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**SUBJECT: PLANNING UPDATE**

**PURPOSE**

This update on transit planning activities in the Victoria Region is provided to the Victoria Regional Transit Commission (the “Commission”) for **INFORMATION**.

**SERVICE CHANGES**

**Fall 2020 (Effective September 7, 2020)**

The fall seasonal service change typically increases service to both secondary and post-secondary schools to align with a significant increase in ridership demand. In concert with the BC government’s Restart Plan, a schedule has been developed that maintains a high level of service across the network, but involves a slight reduction of service on post-secondary routes and targeted routes with low ridership during the COVID pandemic. A substantial volume of analysis was carried out to appropriately target service levels to minimize overcrowding, maintain frequency and coverage, and ensure service reliability.

**PLANNING INITIATIVES**

Work undertaken or proposed since the last Commission meeting includes:

**Local Area Transit Plans**

- Both phases of public engagement and analysis have been completed for the Broadmead/Cordova Bay and Esquimalt/View Royal Local Area Transit Plans. Staff are working to facilitate presentations to municipal councils to ensure these plans accurately reflect shared priorities. The plans will be presented for final adoption at the November meeting of the Commission.
- Local area transit planning for the Saanich Peninsula is slated to begin in early 2021.

**Related Municipal Work and Transit Initiatives**

BC Transit participated in a number of local initiatives on behalf of the Commission over the last few months, including the following:

- **RapidBus Implementation Strategy** – BC Transit continues to develop a RapidBus implementation strategy for the Victoria Region with the support of Urban Systems. This Strategy will develop the vision, goals, and objectives for RapidBus, define the key elements associated with RapidBus (including the development of a RapidBus toolkit), and outline the priorities and implementation plan for RapidBus across the Victoria Region.

The strategy focuses on the key corridors connecting Victoria to the West Shore, the Saanich Peninsula, and the University of Victoria along McKenzie. Engagement with local governments is currently underway. This strategy document is on track for completion this fall, and is currently scheduled for presentation to the Commission at the November 2020 meeting for endorsement.

- **Bus Stop Improvements** - BC Transit staff work with operators and customers to track concerns with bus stops on an ongoing basis. Since the last Commission meeting, BC Transit has worked with the City of Victoria, the District of Saanich and the Township of Esquimalt to coordinate improvements to stop configuration 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. Since the last planning report, planning staff have received nine development referrals and provided comment to five local governments. One of these referrals included a proposal for a major redevelopment at the University Heights Shopping Mall, with over 600 dwelling units.

## **SERVICE MONITORING**

### **COVID Service Ridership Report**

The attached Service Ridership Report provides information on ridership performance. It summarizes ridership over the Spring 2020 service period from April 6, 2020 to May 24, 2020 and provides some evaluation of ridership trends through the period impacted by the COVID pandemic.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended that the Commission receive this report for **INFORMATION**.

Respectfully,

Seth Wright  
Transit Planner

Attachment: Spring 2020/COVID Service Performance Report

**Attachment: Victoria Regional Transit System  
Spring 2020/COVID-19 Ridership Performance Report**

**1.0 Introduction**

This report presents the ridership performance for the Victoria Regional Transit System for the Spring 2020 service period (April 6 – May 24, 2020) and for a portion of the summer 2020 service period (May 25 – July 21, 2020). In light of the COVID-19 pandemic and the Province directive to avoid non-essential travel, this ridership performance report looks at the scale of impact on ridership and trends that are informing the planning of upcoming service changes.

**1.1 Data**

Ridership information is collected through Automated Passenger Counter (APC) units, which are in place on over 60 per cent of the buses assigned to the Victoria Region's conventional fleet. This system counts the number of persons boarding and disembarking from a vehicle. If a person boards multiple buses in a single journey or in a specific day, this is reflected as multiple boardings.

**1.2 External Factors**

In addition to service changes, there are a number of external factors that may affect transit ridership. Some of these include fare increases, changing fuel prices, changing community economics, land use changes and major interruptions, such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

## 2.0 Performance Trends

This report presents ridership performance information at the system, sub-regional, and route-type level.

### 2.1 System Level Performance Trends

For the purposes of this report, overall system ridership has been presented weekly from January 1 to July 21 for both 2019 and 2020. As of March 12, when non-essential travel was discouraged, the transit system experienced a significant decline in ridership of about 75 per cent. Since that time, as the Province’s Restart Plan has come into effect, BC Transit has moved to enact measures that support safe and reliable travel options – from the introduction of vinyl barriers to the phasing of physical distancing standards. Through the implementation of these measures and the reopening of the economy, BC Transit has realized a gradual and steady return of ridership with ridership down only 58 per cent in comparison to 2019 by July 21, 2020.

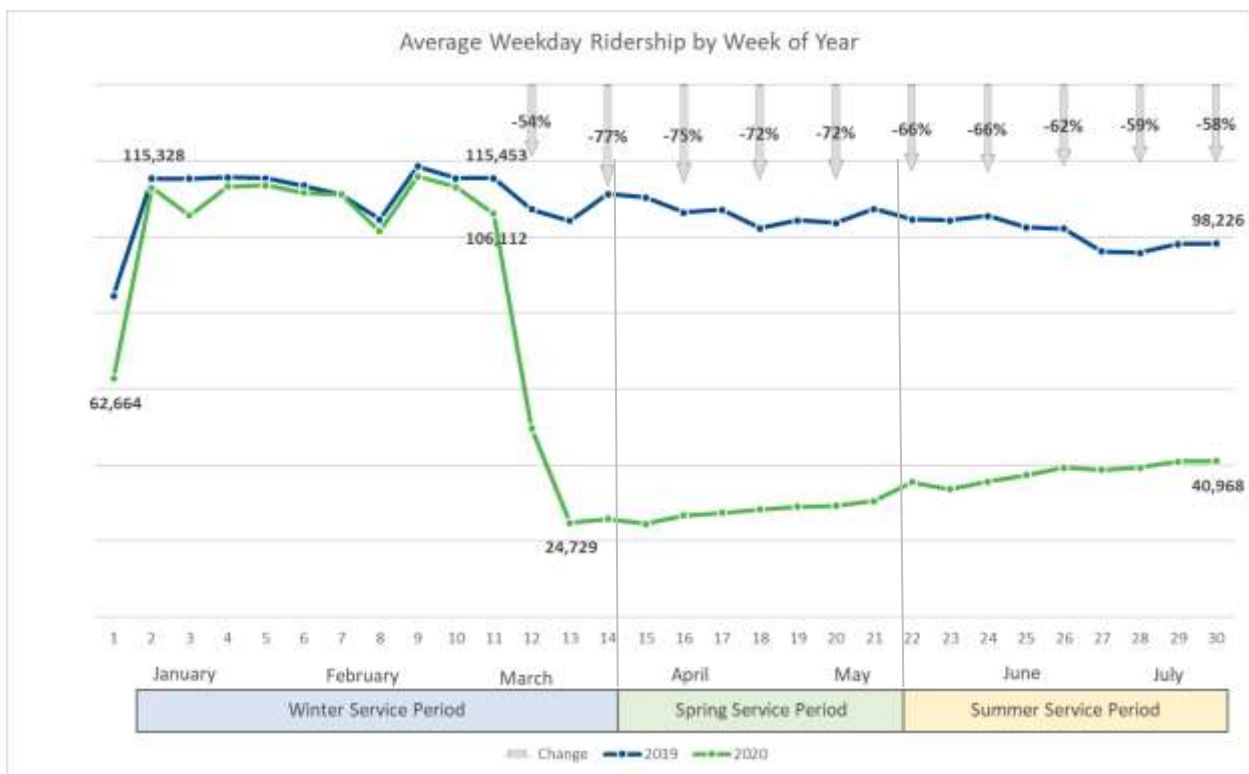


Figure 1: Average Weekday Ridership

## 2.2 Sub-Regional Performance Trends

Ridership was also reviewed sub-regionally, comparing ridership impacts between the Core, Peninsula, and the West Shore. Looking at routes at a sub-regional basis, we see that the impact of the pandemic has been relatively uniform across the region.

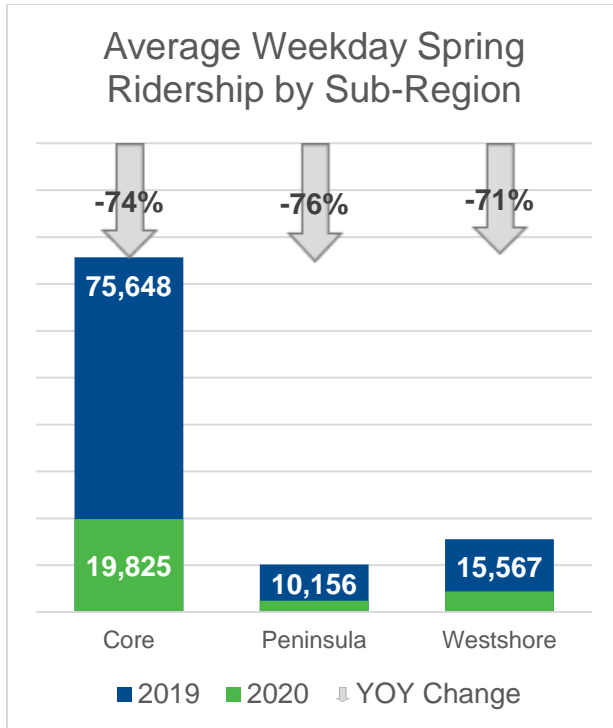


Figure 2: Average Weekday Spring Ridership

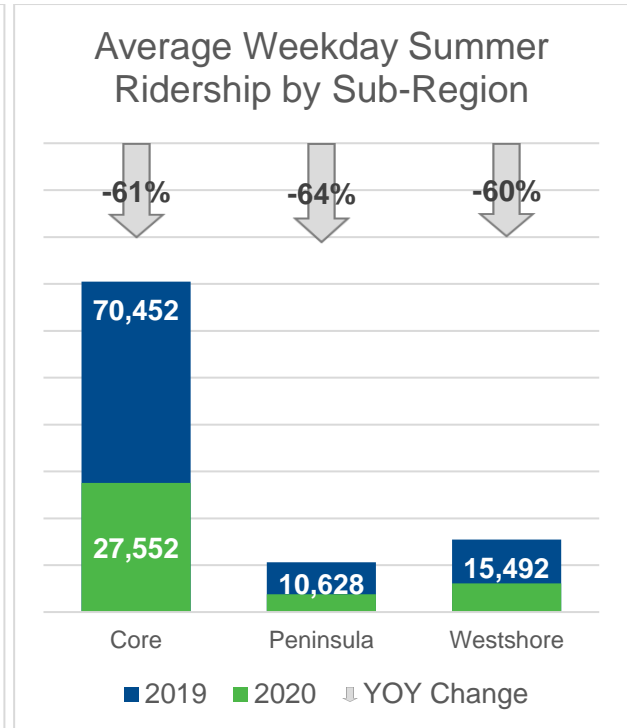


Figure 3: Average Weekday Summer Ridership

### 2.3 Route Level Performance Trends

For the purposes of this report, ridership performance has been aggregated and presented in four route-type categories, including Rapid Transit, Frequent Transit, Local Transit and Targeted Transit. In accordance with the 2011 Transit Future Plan and the Victoria Regional Transit System 2013/14 Service Review.

Looking at route by route type, we similarly see that impact has been quite consistent across all route types with the exception of targeted routes which provide school trips, peak commuter trips, and unique routes like the route 76, which provides Friday afternoon and Sunday evening express service between the University of Victoria and the Swartz Bay Ferry terminal.

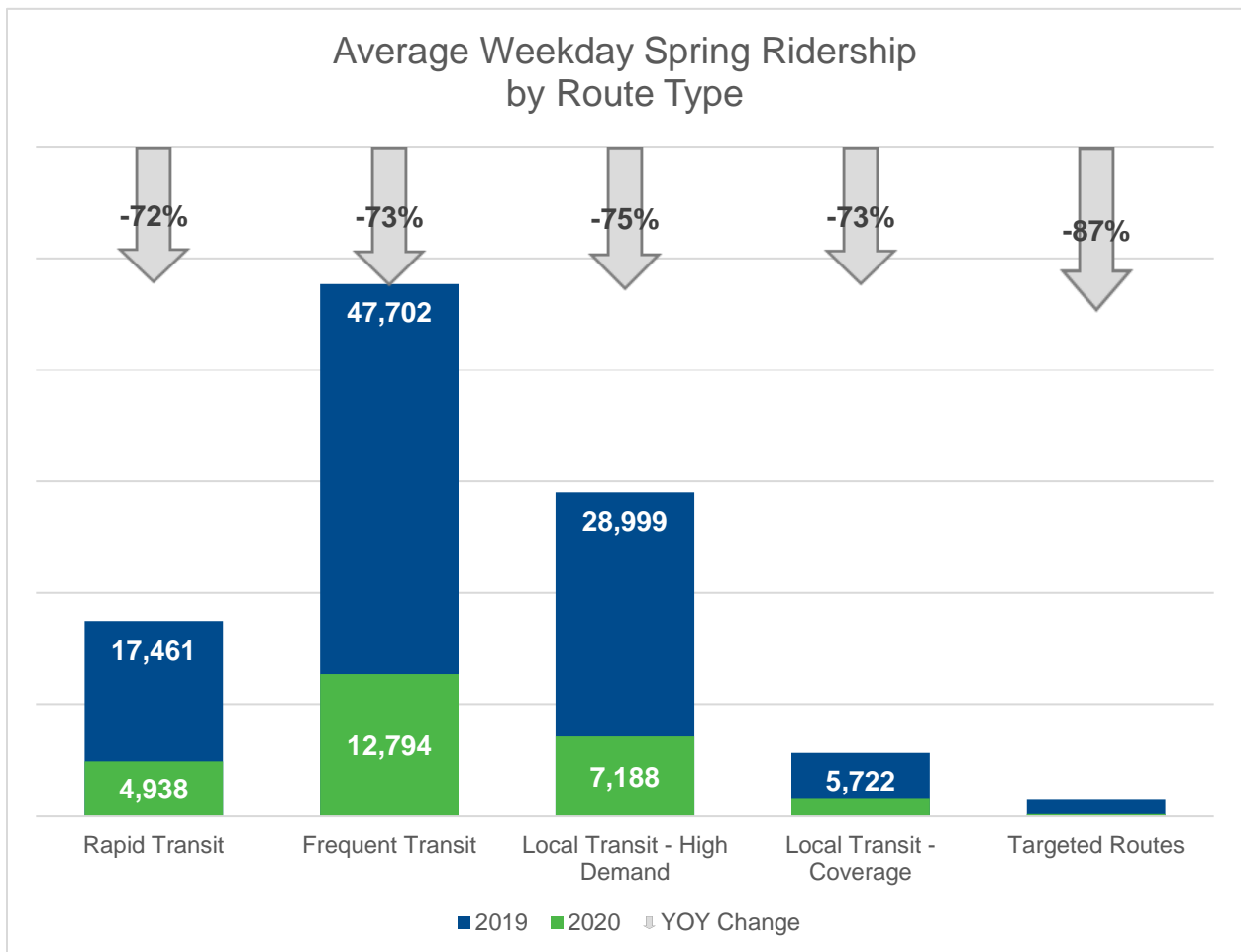


Figure 4: Average Weekday Spring Ridership by Route Type

Looking at the summer period up until Mid-July, we see that ridership is recovering consistently across all route types, but that local coverage and the frequent transit network are seeing a stronger return in ridership.

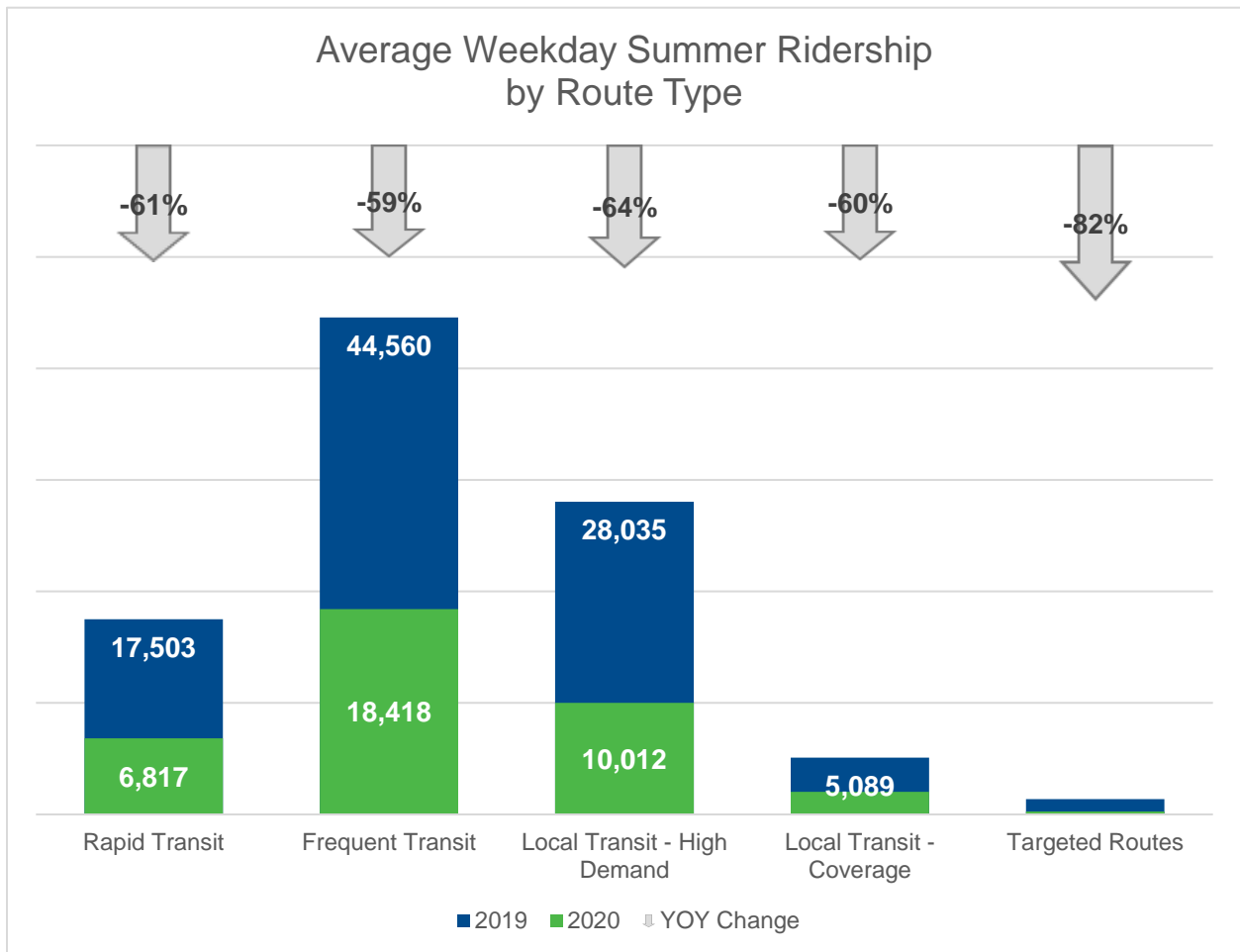


Figure 4: Average Weekday Summer Ridership by Route Type