

# Town to make case for permanent shuttle bus

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Justin Samson Photo

Gibsons Mayor Wayne Rowe, left, is joined with Gibsons and District Chamber of Commerce president Dean Walford last Saturday morning in Gibsons where the community shuttle bus service was officially launched for the summer.

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**JOHN GLEESON/STAFF WRITER**

The Town of Gibsons will be asking the Sunshine Coast Transit System and BC Transit to make the new community shuttle bus service a permanent fixture, chief administrative officer Mani Machado said Tuesday.

"One of our hopes with this project is to demonstrate there's a need to rethink the overall transit plan so that it allows this kind of community shuttle, built on the concept of flexibility that the current model doesn't allow," Machado said.

Last weekend the Town officially launched the community shuttle service that runs between Gibsons Landing and Upper Gibsons on Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays through the Labour Day weekend.

The wheelchair-accessible school bus got rolling for the Gibsons Jazz Festival last month, and Machado said the early indicators are positive.

"At first there was talk of servicing the tourism market, and there has been some of that, but we were pleasantly surprised to see it was more local residents using the service, especially from Lower to Upper Gibsons. It confirms there's a need," he said.

BC Transit is currently developing a 25-year strategic plan for the Sunshine Coast, but Machado said the Town does not want the community shuttle to be included in the plan as a service that will be implemented "down the road."

"We recognize that the plan being reviewed is a long-term plan, but we'll be asking for more immediate changes to the current transit plan to see if a shuttle can be accommodated," he said.

Funding for the shuttle service was provided by the Town, the Sunshine Coast Regional District, community organizations and businesses. Adult passengers pay \$2, children pay \$1 and Sunshine Coast Credit Union (through their sponsorship) members ride free.

"The funding model we used was not a long-term model, but we felt it was important to demonstrate how it could work," Machado said.

Billed as "fun, friendly and flexible," the shuttle runs from 1 to 6 p.m. on Fridays, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Saturdays, and 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. on Sundays. The bus departs Gibsons Marina on the hour and half hour, running up to Park Plaza Mall and back, with service to the wharf, Sunnycrest Mall and Gibsons and Area Community Centre.

"Having this friendly service go out of its way for people has been appreciated," Machado said. "It's not perhaps a perfect bus, but it meets our needs in many ways."