

Armstrong Group & Gray Line West

Best Practices Guide 2007

Victoria, BC

Armstrong Group's Caretakers program was created to promote the development and implementation of sustainable operating policies and practices throughout our company. Caretakers is our ongoing commitment to service excellence and leadership in the tourism industry. We are dedicated to economic, social & environmental sustainability and we pledge to:

- ✓ *Contribute to the economic and social well being of the regions through which we travel.*
- ✓ *Take significant steps to protect the environment we share and contribute to the protection of Canada's natural resources.*
- ✓ *Use energy wisely and minimize our climate impact*
- ✓ *Develop programs and policies that support and acknowledge the history of Canada's heritage & traditions, in the regions in which our businesses operate.*
- ✓ *Develop positive long-term relationships with community stakeholders.*
- ✓ *Support and enhance employee retention programs that allow Rocky Mountaineer Vacations to recruit, hire and retain the best employees and be a company of choice in the tourism sector.*
- ✓ *Educate our staff, guests and suppliers about our sustainability goals and objectives and encourage their participation.*
- ✓ *Be a role model in the tourism sector for sustainability goals and objectives and participate in the mentoring of other organizations.*

Introduction

Armstrong Group, through Gray Line West (GLW) and the company's **Caretakers** program, seeks to support the development of a strong, sustainable tourism environment in the Greater Victoria area, and across the Capital Regional District.

As one of the oldest tourism operators in the region, Gray Line West has been operating in the area for almost 100 years and currently employs over 100 employees year round. The people who work at Gray Line West also live within the community. Therefore, working for a company that is respectful of the communities within which they live and work is very important to them.

In conjunction with other local initiatives like the Greater Victoria Harbour Authority's "Cruise Tourism Community Initiative" the following document will outline the company's voluntary initiatives to support a sound triple bottom line that will provide broadly based economic, social and environmental benefits.

The purpose for creating a best practices guide is largely due to the growing cruise ship tourism industry to this area. As the cruise tourism industry has grown in Victoria so have its impacts. In 2006, a record 184 ship visits brought about 352,000 people to Victoria and approximately 90 per cent of those passengers went ashore, accounting for just under 10 per cent of the 3.5 million visitors to the Capital Region every year.

These numbers represent tremendous economic benefits for tourism and service operators such as Gray Line West. However, there are negative impacts from the surge in popularity, many of which are absorbed by the community at large. These impacts (both actual and potential) include increased congestion at peak times, air and water pollution, altered aesthetics, sound pollution and disruption to the community. Local neighbourhoods are starting to voice their concerns. The James Bay Neighbourhood Environment Association (JBNEA) is spearheading the discussion about mitigating the effects of cruise tourism and related traffic in the area, and discussions are underway between GLW, the JBNEA, the Saanich Peninsula and Rockland Neighbourhood Association.

A number of existing guides have been used as reference for the creating of this working document. Conservation International has also developed a new initiative – the Ocean Conservation and Tourism Alliance – that aims to evolve cruise tourism into a truly sustainable practice. In their report *From Ship to Shore: Sustainable Stewardship in Cruise Destinations* they note:

In its most ideal form, tourism provides an incentive for governments, businesses and local communities to protect natural and cultural assets, as a way to raise revenue and improve standards of living by attracting tourists to a destination. Although cruise tourism has the potential to overwhelm fragile destinations if not managed effectively, the industry is also a great potential ally for conservation, because

many cruise passengers are attracted by the opportunity to experience new places and cultures.

This "Best Practices Guide (2007) outlines a series of operational Best Practices that GLW will implement to help offset negative environmental and community impacts while enhancing tourists' experience of all the Capital Regional District has to offer.

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Description of Operating Environment

GLW operates 65 coaches in the Capital Regional District. Each year, they transport close to 1 million passengers on a variety of sightseeing trips through the scenic neighbourhoods of Oak Bay and Rockland, out to Butchart Gardens in Saanich and to local attractions such as Afternoon Tea at The Fairmont Empress and whale watching excursions.

The coaches also carry over 65,000 ship passengers through neighbourhoods like James Bay and across the Saanich Peninsula on day trips and site seeing excursions. Bus cleaning and maintenances is done primarily on site at the GLW terminal, located on Glanford Street, Victoria, BC. Buses are parked at the Glanford Street location as well as overnight at Ogden Point for early arriving cruise ships, where some onsite cleaning does take place, to cut down on traffic through the James Bay neighbourhood.

Over 100 staff members are employed year round in the Capital Regional District including 70 drivers and a dispatch and administrative team located at the Glanford Street office. There is also an on-site maintenance team that is dispatched immediately if there is a problem. There are a number of potential environmental and social impacts that this plan hopes to anticipate and, where possible, mitigate.

Each of GLW's coaches undergo an annual safety inspection and are upgraded as needed to ensure they adhere to the highest safety standards and provide as minimal impact to the environment as possible. It is also important to note that highway coaches are similar to transit coaches with regards to emissions.

Potential Environmental Impacts that will be reviewed and addressed:

- Fuel use and greenhouse gas emissions
- Leakage of oil, fuel, and other hazardous fluids
- Loss of greenways for roads
- Water use and grey water from cleaning
- Material waste and recycling from passengers and other sources
- "Road kill" potential for squirrels, birds and other small animals
- Land use for bus and staff parking and office space
- Waste from used tires and other used bus parts
- Waste from onboard Latrines.

Potential Social Impacts

- Sound pollution
- Large numbers of people in quiet neighbourhoods
- Traffic safety
- Visual impact of buses and parking area
- Overcrowding of local greenspace and attractions

Potential Economic Impacts

- Service and product providers will be sourced locally as much as possible
- Opportunities for local providers to benefit from GLW will be reviewed

Strategies

Conservation International stresses that shore operators are important stewards of the local environment:

Shore operators rely directly on the natural and cultural resources of a destination for their livelihoods. They are also directly responsible for the time when cruise passengers are on shore and thus play a critical role in influencing the actions of visitors and educating them on appropriate behavior. Shore operators can join together in associations to increase the sustainability of their activities, or partner with cruise lines and local communities to develop products that benefit the environment and local populations and minimize negative impacts on sensitive or threatened areas. In all product offerings, including both new and existing tours, shore operators can adopt and implement responsible managerial and operational practices to help ensure the protection and maintenance of the destination. They can also contribute directly to sustainability by donating time, resources or equipment to local conservation or community development efforts and by offering their clients opportunities to contribute directly to these efforts during their tours.

Employee Training – GLW is proud to have a number of drivers who have been with the company over 30 years, and overall GLW enjoys a low turn over rate. Currently, each new driver undergoes a five-week training course and a peer-mentoring program is in place.

On ground staff training - GLW employs up to 15 university students as ticket agents every summer who also undergo first aid and superhost training.

Onboard commentary - GLW is a source of education and awareness building for the thousands of passengers it interacts with each year. The currently onboard commentary is being updated to highlight more specific information regarding the neighbourhoods it travels through as well as areas that are environmentally sensitive, cultural awareness (i.e. First Nations history) and milestones reached by Victoria and surrounding communities (i.e. Oak Bay's residential composting initiative) regarding sustainability.

Cooperation and Partnerships with Local Stakeholders

When working with local suppliers and vendors, GLW will develop a system of quality assurance and raise awareness about sustainability issues among their local partners. GLW can contribute significantly to local sustainability by actively seeking, choosing and promoting environmentally and culturally responsible shore operators and recreation providers. Along with the current support of local attractions that GLW already provides (Craigdarroch Castle, Butterfly Gardens, Afternoon Tea at The Fairmont Empress, Butchart Gardens, etc.) GLW will also explore:

- developing tour stops that highlight local culture and heritage – Chinatown, First Nations
- tour operators may provide commentary about conservation issues (e.g. Garry Oak meadows in Beacon Hill Park) and sustainability issues on tours
- seeking out partnership with local environmental groups and contribute both financially and as volunteers – e.g. TLC, Nature Conservancy
- seeking out partnerships with local suppliers for guest conveniences and services

Education and Awareness Among Passengers and Staff

GLW can contribute a great deal to sustainability in a destination by increasing the understanding and awareness of their passengers and educating them on how to act responsibly. This education can take many forms and can focus on topics such as local regulations, local resources and protected areas, appropriate behavior, or species-specific guidelines and information. Ensuring that tourists are aware of and comply with appropriate behaviors and guidelines can greatly limit the potential negative impacts of visitors to a sit

In addition to focusing on passenger education and awareness, GLW acknowledges that its staff has an important impact.

Staff can be trained and educated both to limit their own negative impacts and to promote responsible behavior among the passengers with whom they interact. Ideas GLW will also explore include:

- Guest speakers / on-board lectures / naturalists – mix entertainment and information
- Promoting local conservation initiatives and heritage groups
- Point out where further educational information is available
- Bring in guest speakers to employee meetings (similar to the Guest Services Network)

Contributions to Conservation and Community Development

To contribute to sustainability in a destination, GLW can make investments in local conservation and community development projects. This might include supporting local infrastructure such as visitor centres or roads and supporting local NGO's and community groups.

Currently GLW Victoria supports many local community initiatives including the Island Farms Victoria Day Parade and Christmas Parade, Times Colonist 10 K run, the annual Truck Light Parade at Christmas time and Cops for Cancer. Plans are underway to create an employee committee that will assist in identify other ways GLW can support community initiatives.

Partnerships

GLW can form partnerships and collaborate with other local stakeholders to increase the environmental, economic and cultural sustainability—and thus long-term viability—of their operations. Groups of shore operators may form local associations to strengthen communication and collaboration amongst themselves, share and promote voluntary good practices, and develop protocols for peer enforcement of local guidelines and regulations. GLW can also form partnerships with local communities and indigenous people, in order to include cultural elements in their shore excursions. Currently GLW is working closely with the neighbourhood associations, Tourism Victoria, Tourism Vancouver Island and Tourism BC as well as with the Greater Victoria Harbour Authority.

Good Practices

GLW is responsible for adopting and implementing responsible practices in the activities that they offer to passengers, and for educating themselves on environmentally and culturally sound methods. These include managerial as well as operational practices. For example, good managerial practices can include hiring local people, paying competitive wages, ensuring that language barriers are overcome in day-to-day business activities, integrating environmental and social criteria into supplier contracting processes, and training guides and staff in sustainability issues as well as customer relations and educational interpretation. Sound operational practices can include providing information, signage, interpretation services and awareness building materials in natural areas; implementing standard operating procedures to ensure minimal negative impact on the local environment and cultures; and educating tourists about specific local regulations, laws, customs and needs.

GLW is committed to providing an exceptional working environment and supports them with a benefit program. Hiring is done locally and the majority of job opportunities are offered year round. There is also an apprenticeship program available within the onsite maintenance shop. GLW is also a member of the Armstrong Group's growing green committee and providing pertinent and current commentary for guests as well as educating and listening to staff members on sustainable issues is a priority.

Product Design

When designing the tours and products that they offer, GLW should recognize, and meet, the growing demand for environmentally and culturally sensitive shore excursions among passengers. These tours should be developed responsibly, involving any other stakeholders that might be affected, and include environmental and cultural education elements. Conservation organizations and other NGOs can offer valuable assistance in developing new and environmentally responsible shore excursions.

One way to limit the overall negative impact of shore excursions is to design new alternative tours that move passengers away from the most sensitive and threatened areas. When this is not possible, shore operators can work together to implement management practices that minimize negative impacts, such as staggering visitation to popular sites, limiting visitor numbers or coordinating schedules so that the tourists don't all arrive at a site at once. These good practices can be applied not only to new tours, but also to existing ones. Shore operators can assess their current product offerings to ensure that they are performing as responsibly as they can and to determine how existing tours might be redesigned to take into account environmental and cultural sustainability issues.

Sourcing out suppliers and attractions that share the same sustainability values as GLW and Armstrong Group is a priority and is committed to working with other local operators to share best practices regarding sustainable development.

Site Design and Property Maintenance

Impervious surfaces such as concrete and asphalt interrupt the natural flow of rain and snow (part of the *hydrologic cycle*), causing pollutants to flow untreated into the sewage system and, thereby, into the ocean.

The oils, heavy metals and chemicals that flow off the land impair aquatic ecosystems, can make swimmers sick, close shellfish and other fisheries and exacerbate flooding. Loss of sport and commercial fish stocks has tremendous economic and social ramifications. To minimize these negative effects GLW can:

- Reduce the amount of impervious surfaces on its lot
- Disconnect downspouts from its building from the storm drain system and direct runoff to landscaped areas ("disconnectivity")
- Reduce or eliminate chemical fertilizers, pesticides and herbicides

Use of Low Impact Development techniques can also be beneficial. These include:

- Bioretention cells (surface runoff is directed into shallow landscaped Depressions)
- Amending soils with compost
- Pervious (porous) substrates
- Grass or gravel pavers or paving blocks for parking areas and alleyways
- Rainbarrels to collect roof runoff

Environmentally Preferable Purchasing Strategies

Environmentally Preferable Purchasing (EPP) is a method for incorporating environmental specifications into GLW's purchasing system. It utilizes products or services that have a lesser effect on human health and the environment when compared with competing products, while meeting effectiveness and cost considerations. Tourism businesses, as non-manufacturing businesses, have the opportunity and power through EPP to:

- Reduce negative impacts on the environment
- Reduce operating expenses
- Consolidate product purchases
- Reduce risk of injury to staff and guests
- Reduce liability

Develop a purchasing policy which aims to purchase products that

- Are made with less energy
- Are made with less materials (but deliver the same service, like cleaning)
- Are made with recycled materials
- Use renewable resources (not fossil fuels)
- Have extended durability and reuse potential
- Contains no toxics or less toxic chemicals

Along with Armstrong Group's other companies, GLW is currently reviewing its purchasing practices and working with the sustainability purchasing network. <http://www.buysmartbc.com/>

Other environmental considerations GLW is investigating include:

Building and Site Design

- Evaluate existing or previous habitat and wildlife populations on the operating sites and determine ways that the natural environment can be supported.

Energy Use

- Minimizing fuel use and use of more environmentally friendly fuels or fuel cell technology – GLW has converted its full fleet to biodiesel.
- Investment in emerging technology

Water Use

- Wash vehicles at facilities which reclaims water back into the washing system.
- Develop guidelines for cleaning buses –that minimize chemical use

Waste and Hazardous Waste

- Recycles paper, glass, metals and plastic and uses recyclable materials whenever possible
- Provide regular waste disposal station for guests that include clearly labeled recycling for all suitable materials.
- Have policies in place for used oil, cleaning materials and other materials used for bus maintenance
- Develop guidelines for coach repairs
- Develop guidelines for hazardous waste management
- Minimize production of solid waste materials whenever possible.

Neighbourhood Best Practices

Each neighbourhood and community within which GLW operates has the company's commitment to listen to local concerns and to make changes wherever possible. As well, as outlined by Armstrong Group's Caretakers Program, GLW will continually look for ways to contribute to the economic and social well being of the local neighbourhoods.

Saanich Peninsula – GLW is committed to minimizing the use of engine brakes when traveling through neighbourhoods and to adhering to posted speed limits. Currently discussions are underway with neighbourhood stakeholders to identify other areas where GLW can manage best practices. They will receive a copy of this guide for input.

Rockland & Oak Bay – GLW is in the process of setting up meetings with various stakeholders in these neighbourhoods to establish best practices. They will receive a copy of this guide for input.

JBNEA – GLW has held two meetings with Doug Craig of the JBNEA, who oversees transportation issues. Doug will be reviewing this guide for input. And, in addition to the best practices outlined by a similar guide created by the Greater Victoria Harbour Authority, GLW will running there coaches through the neighbourhood and along Dallas Road at **30km** as opposed to the posted 50km.

In addition, GLW will also comply with the Cruise Tourism Community Initiative (CTCI) as prepared by the Greater Victoria Harbour Authority:

General Agreements for All Operators &/or Agents

One of the most visible signs of the impact of Cruise Tourism is the traffic created by Tour Operators and Shuttle Services to transport cruise guests into downtown Victoria. The port and numerous operators along with representatives from the community have met for a number of years to identify and address issues related to increased motor coach, horse drawn trolley and taxi traffic in the James Bay Community.

A website should be established to track community concerns and responses that have been provided by the industry. It should be noted that not all traffic in the Community that is associated by the Community as being cruise related is actually involved in providing services to the cruise lines, this Initiative will however attempt to address the issues created by this outside group where possible. Both noise and environmental impact is a concern in the Community and the efforts below will attempt to address these issues.

Motor Coach Participants: Horse Carriages & Trolleys: Taxi Services:

- ☑ ***Contact Name:*** Operators/agents agree to provide the Greater Victoria Harbour Authority with a contact name, telephone/fax number, and e-mail address.
- ☑ ***Operator Self-Monitoring:*** All participants agree to self-monitor and improve self-monitoring efforts and to notify other operators who are not observing the CTCI.
- ☑ ***Response:*** Operators/agents agree to respond to calls and e-mails from the Greater Victoria Harbour Authority in response to the practices of the CTCI as long as there is sufficient information to allow operators to address the issue being raised. Key information such as time of the incident, location, unit number or license plate number, are important factors. Operators/Agents also agree to notify the Greater Victoria Harbour Authority as to the result of their interaction with the caller. Callers will be asked to communicate as much information as possible, including name of operator, description of the issue and date and approximate time of observation. Callers will be asked to leave a name, phone number and/or email address so the operator/agent can respond.
- ☑ ***Training:*** Operators/agents agree to provide information and training on these CTCI practices to all relevant employees.

Operators will train employees and strive to conduct business in a manner, which exhibits common courtesy throughout the season.

- ☑ **Work Sessions:** Operators/agents agree to participate in periodic work sessions to discuss progress made in attaining program goals.

Transportation and Vehicles

For the purposes of the CTCI, vehicles include motor coaches, buses, mini-buses, vans, taxis, motorcycles, and pedi-cabs.

Residents should remember that tour vehicles are also used for non-cruise related tour

Activities including private charter and/or institutional or government uses (i.e. school field trips). While the CTCI focuses on the vehicles movements used to support cruise tourism programs, participants are reminded to conduct all activities in a courteous manner and to emphasize these best practices during all training programs.

Motor Coaches

- ☑ Where feasible, carriers will review basing coaches that primarily operate for Cruise Ships at Ogden Point. This will limit the amount of trips into and out of the community by these units.
- ☑ All motor coaches are to avoid using **Government Street between Dallas Road and Michigan Street**, unless transiting to a drop-off or pick-up location on this street.
- ☑ All motor coaches are to access Ogden Point by using Belleville Street, Erie Street and Dallas Road.
- ☑ All motor coaches departing **Ogden Point are to do so by departing Dallas Road to Douglas Street. (And must travel past Mile 0 prior to turning left onto Douglas Street.)** Exception for Whale Watching Transfer motor coaches travelling to Fisherman's Wharf, which may take direct route Dallas to Fisherman's Wharf, however must return via Ogden Point and Dallas Road.
- ☑ Drivers agree to avoid the use of **Superior Street** unless transiting to a drop-off or pickup location on this street or in the immediate area.
- ☑ **Engine Idling:** Drivers of all vehicles agree to turn off engines at every reasonable opportunity when loading and unloading passengers and/or when staging in the various loading zones, staging areas, and tour destinations. Vehicles should not sit with engines idling while actively loading, unloading, or waiting for passengers to arrive. Engines should only be started when the vehicles is ready to move, and thereafter, only when the vehicle is in motion or in traffic. Maximum permissible idling time is 3 minutes.

- Alternative Fuel Commitment:** All motor coach operators agree to use a minimum of B5 Bio-Diesel for the 2007 Cruise Ship Season. This will be calculated as an average for their fleet usage. (50% of fleet using B20 – 50% of fleet using Diesel would be equivalent to the use of B10 fleetwide)
- Impeding Pedestrian Traffic:** Drivers should refrain from opening their doors into the sidewalk in a manner than impedes pedestrian traffic on that sidewalk unless they are engaged in an activity directly related to passenger loading or unloading.
- Left Turns:** Drivers or motor coaches and buses agree not to make a left onto Douglas Street at Dallas Road. Motor coaches must continue past Mile 0 prior to turning left.
- Safety When Backing:** All motor coaches, buses and mini-buses will take special care when backing out of the loading/unloading zones. When preparing to back-up a vehicle, drivers should be aware of the back-up beepers and the sound they make, and should spend as little time as possible in reverse while giving primary importance to public safety. Drivers should only shift into reverse when they are ready to commence backing to minimize beeper sounds.
- Specific Locations:** Fisherman's Wharf – traffic should enter from Erie Street at Dallas Road (Shoal Point). Pick-up and Drop-off location should be in the designated area only and not close to residential area.

General Rules All Vehicles

- Traffic Flow:** Drivers agree not to impede normal traffic flow by slowing down or stopping for sightseeing opportunities along Dallas Road, near Mile 0, or along Government Street between Belleville Street and Pandora Avenue.
- Training of Schedulers:** Operators will train schedulers to take advantage of synergies that may be present in the Greater Victoria transportation industry. Schedulers should strive to better serve their cruise guests and community residents by minimizing vehicles on the road whenever possible.
- Use of Left Lane:** Drivers of all vehicles (regardless of size) will avoid driving in the left lane, except when turning left, preparing to turn left, or overtaking a very slow traffic traveling in the right lane.
- Vehicles Fluids:** Drivers of all vehicles agree to monitor any engine and/or fluid leaks when operating a service for cruise guests. This includes monitoring at all staging/loading zones and the cruise ship terminal. Should any vehicle exhibit a substantial leak, the vehicle operator should be prepared to immediately pull the vehicle from service and repaired.

- ☑ **Clean Up:** Companies involved in this initiative will clean up any spills with absorbent or other material. The absorbent material will then be removed from the site of the spill.
 - ☑ **Safety on Roadways:** Drivers will take caution when encountering pedestrians, cyclists, and animals on roadways and lanes and safety training will be part of the company's driver training programs. Drivers should strive to operate their vehicles in a manner that exhibits common courtesy through their routine driving and travels.
 - ☑ **Resource Scheduling:** Operators agree to assign vehicles to scheduled tours or a specific service in a manner, which efficiently maximizes the use of all vehicles on duty where providing the level of service required by the cruise guests. The number of vehicles and type of equipment will be assigned to a tour or service based on the capacity needs on a given day, Operators will collaborate with partners/vendors to find opportunities to minimize the number of vehicles on the road whenever possible.
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Accountability:

Following consultation with all neighbourhood associations, a local advisory group will be created to provide regular feedback to GLW. Feedback from the neighbourhood will be encouraged and a company wide sustainability report will be presented to the community associations and posted on the website, where feedback will also be welcome.

For more information on Armstrong Group's commitment to sustainable development, sustainable tourism, please go to www.graylinewest.com/about_us.aspx or contact:

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