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**SUBJECT: WESTSHORE LINE RAPIDBUS STATION IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY**

**PURPOSE**

This report, requesting approval on the preferred phasing to finalize the design and construct RapidBus Stations on the Westshore Line, is presented to the Victoria Regional Transit Commission (the “Commission”) for **APPROVAL**.

**BACKGROUND**

The RapidBus Implementation Strategy (2021) classified the Westshore RapidBus Line as the highest priority corridor for RapidBus in the Victoria Region. Significant service and infrastructure investment is required to fully actualize the Westshore RapidBus Line, requiring several phases of improvements:

- 1) In April 2023, an **initial implementation** of route 95 was launched including utilizing the existing route 50 Langford / Downtown routing, improved service levels, introduction of the Blink branding, and a reduced number of stops.
- 2) In the medium-term, the **full implementation** of the Westshore RapidBus Line will launch featuring further service level improvements and extending the RapidBus route to a new terminus at Belmont Market within the City of Langford.
- 3) **In the longer term**—pending further evaluation—the route may also extend to a terminus at the Westhills Exchange.

RapidBus service is complemented by transit priority measures (such as bus lanes) and RapidBus stations which provide a higher capacity bus stop with additional passenger amenities and Blink branding opportunities.

Upgrading existing bus stops to RapidBus Stations is an important component of the RapidBus Implementation Strategy. Investments in RapidBus Stations makes transit more attractive and accessible by improving the passenger waiting area and pedestrian connections to the stations. Investments in the stations will also allow for a more visible branding of the RapidBus service and make it stand out from typical bus stops.

RapidBus Station design concepts were developed in collaboration with the City of Langford, City of Colwood, Town of View Royal and the City of Victoria. Approval-in-principle has been received from the municipalities, supporting BC Transit proceed with the next phase of implementation – detailed design and construction.

The design of RapidBus Stations in Downtown Victoria is being developed through a separate initiative. Similarly, the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure is leading the implementation of RapidBus Stations on Highway 1, which is not included in this report.

## DISCUSSION

Twenty-three station concepts on the medium-term Westshore Line route received local government approval: 12 in Langford, five in Colwood, three in View Royal and three in Victoria. An additional six locations in Langford received local government approval to facilitate the potential longer-term RapidBus extension to Westhills.

Currently, there is no applicable federal funding program to apply for to complete the detailed design and construction for the RapidBus Stations. The previous federal program named Investment Canada Funding (ICIP) provided capital funding for eligible transit infrastructure shared at 20% Local Government, 40% Province of B.C. and 40% Canada. A new Federal Program is expected to emerge in 2026.

Without federal funding, the project costs would be shared between the Commission and BC Transit. Projects could be funded at the traditional funding cost share rate of 68.3% VRTC share / 31.7% BC Transit/Province share

The phasing of station upgrades was developed using four principles:

- 1) Belmont Market Extension – Creation of a new terminus at Belmont Market and the establishment of new bus stops on Jacklin Road at Station Ave are required to extend RapidBus to Belmont Market.
- 2) Transit Impact – Stations that improve passenger accessibility and waiting capacity as well as improve transit travel time reliability are prioritized.
- 3) Equity – Stations in areas that have not had other rapid transit investments (Douglas Street bus lanes, Island Highway bus lanes) are prioritized.
- 4) Project Delivery – Stations should be delivered in collaboration with one-two municipalities at a time to improve cost efficiencies.

Three phasing plans were developed that illustrate three different speeds at which stations could be implemented. The stations and cost estimates are subject to change pending further design investigations.

Option 1 is to proceed with the higher-priority stations in the next three years and to reassess the timeline for future stations if details of a potential federal funding program become available. The table below summarizes the phasing of stations which includes 13 stations over the next three years. The cost of the 13 stations is currently estimated at \$7.0M.

Timeline	Stations	Class D Cost Estimate
Year 1	Langford (5): Belmont Terminus, Station Ave (x2), Grainger (x2)	\$2.8M
Year 2	Colwood (4): Wale (x2), Goldstream (x2)	\$2.2M
Year 3	Langford (3): Westshore Town Centre (x2), Langford Centre (x2)	\$2.0M
Wait for federal funding program		
Medium-term	Langford (3), Colwood (1), View Royal (3), Victoria (3)	\$4.6M
Long-term	Langford (6)	\$3.8M

Option 2 is to proceed with a faster pace of delivery with all short- and medium-term priorities in the next three years. Opportunities to benefit from a potential federal funding program would be assessed when details become available. The table below summarizes the phasing of stations which includes 23 stations over the next three years. The cost of the 23 stations is currently estimated at \$10.5M.

<b>Timeline</b>	<b>Stations</b>	<b>Class D Cost Estimate</b>
Year 1	Langford (5): Belmont Terminus, Station Ave (x2), Grainger (x2) Colwood (2): Goldstream (x2)	\$4.0M
Year 2	Langford: Westshore Town Centre (x2), Jacklin (x2), Langford Centre (x2), Kristina (x1) Colwood (3): Wale (x2), Colwood Exchange (x1)	\$4.5M
Year 3	View Royal (3): Wilfert (x1), Six Mile (x2) Victoria (3): Finlayson (x2), Hillside (x1)	\$2.0M
Wait for federal funding program		
Long-term	Langford (6)	\$3.8M

Option 3 is to wait for a federal funding program for all the station improvements. No costs would be incurred until a federal funding program is available (it is anticipated to emerge in the next three years).

The following table summarizes the cost implications for the Commission over the next three years. Option 1 results in an increase in the Commission's lease fee by \$400,000/year for 15 years whereas Option 2 results in \$600,000/year. The average impact on property taxes is \$2/household and \$3/household, respectively.

	<b>Option 1</b>	<b>Option 2</b>	<b>Option 3</b>
Stations Constructed in Three Years	13	23	0
Estimated Total Project Costs	\$7.0M	\$10.5M	-
Estimated Commission Costs (68.3%)	Capital Cost	\$4.8M	\$7.2M
	Annual Lease Fee (for 15 years)	\$400,000	\$600,000
	Property Tax Impact (for 15 years)	\$2/household	\$3/household

*Lease fee estimates are based on a 3% interest rate.*

The cost estimates include construction, engineering, project management, cost escalation and contingency. The total project budget will be refined as further design work is completed and a project schedule is developed.

The cost estimates assume that transit shelters will be purchased as part of the project. However, since multiple municipalities already have agreements in place for Pattison Outdoor Advertising to provide shelters and shelter maintenance in their community, partnership opportunities are currently being explored with Pattison for them to provide RapidBus-branded shelters. A Pattison-provided shelter could reduce the project cost by approximately~\$100,000 per station, or about 10-20% of the project cost.

Stakeholders impacted by project design and construction will continue to be engaged as further design work is completed. Two stations may require a Statutory Right of Way (depending on the exact shelter chosen) which has already been approved-in-principle by the property owners. All other stations will be implemented on municipal rights-of-way.

Option 2 (delivering all short- and medium-term priorities in the next three years) allows for the accelerated ability to establish the Blink RapidBus brand and improve the attractiveness and accessibility of transit service. It will also allow the Westshore Line infrastructure investments to be substantially complete before investments in additional RapidBus routes (McKenzie and Peninsula) are initiated. Investments progressing at an accelerated rate will mean less opportunity to take advantage of federal funding to reduce local governments project costs. While inflation has recently started to slow down, it is still at an elevated rate, causing deferred infrastructure investments to have a higher cost.

The next phase of implementation will be to conduct detailed design work to inform the business case to secure provincial funding. At the Belmont Market Terminus, there is a potential desire to provide on-route Battery Electric Bus charging equipment and/or a transit operator washroom, however, since these potential additions require additional investigations, they are not included in the proposed project scope currently. Once those activities are complete, a request for project funding would come to the Commission for approval as part of future budget cycle development.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended that the Commission **APPROVE** Option 2 for the delivery of RapidBus Stations for the Westshore Line.

Respectfully,



James Wadsworth  
Project Development Manager