

LIDLAW BUS DEPOT SAFETY AUDIT REPORT SUMMARY

Cowichan Valley Intercultural and Immigrant Aid Society

The Intercultural and Immigrant Aid Society serves, supports and informs and assists new Canadians during their transition toward full integration into Canadian society. One of its programs is the Multicultural Women's Group, sponsored by the Department of Multiculturalism and Citizenship Canada. This on going group provides support for immigrant and visible minority women. Their drop-in Friday morning meetings provide opportunities for women to network, socialize and help each other with language skills. The group also provides workshops on various topics such as public speaking, self-esteem, leadership training and healthcare.

The group coordinator sits on the CVRD Women's Safety Advisory Committee as a community representative. She invited the Safer Futures staff to attend one of their meetings and explain the Safety Audit Project as part of their on going interest in local activities and community initiatives. With great enthusiasm, the women agreed to try their hand at doing an audit, intrigued with the described audit process and appreciating an opportunity to offer their perspective on personal safety.

Purpose & Parameters of the Audit

The purpose of this audit is to address safety concerns with the intention of making public transportation more accessible. An increase in ridership creates demand which in turn benefits the service. An increase in the number of people coming to Duncan facilitates an economic boost in the downtown core .

The group did not take long to identify the Bus Depot as a public space that was commonly experienced amongst group members as an unusually unsafe environment. Unusual for them, because, in their experience of Bus stations in their respective countries of origin, a town's main bus station is a hub of activity and as it is often a visitor's introduction to a town, will tend to reflect the community's pride.

Certainly, public transportation has a higher profile in countries outside North America. This group's insights are a reminder that public transit systems will continue to play a more and more crucial role in the community fabric due to factors such as: our collective environmental awareness, the increasing cost of owning a car, an aging and increasingly diverse population.

The group describe themselves as frequent users of public transit in the Cowichan Valley and the Island, and were looking forward to really taking a close look at the elements at the Depot location that make them feel unsafe, while exploring options for improving the level of safety for passengers.

The audit site focused on the immediate exterior surroundings of the Depot and the interior waiting area and ticket dispensary.

Summary of the Observations and Recommendations

The location of the Bus Depot, at the back of the Village Green Mall, gives an impression of isolation as it is situated apart from the regular commercial activity of the other mall tenants. The group felt the depot site was not a welcoming environment for visitors and did not feel like it was a safe place to arrive nor depart after dark. Some contributing factors affecting the women's sense of security include:

- dim lighting in the parking lot
- inadequate outdoor shelter
- insufficient indoor and outdoor seating
- poor signage for schedule information and emergency strategies,
- stark aesthetics including unpainted doors and partially disassembled electric signs
- cluttered waiting area
- unstaffed depot after 6:00 pm
- proximity to drinking establishment

A summary of the recommendations put forward to increase women's sense of safety include:

- Installation of wider and lower outdoor awnings
- Increase number of benches indoor and outdoor
- Post Entrance sign on doorway to Office
- Post Hours of operation and clearly visible bus schedule information
- Paint entrance door matching blue to canopy
- Improve wattage of existing parking lot lighting
- Install additional lighting on side of building outside depot and in dark areas near garbage and at either end of the building
- Install planters amongst bench seating
- Sponsor a Mural on the wall of the Mall
- Create defined area in waiting area for parcels and cargo
- Install brochure rack, newspaper boxes
- Hang pictures, posters of Cowichan Valley in the Waiting Area