

# Victoria Regional Transit Commission

Chair and Members

March 13, 2023

# #10

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**PREPARED FOR:** Victoria Regional Transit Commission

## **PURPOSE**

To provide the Victoria Regional Transit Commission (“the Commission”) with an update on transit service planning, infrastructure planning and construction activities in the Victoria Region. This report is presented to the Commission for INFORMATION.

## **1. SERVICE CHANGES**

### **Winter 2023 Seasonal Service Change**

Effective January 2, 2023, the Winter 2023 service change includes service level improvements on routes serving K-12 and post-secondary schools to align with the return from holidays and Sunday service improvements on route 70.

Other minor routing changes:

- Route 10 routing change to align with the City of Victoria active transportation upgrades in James Bay.
- Routes 24, 25, 39, 46, 47, and 58 have received minor routing changes to align with road conditions.

### **Spring 2023 Seasonal Service Change**

Effective April 10, 2023, the Spring 2023 service change includes the implementation of the West Shore RapidBus line and service improvements on routes 61, 65 and 72.

#### West Shore RapidBus:

- Route 50 discontinued and replaced with the new Route 95 RapidBus Line.
- Streamlined stops.
- 15-minute minimum service from 7 am (8 am on Sundays) to 10 pm.
- Service improvements in the am and pm peak.
- New branding for the first RapidBus in the region.

#### Route 61 / 65 service improvements all days of the week:

- Increased am peak trips to downtown and pm peak trips to Sooke.
- Service improvements all times of the day between Sooke and Langford.
- Route 61 will no longer through-route with the Route 50 in off-peak periods at the Langford Exchange . Transit users will now need to transfer between Routes 61 and 95 at Langford Exchange in off-peak periods.
- Routes 61 and 65 will now operate with heavy duty buses.

#### Post-Secondary routes:

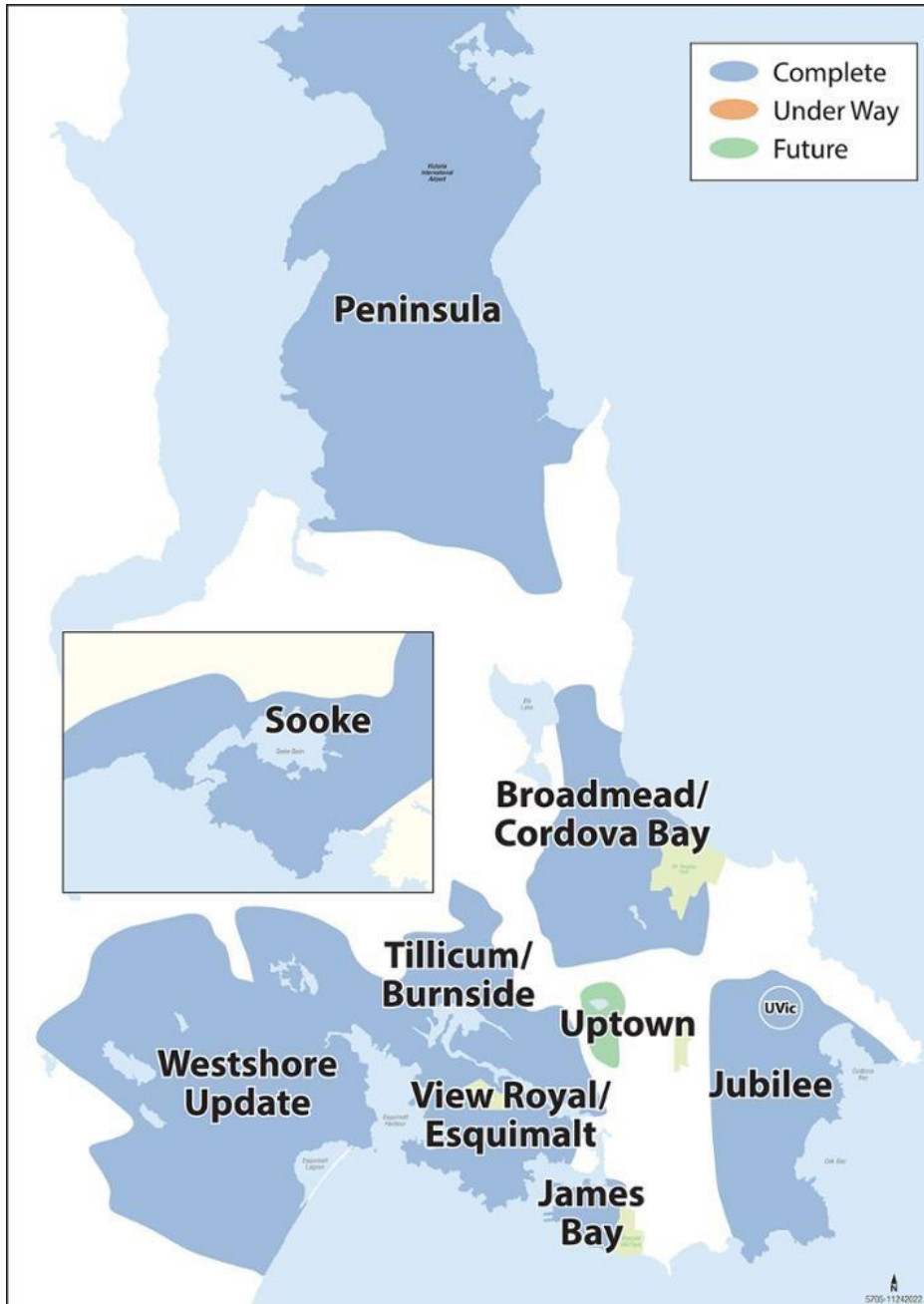
- Seasonal service reduction to align with reduced demand.

## 2. PLANNING INITIATIVES

### Local Area Transit Plans

With the completion of the West Shore and Peninsula Local Area Transit Plans in 2022, the initial series of Local Area Transit Plans for the Victoria Regional Transit System have now been completed with the exception of the Uptown area.

The Regional Corridor Strategy has been identified as a process to support and prioritize local area and corridor planning work moving forward.



## Regional Corridor Strategy

### Project Timeline

The Regional Corridor Strategy began in January 2023, with the goal of completion before the end of 2023.

### Project Goals

The intention for this biennially updated strategy is to:

- Provide an updated Transit Future Network, which was originally developed through the 2011 Transit Future Plan.
- Support the 10 Year Vision, with a more technical focus on network planning and development.
- Develop and prioritize a strategic transit planning work plan over the next 5-10 years, intended to:
  - Support broader network developments, including the Uptown Mobility Hub development and implementation, crosstown network development, and RapidBus planning and implementation.
  - Increase collaboration with Local Government Partners and alignment between land use and transit planning processes to better achieve collective sustainability goals.
  - The strategy's resulting work plan will include a phased list of Corridor Plans and Local Area Transit Plans needed to support the goals of the Regional Corridor Strategy and 10 Year Vision.

**Referrals** – Referral-related work undertaken or proposed since the last Commission meeting includes:

- **Bus Stop Improvements** – BC Transit continues to work closely with local government partners within the Victoria Region to coordinate improvements to stop configurations and layout to improve accessibility and customer experience.
- **Development Referral Process** – BC Transit receives and responds to development referrals from local governments considering rezoning and large-scale development proposals. BC Transit provides comment on opportunities for transit supportive development, improvements to transit supportive infrastructure such as bus stops and sidewalks and provides comments on the feasibility of future transit service to the proposed development.

Planning staff have received approximately 60 development referrals since the last Commission meeting between August 2022 and February 2023, and provided comment to seven local governments.

## Service Monitoring

- **Ridership Performance Report** – Planning regularly monitors service performance against the service standards and performance guidelines identified in the 2013/14 Service Review document. Regular performance monitoring allows for a better alignment between service levels and ongoing changes in demand patterns.

The attached Ridership Performance Report (#10a) provides information on ridership performance over the fall 2022 service period from September 5 to December 4, 2022, and provides information on ridership trends through the period impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic up to December 4, 2022.

## RapidBus

The Victoria Regional RapidBus Implementation Strategy was completed in summer 2021. RapidBus is transit service that outperforms the personal automobile in speed, comfort and reliability. Over time, the RapidBus system will be implemented across several corridors to create a high-capacity transit system. There are a number of transit service planning and infrastructure activities that support advancing the RapidBus strategy. This includes:

- **West Shore-Downtown RapidBus Line** – The West Shore-Downtown RapidBus Line will launch on April 10, 2023, with unique branding and service levels.

## 3. ON-STREET TRANSIT INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS

### Active Infrastructure Projects

- **Island Highway Transit Priority Upgrades:** The Island Highway Transit Priority Project is being advanced to support the Westshore Rapid Bus Strategy on the Island Highway between Highway 1 in the Town of View Royal, and Wale Road, City of Colwood. The scope of the project includes transit queue jump lanes, bike lanes, sidewalk widening, accessible wheelchair ramps, intersection improvements, crosswalk signage and road painting, street lighting and traffic signals upgrades. A full tender ready design has been completed for the Island Hwy Transit Priority Project to construct transit priority improvements along the Island Hwy between the interchange with Hwy 1 in the Town of View Royal, and at the Wale Rd. intersection in the City of Colwood. BC Hydro has completed their detailed design for construction documents related to the transit priority improvements. Documentation and negotiations are continuing for statutory right of ways or road dedications with private landowners where the design elements affect their properties. A new funding application to Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program (ICIP) will be completed in February 2023 to obtain funding approvals to move forward with the project construction execution. A First Nations engagement consultant has been retained and has initiated the required additional communications to satisfy the requirements of ICIP funding agreement. Asset Benefit Agreements are being reviewed currently between BC Transit and the two municipalities

to meet the Eligible Capital Funding requirements. The project will move forward with a public tendering process in the summer of 2023 and into the construction phase in the fall of 2023, subject to a successful ICIP application, the completion of the statutory right of way and engagement tasks.

- **UVic Exchange:** The University of Victoria (UVIC) Transit Exchange project refurbished the outstanding portions of the transit exchange to a similar standard as implemented in Phase 1 on the opposite side of Finnerty Rd. The project was put in-service in November of 2022 and replaced bus pads, curbing and paving, new shelters, addressed pedestrian concerns, and added designated layover bays. The project also enhanced three bus stops on campus located on Ring Rd. SAFE Design certification was also achieved by the design and refurbishment execution. A post project completion operating agreement will be executed between UVIC and BC Transit in the spring of 2023.

### Infrastructure Studies

- **RapidBus Stations:** The majority of station locations have been confirmed with the multiple municipalities on the West Shore Line. Conceptual designs are complete for over half of the stations and the technical study should be complete in the spring of 2023.
- **Downtown Douglas:** BC Transit presented to, and received approval from, the City of Victoria Council in September 2022 to initiate planning work to develop a vision for Douglas St. in the Downtown Core. The visioning process has started in collaboration with City of Victoria staff with a target of returning to City of Victoria Council for approval of the vision in the summer of 2023.
- **McKenzie Corridor Study:** In partnership with the District of Saanich, a multi-modal vision has been established which combines Transit Priority, RapidBus Stations and active transportation improvements. Long-term option development and evaluation is underway, with a preferred long-term option being finalized in February 2023. Short-term improvements will also be developed, and the study is expected to conclude in mid-2023.
- **Peninsula RapidBus:** The Peninsula Local Area Transit Plan is now complete, and identified the steps required to implement the Peninsula RapidBus Line. Further coordination and planning with MoTI and Sidney are required before implementing the Peninsula RapidBus Line, along with significant service and infrastructure investment; consequently, the Local Area Transit Plan outlines a phased approach to implement this service, capable of supporting the diversity of local and regional travel needs on the Peninsula moving forward.

### Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure (MoTI) Studies

- **Highway 1 –** MoTI is advancing planning work along the Douglas St./Hwy 1 Corridor to support existing BC Transit initiatives. This work includes exploring transit priority treatments that align with the BC Transit priorities identified by the Victoria Transit Future Plan and the South Island Transportation Strategy. A technical study for providing bus-on-shoulder lanes between the McKenzie Interchange and Six Mile Rd. is complete. MoTI is in the process of completing additional design work for budget development purposes, and subject to project approval and funding is forecasting to start construction in 2025.

- **Highway 14 Corridor Management Plan Highway 1 to West Shore Parkway** – MoTI is undertaking a planning study that will create a single source document to assist in development approvals and generate ideas for projects that can be advanced outside of development areas. The plan considers transit, active mode, and vehicular needs over the next ten to twenty years.
- **Six Mile Mobility Hub** – MoTI is designing a Mobility Hub in View Royal along the RapidBus corridor on the Island Hwy to support existing BC Transit initiatives and active transportation. This work includes transit park & ride, which aligns BC Transit priorities identified through the Victoria Transit Future Plan and the South Island Transportation Strategy. This project is not funded for construction.
- **Uptown Transit Priority** – MoTI is advancing planning work to develop transit and active transportation priorities and improvements to serve near-term goals that align with the future development of the Uptown site and do not preclude the long-term plan. The plan includes a proposal for bus only lanes on Ravine Rd. & Vernon Ave., a RapidBus station on Hwy 1 and expanded bus zone capacity on Carey Rd. MoTI is in the process of completing additional design work for budget development purposes in 2023, and subject to project approval and funding is forecasting to start construction in 2024. This plan will support BC Transit advancing long-term plans for the Uptown Transit Hub and Transit Oriented Development (TOD) opportunities.
- **Uptown Mobility Hub Transit Oriented Development (TOD) Plan** – BC Transit/MoTI/BCTFA have completed a Conceptual Development Design Technical Feasibility Report and Financial Feasibility Report. The concepts and findings of the reports were shared with Saanich staff in July 2022 as well as a discussion on next steps. The parties are clarifying each agency's roles and responsibilities to advance further planning on the project. Next steps will include further site investigations, traffic impact assessment, further engagement on the designs with local governments and a selection of a preferred concept for advancement to a final proof of concept, to prepare a business case, for associated funding applications and approvals.

#### MoTI Active Infrastructure Projects

- **Highway 17:** Construction of the Transit Priority Queue-jump Lanes and RapidBus Stations at the intersection of Hwy 17 and Mt Newton is completed and the RapidBus Stations are in service. The project will support the VRTC RapidBus Strategy, Transit Future Plan, and the South Island Transportation Plan.
- **Highway 14 Connie Rd to Glinz Lake Rd Realignment and Park & Ride:** The Hwy 14 realignment includes a new park & ride near Connie Rd. and new transit stops with bus pullouts to improve safety and additional passenger amenities that are under construction.

## 4. TRANSIT FACILITY PROJECTS

### Active Projects

- **handyDART Centre at 2401 Burnside Road** – The “Early Works” phase that began in January 2022 is nearing completion and includes completed Galloping Goose trail improvements, new park space for the Town of View Royal, early landscaping, two new bus shelters streetscape improvements, stream restoration, wick drains, retaining walls and will soon complete the valve chamber work near the entrance to the site.

The next phase is building construction. The building will be BC Transit’s first LEED Gold and Step Code 3 building, and home to the first battery electric bus fleet. Mobilizing to site will take place in February 2023, and foundation piling activities will begin in early March.

First Nations continue to be updated on project progress and we are exploring the potential for naming the new stream with local Nations. Indigenous economic opportunities associated with the current and future tender packages are incorporated and specific opportunities are under discussion with the Nations. The project teams continue to advance discussions with Esquimalt Nation to inform cultural recognition opportunities and provide ongoing project updates. Planning is underway for a ground breaking and blessing ceremony in the near future.

On November 10<sup>th</sup>, the project was awarded the Synergy Foundation EcoStar award for Leadership in Design and Construction. The EcoStar Awards recognize outstanding environmental achievements and leadership on Vancouver Island. Additionally, BC Transit is the first development on Vancouver Island to be certified Salmon-Safe by the Fraser Basin Council.

In early November, about 200 students from Craigflower Elementary School and Shoreline Middle School helped with planting on the remaining slope of the stream channel. Students from schools within the Craigflower Creek watershed have helped plant over 1,000 of the 8,000 new native plants.

- **Saanich Transit Centre** – Early planning activities for Saanich Transit Centre are continuing to support the development of a business plan to secure future funding for Phase 2, which is anticipated to be in place in 2026. Due to timelines related to securing provincial and federal Treasury Board approvals, the project is being progressed in two phases, with ICIP funding being pursued for the initial phase to leverage available federal funding and maintain the desired project schedule. A partnership with Infrastructure BC has been established and project feasibility planning is underway. A consolidated communications plan has been developed with input from a public engagement consultant and an Indigenous relations consultant. Early outreach to Indigenous groups is underway to facilitate additional land studies. A design team and quantity surveyor have been retained to advance design and further inform feasibility of the project. Market sounding with the construction industry has occurred to help inform potential procurement options to deliver and identify high level risks to the project.

- **Victoria and Langford Transit Centre Upgrades** - The Facility Master Plan included a modernization strategy to enhance fleet maintenance functions at both the Victoria and Langford Transit Centres. Project planning activities prioritized near term upgrades and obtained order of magnitude construction costing for two business cases being prepared for presentation in February 2022. One project will deliver a fleet maintenance training centre at VTC (Victoria Transit Centre) and the other will deliver upgrades that ensure all bays in the LTC (Langford Transit Centre) shop are available for regular fleet maintenance activities. If approved, an application for ICIP funding will be submitted.

**RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended that the Victoria Regional Transit Commission receive this report for INFORMATION.

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