

MINUTES FROM PUBLIC CONSULTATION MEETING
WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 29, 2003
AMBROSIA CENTRE

Commission Members attending: Mayor Don Amos, Chair
Mayor Christopher Causton
Mayor Frank Leonard
Councillor Jackie Ngai
Councillor Bea Holland

Meeting commenced at 6:15pm

1. Presenter #1

Regular transit user expressed his environmental concerns that so many people in the urban regions drive their own cars which causes climate change, air pollution, and road congestion. He would like to see transit service increase at a rate of population growth. The status quo is not good enough, it requires a long term stable source of funding. He would like to see specific improvements to night bus service as a safety measure. People need to get places at night, and they need a option. He would also like to more express service to and from the terminal at Swartz Bay. To pay for transit and better service suggested paying a bit more for monthly passes, freeze fares, alternate funding to reduce fares. There also has to be improvement in bus boarding times.

2. Presenter #2

Director of Services, UVic Students Society representing 27,000 students provided background on the bus pass program at UVic. There has been an increase of 13% in UPass fees and the current service levels are inadequate, there has been 30,000 hours of reductions which has affected their members and they are frustrated. UVic supports BC Transit's 2004 – 09 Development Plan and a property tax. Our gas tax (2.5¢/litre) is lower than other Canadian cities. The plan needs to be expanded, but you should avoid increase on fares as it will jeopardize support for transit in the region.

3. **Presenter #3 (Submission attached)**

Regular bus rider presented a report to the Commission and suggested developing ongoing strategy and that we move together as a community to find permanent, sustainable solutions to address transit concerns rather than looking every year or two years for band-aid solutions. There should be more public input.

4. **Presenter #4 (Submission attached)**

Transportation and Land Use Planning Consultant presented a report and stressed the need to improve transit service and look to efficiencies. Conventional planning understates value of transit improvements and a good transit service frees up discretionary income for local economy. Look at multiplier effect. Car travel is under subsidized. Transit improvements can reduce traffic and parking congestion problems and costs. There is a good case to increase transit funding by using property tax and fuel tax.

5. **Presenter #5 (Submission attached)**

Student Research Assistant, Vancouver Island Public Interest Research Group (VIPIRG) presented a report, Thinking Outside the Fare-Box. The Commission has some difficult choices and most people appreciate choices, but 20% of Victoria residents living in poverty, transit is less of a choice than a necessity and \$1.75 fare is already a barrier. Instead of raising fares suggested vehicle taxes, parking surcharges, a small property tax and a gas tax. Instead of raising fares, should be working to reduce fares.

6. Presenter #6 (Submission attached)

Representing Camosun College Student Society who are very strong supporters of the UPass program. Camosun College is generally supportive of the Development Plan and increase in service. Reducing service hours is unacceptable. BC Transit has to make some difficult decisions and it comes down to money in the end. The provincial government is not providing enough funding and the federal government is not participating. Suggested raising local property taxes and fuel taxes and leave fares as is. Students are under a lot of pressure with rising tuitions etc. and our members will not look favourably with an increase in the UPass.

7. Presenter #7 (Submission attached)

Resident of South Fairfield expressed concern that \$86,000 in the budget was required to resurrect the #5 route (James Bay to Cook Street) and questioned the reasoning. There are many who cannot walk to May Street for a bus (12 – 15 disabled and elderly people) and they are also unable to get the taxi voucher she complained of this spending and they are unhappy with the service. There are empty buses observed. Linden Avenue is a narrow street with one bus stop and only 7 riders used the stop from 9 to 4 per day and the nearest alternative stop is one block away. There were extensive surveys of residents done in 1998 & 2003 with the majority wanting the bus service off Linden and to use the perimeter route. People want the bus off our street and suggested the Commission does not care about the disabled and elderly. A copy of a letter from an elderly resident was attached.

8. Presenter #8 (Submission attached)

Representing the Greater Victoria Transit Alliance (GVTA) stated she was here to call on the Commission and BC Transit to find sustainable funding to rebuild the transit system which is inadequate. Suggests that the Commission broadens its focus to establish sustainable funding and there are more than 3 options. The GVTA does not support an increase in fares, but supports local property tax and gas tax specifically dedicated to public transit and stated investment in public transit through a broadly supported tax base is a bargain.

9. Presenter #9 (Submission attached)

Regular commuter but does not agree with any of the options. No money is being saved on the late Route #10. She pays \$32 for a monthly pass and gets very little service. The #5 route is unsatisfactory. Suggested that BC Transit press the federal and provincial government for money. People that don't ride the bus have more clout than those that do.

10. Presenter #10 (Submission attached)

Ads on radio and TV are a waste. The #10 route did not run every 10 minutes, the bus runs every 20 to 30 minutes and it used to have 48 trips a day, now #5 only has 7 trips a day, this is a 700% reduction in transit. Pointed out that the #5 is going down the same route as the #7, and they are following each other. We fought for a bus shelter and now we have three and no service. Suggested having lotteries like the Canucks for transit.

11. Presenter #11 (Submission attached)

Representing the Garth Homer Society described some of the opportunities for the disabled and how the handyDART service is essential for their clients. Requested that handyDART and conventional bus service be expanded to include outlying service areas.

12. Presenter #12 (Submission attached)

Fairfield resident feels that BC Transit's funding shortfall is due to high salaries being paid to Executive staff. The Commission should look for cost savings in a top-heavy administration and pass savings to bus service. Requested a new brochure and a breakdown of salaries and wages. Riders should not be expected to subsidize the bus system. Suggested lobbying the provincial and federal governments. Please get rid of the new small buses (Darts) and replace with older, longer models.

13. Presenter #13

Fairfield resident who seldom uses the transit service. He acknowledges that the automobile is a major cost. He described the social and environmental advances of using transit. Labour is a major transit cost and it should stay in the region. Three options are too narrow. Suggested increasing gas tax, then property tax and lastly fares.

14. Presenter #14

Speaking on behalf of some of her elderly neighbours who could not attend tonight due to a lack of a night time service in the Fairfield area. The closest bus is 4 blocks away. Her neighbours feel like prisoners in their home and they can't afford a taxi. You need to spend money in more areas.

15. Presenter #15

Blind user of the bus system, property owner and a car owner. He would be willing to pay more taxes, if service was increased. Advised of misinformation from the bus information line and the transfer points are tough. Service is poor for a blind user. The BC Bus Pass is a bargain with ridiculously low fares. Suggested that bus operators call out every stop and train the drivers for sensitivity – why drop the bus front?

16. Presenter #16

Asked if bus drivers were asked their opinion where needs are, thought it was a good idea to ask those who know the system. Bus drivers are very helpful sometimes under nasty situations and it is a pleasure to use the bus.

17. Presenter #17

Oak Bay resident and former Oak Bay Councilor stated that the status quo is unacceptable. Suggested lobbying through UBCM and FCM to get federal money. Also get federal fuel tax. Strongly urged the Commission to not pass costs onto riders. Think outside the farebox. Why are transit buses not offered up for rent or charter? Is there equal provincial money between us and Vancouver, taxes allocated to Vancouver versus Victoria?

18. Presenter #18

Fairfield resident for 30 years and referred to 5 minute service in Ontario and in California routes were sold off, if they don't make money they don't run. Referred to differences between public and private service and suggested seeking out private sector economies.

19. Presenter #19

Suggested an alternate funding source of a parking surcharge on one level parking throughout the region. It takes up a lot of space for parking. Also suggested saving and planning for LRT – 2007/09 downtown to Langford and out to the ferry.

20. Presenter #20

James Bay resident for 6 months and doesn't run a car in Victoria. Will contemplate any of the increases ie taxes/fares. Transportation is regarded as a public service and essential service in Victoria. The Commission has a choice to either grow or there will be a downward spiral. Suggested grouping local transportation.

21. Presenter #21

Suggested increasing property tax and gas tax is acceptable. Significant increase in fares would be counter productive. What do we do with the funds? Suggested users provide input in a meaningful manner and also take input from drivers. Some problems with the system - #11/14 on Fort Street are too close and #1 & #8 are hard to use as you can't come and go from same place. Long range planning – it is difficult to transfer.

22. Presenter #22

Trying to give up her car, but expressed concern with the system as buses don't run on schedule, it is confusing, infrequent and bizarre. James Bay bus which used to be every 12 minutes is now every ½ hour. There is no excuse for buses running late.

23. Presenter #23

Stated it is important that transit is essential for getting groceries, going to medical appointments or social events. Some users fall into the cracks as they can't walk to the bus stop and are not eligible for subsidized pass. She is totally bus dependent has a physical disability, financially disabled and can't afford a car. Blessed to attend UVic and have a UPass. Does not support fare increases, but does support fuel/property tax. Expressed concern with overcrowding and standing room only when she requires a seat. Would support an increase on the UPass. Very bus dependant but Sunday is awful bus service.

24. Presenter #24

Royal Oak resident for 22 years and uses the bus. Service has fallen off and cutbacks are tough when you don't have a car. He can't get to Monterey Centre in Oak Bay and requested more service on Sundays.

25. Presenter #25

Lives in Oak Bay and takes the #1 Richardson which used to work for her but now has to walk 3 or 4 blocks in the dark. Very confused with the changes to the #2 and requested that the #2 go back to the original schedule. Drivers are extremely rude and dangerous. Suggested that salaries should be lowered.

26. Presenter #26

Suggested alternative funding with a surtax on banks. Corporation taxes are too low. Should be a tax on oil companies. There is no federal government support and there isn't money for transit. Drivers should have more say – management is not interested.

27. Presenter #27

Status quo is unacceptable. Routes that have been affected # 30/31/11/2/5. Suggested a 1¢/litre gas tax and charge more for cash. But would mind an increase for pass holders. The #30/31 is very confusing with a 35 minute wait to go to Coast Guard. Saturday service is bad and night service needs to be increased.

Meeting ended 8:40pm