

MINUTES FROM PUBLIC CONSULTATION MEETING
THURSDAY, OCTOBER 30, 2003
MARY WINSPEAR CENTRE AT SANSCHA

Commission Members attending: Mayor Don Amos, Chair
Mayor Christopher Causton
Councillor Bea Holland

Meeting commenced at 6:00pm

1. Presenter #1

Student and regular bus rider who uses the bus to travel to Camosun College. Favours expanding service and a property and fuel tax. He has no problem with paying extra.

2. Presenter #2

Referred to a huge transportation forum he attended at UVic 12 years ago and how it started out as a plan for public transit, but the automobile always creeps back. How to get people to ride the bus, there are 3 major employers in Victoria and suggested to clear all parking lots and force people onto transit at UVic, provincial government precinct and CFB Esquimalt. This would relieve congestion, double ridership and more buses would have to be purchased. Referred to Ottawa model as being very efficient. There have been 3 different lobby groups in Victoria, one suggests a light rail system from the western communities and UVic; second group is the black top boys from the provincial government, Highways branch controlled with more freeway and not a transit system; and the third is the bicycle lobby group in favour of a healthy way of commuting. When Victoria population reaches 1 million plus it is possible for an LRT. We think we have a problem, go to Vancouver they have a real problem. Referred to Colwood crawl issue and money spent on a highway as opposed to public transit, it is ludicrous, it is as bad today as years ago.

3. **Presenter #3**

Public transit user on the #70 speaking for the youth on the Peninsula who are just discovering their freedom. Strongly supports expanded service and supports a fuel and property tax. Stated a farebox increase is counterproductive.

4. **Presenter #4**

Executive Director of the Community Social Planning Council spoke on the importance of transit for the poor. There are 50,000 low income people in Greater Victoria and they need transit to travel to get food, shelter, clothing and training. The link between housing and transportation is strong as they need affordable, decent and safe housing. It is very distressing with the changes that are occurring in provincial government funding and all agencies are noticing an increase in basic needs for the poor. The Ticket Assistance Program with BC Transit has increased 16 – 22% this year for people looking for work, going to the food bank and looking for shelter, basic needs and there were 20,000 tickets used. The link between transportation and employment is very strong as people need transportation to look for work as they cannot afford tickets. Suggested the following: employers provide transportation, look at bike as well as bus passes through employers; Human Resources policy that would help low income employees; subsidizes to low income individuals; bus pass partners amongst employers. The bus is too expensive for the poor, no fare increases. The council recommends a public forum with 3 strategies; supports a pilot program with bike and bus pass; supports BC Transit Ticket Assistance Program; lobby BC provincial government for income assisted people; not off load costs and recommends that fares do not increase at this time as it will cause pain and suffering for the poor. Will be submitting a written submission.

5. Presenter #5

Regular bus user on the #75 and lives and works in Sidney. Needs to be at work at 6:30am in Sidney, but the first bus is at 7:15am which does not work for her. Would it be possible for the bus deadheading on the Pat Bay Highway to do a pickup at the Waddling Dog? Not everyone starts work at 8:00am. BC Transit will look into this request. Fares are fair and would not oppose an increase. Seniors should get a deal and there should be a small fee for bikes.

6. Presenter #6

Thanked Mayor Amos for the enhanced service to the Airport, it is long over due and could be expanded. Also thanked the Commission for the Youth Pass, it is great and the kids have a keen interest in the bus. Suggested raising threshold for free ridership a nominal charge; surcharge for bike riders, bike racks are a great idea. Very disappointed at public transit funding freeze and there is a double whammy on the Peninsula. Thinks property tax of \$38.50/household is reasonable. Disgusted at provincial government abdication of responsibility.

7. Presenter #7

Annual pass holder for 10 years. The overall transit plan enables you to think outside the box. Member of the Central Saanich Bus Users Group and we have given advice to transit. There has been 10 years of cuts in this area and there needs to be a 5 year strategic plan. Ideas used in Portland and other areas could be used here in Victoria. We need to go beyond what we should be doing for 21st Century. Other sources of revenue and efficiencies need to be explored. We could promote car sharing. Transit needs to educate people and promote environmental and safety benefits. Fares need to be reduced. Suggested a lottery for transit and naming every bus stop. Advertising at bus stops, charge for ads. Suggested 3 advisory committees in Western Communities, Peninsula and Victoria to provide ideas. Transit is wonderful and operators are excellent.

8. Presenter #8

Is a 100% bus user and is a BC Housing employee who is concerned with low income people who are complaining everyday that they don't know how they are going to get money for bus fare and there is no means test. Concerned that people who take bikes onto the bus pay no extra for their bikes. We need to encourage people to use bike and buses. She fears gas taxes. While waiting for a bus she counted 130 cars and only 4 had more than one passenger, this is ridiculous, we can no longer afford this lifestyle of using the car year in and out and destroying our environment. We cannot afford more and more roads and there is global warming for Vancouver Island. You need to take a really good look and make really big changes and use creative advertising. The more routes and times cut does not get people on the bus, it makes the problem worst. Victoria buses were always clean and in good shape, but not happening now. Seats need repairing, held together by duct tape, windows are dirty and there is bad advertising. You need to talk to the passengers.

9. Presenter #9

Huge improvement is needed as ridership has crashed since 10 years ago. There is deterioration of the system and he is unable to get to work by transit to Swartz Bay, as is also a whole Ferry crew. There are transit deficiencies. He prefers to ride his bike, but there needs to be better bike service and a better place to leave bikes (bike lock-up). Indicated there are no bus stops at Tanner Road, and a lot of young people in this area have lost job opportunities as they can't get home. There should have been advertising on the buses for these public meetings as there were a lot of people interested, very poor information. Have been a life long bus user, but recently using my car.

10. **Presenter #10**

Saanichton resident and a taxpayer who does not want to pay more taxes. I can't get a bus, why should I be paying for bus service? Suggested that fares need to go up, there has been no increase since 1997. We are being raped with tax increases and get nothing. The bus service does not work for his commuting pattern. Illegal suites need to be taxed as they are paying nothing. Add a surcharge on illegal suites to go to improve transit. Suggested using a smaller 20 passenger bus to bring people to the Pat Bay Highway, a community bus could double ridership. I have no time to sit on a bus for 1 ½ hours when I can drive in ½ hour. We need more buses on #70/75, why can't more than one bus start at different places.

11. **Presenter #11**

On a good day she has to take 4 buses for her commute. Used to take her car, but now takes only the bus. She likes the user group idea. Suggested a reasonable fare increase and supports user pay to some degree. She has concerns with the number of deadheads on the #70 coming back from Swartz Bay. As you are paying for wages and gas why not make a quick stop in Sidney and Royal Oak as express buses. She likes the Airport service. Has concerns with heavy loads on the ferry route and luggage taking priority over passengers. As she travels with a small child in a stroller she is unable to get a seat on this route. Please don't cut Busline service. Pamphlets for these meetings should have gone out sooner.

12. Presenter #12

Brentwood Bay resident and a UVic student. As part of his fees at UVic pays for a bus pass so he takes the bus to UVic it is worth it and prevents him from taking his car. We have to take the Kyoto Agreement seriously and it comes down to the individual. The eastern side of the peninsula is not serviced, First Nations are not near a transit line. BC Transit would be wise to follow up with this lack of service to the First Nations. Mr. King supports an Advisory Committee.

13. Presenter #13

Very happy with his transit service and likes bike racks on buses. With 44% of costs borne by riders and 38% transit revenue intake, why discrepancy? Feels fuel tax should be for roads and maintenance and users should pay for transit. He thinks property tax subsidy for transit is odd. Also thinks that individuals using the transit service should pay more.

14. Presenter #14

Uses the handyDART service only and is very happy with the service. The drivers do a good job on a long trip. She is pleased to see expansion on the handyDART service.

15. Presenter #15

Is in favour of a bike fee. Very happy with the new safety light at bus stops in suburban areas, it is a nice feature to have. Annual meeting is a good idea. Agrees with small fare increase.

16. Presenter #16

Victoria resident expressed concern with 54% subsidy standing in the way of the private sector. Contracted out services would be a major cost savings.

Meeting ended 8:00pm