

December 11, 2007

TO: Mayor Don Amos, Chair
and Members of the Victoria Regional Transit Commission

FROM: Ron Drolet, Senior Vice-President and Corporate Secretary

SUBJECT: **GORDON HEAD CADBORO BAY COMMUNITY BUS**

PURPOSE

This report provides the Commission with service recommendations regarding the Gordon Head Cadboro Bay community bus proposal under review for the past year.

BACKGROUND

In 2006, the Commission received correspondence from residents and businesses in the Cadboro Bay village area and Wedgewood Estates requesting a public transit connection between Wedgewood Estates and Cadboro Bay Village. Wedgewood Estates and the surrounding neighbourhood have high quality transit service available within 800 meters but a steep hill prevents many residents of this aging community from accessing transit.

BC Transit conducted a study of community bus potential in the area (**Attachment 1**). This review identified that Wedgewood Point was too small a transit market to independently support the costs of a community bus route, particularly when frequent bus service already exists to almost all of the area which would be served by the route.

On-going assessments of transit service and demand have in the past identified significant areas without transit service within moderate walk limits in the Cedar Hill and Gordon Head area. It was proposed to add community bus service to Cedar Hill, Kenmore and San Juan linking UVIC, schools, and the major activity center at Shelbourne and McKenzie. The high ridership (for community bus) expected from this portion of the service proposal would allow occasional trips to Wedgewood Point to be provided as well as increase overall transit service and ridership in the area.

A public consultation process was held last June. Results of the public consultation and communications that have been received by BC Transit and were presented at the Commission's meeting in September. (Attachment 2) In general, the results can be summarized as follows:

- Residents of Wedgewood Estates, a multi-family residential complex including many senior households, generally express strong support for introduction of service
- Residents living along the proposed route in Wedgewood Point generally express strong opposition to the introduction of transit service on their streets.
- Residents living along the proposed Gordon Head route – Cedar Hill, Kenmore, San Juan - generally express strong opposition to the introduction of transit service on their streets.
- Some elderly and mobility challenged residents have expressed support for and potential use of the service.
- Community associations have expressed general support for increased transit services but also have communicated opposition to the current proposal
- Support has been received for the new services from UVIC and its students association and from high school and post-secondary students living in the service area
- Saanich listed the proposal as an example of “best practices” in its World Health Organization report on developing age friendly communities

Since the public meetings and September Commission meeting, staff have reviewed ridership expectations and costs for the two routes. Community bus performance expectations have traditionally been in the area of 10 rides per hour. Most current community bus services achieve this target.

In reviewing the expectations of the two routes the following conclusions can be drawn.

- To achieve or exceed the 10 rides per hour performance target, each loop trip on the 13 Cadboro Bay from UVIC to Wedgewood Point and back would need to carry 4 people. This is a reasonable expectation for this route.
- To achieve or exceed the 10 rides per hour performance target, each one way trip on the 12 Kenmore would need to carry 4 people between Shelbourne and McKenzie and UVIC or the reverse. It is expected that this performance target would be exceeded in the initial year of operation.
- The ridership risk of introducing the 12 Kenmore is not that performance targets for community bus could not be met, but rather than at key school oriented times, community bus capacity would be exceeded requiring the introduction of conventional transit vehicles on this route. Conventional transit operations would require a modification to the route, continuing north on Cedar Hill to Shelbourne Street as larger vehicles cannot make the right turn from Cedar Hill to Kenmore. Conventional trips would not continue to Wedgewood Point and would be provided in addition (rather than instead of) community bus trips where required.

Other risks and issues include:

- Saanich and BC Transit have not formally identified bus stop locations. Roadways are narrow in some locations and bus stops may not be ideally located in all route segments limiting access to the service. This is considered a minor risk as a preliminary assessment of bus stop locations has been completed and a reasonable stop plan can be implemented. All roads are suitable for transit service in both physical characteristic and municipal designation.
- Pedestrian facilities along the route are substandard. Both the municipality and BC Transit have programs to develop and improve bus stop facilities. Other routes in the municipality have similar pedestrian facilities and transit service is safely and effectively provided. Saanich has plans for greenways and other infrastructure improvements in the neighbourhood which would improve the access to the potential transit route.
- Current community bus vehicles are not low floor, so that service to elderly residents is less accessible than ideally achievable. However, the access to these buses is the same as typical of our handyDART fleet which exclusively serves persons with mobility issues. BC Transit is reviewing vehicle options for community bus replacement.

Two alternative recommendations are presented for the Commission's consideration.

The first recommended option delays further consideration of scheduled bus service on routes 12 and 13 until some time after 2009. Passenger demand, bus stops, routing, and pedestrian infrastructure could be considered again at that time depending on community and municipal needs. There are many demands for additional service in the region. In the immediate future, staff time and Commission resources could be directed to those areas expressing a need for additional transit service.

In order to address in some measure, the initial service request made from Cadboro Bay to the Commission, it is recommended to provide 4 trips per day between Cadboro Bay Village and Wedgewood Estates through handyDART at a cost of approximately 2 hours of service per day. This is equivalent to a scheduled trip every two hours during the mid-day and approximates the community bus daytime service proposed in public consultation. To achieve performance targets, these trips would need to carry 5 persons per trip. Due to the lower level of recognition of handyDART provided service, and the likely reliability issues (due to day to day variations in vehicle activity), this ridership target would be at the upper end of expectations for such service. However, it could be introduced quickly and at relatively low cost (approximately \$20,000 per year). In addition, as the demand for public transit service in Wedgewood Point is so concentrated in the Wedgewood Estates complex, this service could be effectively communicated to these residents.

The second service option recommendation is to approve routes 12 and 13 for implementation as part of next year's service plan in September 2008. The route has been shown to provide improved access to transit for much of the neighbourhood which would be of use in particular by elderly residents. School oriented trips are likely to be very busy and provide a strong ridership base for the service. Approval of the route would provide Saanich with information needed to budget for sidewalk upgrading and other related infrastructure improvements. The estimated total annual cost of this service is in the range of \$200,000 to \$220,000 with ridership expected to be in excess of 100,000 passengers.

	Daily Transit Trips	Annual Cost	Annual Ridership
Wedgewood Point via handyDART only	4	\$20,000	5,000
12 / 13 Service Proposal	45	\$210,000	108,000

RECOMMENDATION

IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT THE VICTORIA REGIONAL TRANSIT COMMISSION RECEIVE THIS REPORT AS INFORMATION AND EITHER

OPTION 1

APPROVE IMPLEMENTATION OF 4 TRIPS PER DAY BETWEEN CADBORO BAY VILLAGE AND WEDGEWOOD ESTATES TO BE DELIVERED BY HANDYDART ON A 6 MONTH TRIAL BASIS STARTING IN JANUARY 2008.

OR

OPTION 2

APPROVE TRANSIT ROUTES 12 KENMORE AND 13 CADBORO BAY FOR IMPLEMENTATION IN SEPTEMBER 2008

Ron Drolet
Senior Vice President
Customer Service and Corporate Secretary

Attachments: 1. Commission report and attachments – December 12, 2006
2. Commission report and attachments September 2007