (launching October 11th) called ON-IT could easily be called "**LOVE-It.**"

Why?

Because, by all accounts, everyone loves the idea of piloting a regional bus service allowing people in High River, Turner Valley, Black Diamond and Okotoks to get to and from Somerset-Bridlewood LRT station in the morning and evening on weekdays.

The Mayors "Love It," Councillors love it and over 2,500 citizens in those communities have signed up for more information and updates.

And it's not just commuters who are interested – so are post-secondary students and seniors.

At the On-It preview on Monday October 3rd (*which I was invited to*) citizen Maureen Nelson enthusiastically grabbed a handful of information cards to take back to the High Country Lodge in Black Diamond.

She was certain many of the seniors living there would love taking transit to Calgary for day trips.

"Many residents don't like driving in Calgary or parking....this is perfect." In chatting with several other residents the On-It preview, there was a common theme – "driving and parking in Calgary is no fun."

Visionary...

On-It is a visionary, innovative partnership between Black Diamond, High River, Okotoks Turner Valley and the Calgary Regional Partnership.

It's a two-year pilot project that does not replace private express buses currently operating between High River, Okotoks and downtown Calgary.

But rather is the beginning of a regional public transit system.



The On-It buses won't go downtown but rather to the City's southernmost LRT station where riders can access the [Calgary Transit](#) system.

Currently, the service is designed to serve the 60,000 people living in the Calgary Region's southern edge.

It's designed to grow with the Region, whose population is projected to reach almost 3 million in 2073. Okotoks alone could have 90,000 people in 50 years.

As well, Strathmore and Chestermere are working together to be ready when the pilot is completed to launch their own regional transit service in 2018, with its link being to the new 17th Ave SE Bus Rapid Transit.

This is long-range thinking...



Experimental...

Over two years of regional transit research preceded the two-year pilot, information gathered and lessons learned was then applied to the Calgary Region.

The best routes, stops, fares and size of buses are then determined for the pilot.

High River Mayor Craig Snodgrass loves the pilot concept saying, “surveys can be misleading as people might say they want a commuter bus, but then don’t use it. This way we will have empirical data on who is using the service and how often. This will allow us to experiment with changes as we gather new information and make educated decisions going forward.”

Calgary’s [Southland Transportation Ltd.](#) was the chosen service provider for the pilot based on their extensive experience providing unique and specialized bus services in many communities in Alberta and British Columbia.

Don’t be alarmed! On-It will not be using rickety old school buses, but rather 55-seat motor coaches typically used by travel tour operators, which means you will travel in climate-controlled, luxury with comfy seats and an on-board washroom.



On-It will also result in less pollution and is expected to free up coveted park and ride spots for Calgarians . Woo-hoo!



Last Word

You gotta love On-It's slogan – "the best commutes include a nap!" With a slogan like that, how can it not succeed?

I am going to be very interested to see how this pilot evolves.

Want more details? Visit our "[Meet On-It](#)" and "[Ride with Us](#)" pages.

