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**SUBJECT: RapidBus, Planning and Infrastructure Update**

**PURPOSE**

To provide the Victoria Regional Transit 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.

**SERVICE CHANGES**

**Summer 2022 Seasonal Service Change (Effective June 27, 2022)**

- To align with road works along Gorge Road between Tillicum and Admirals, route 11 will no longer serve the Gorge-Admirals-Cowper-Obed loop. Instead, this route will operate directly along Gorge and Tillicum. Routes 24 and 25 will extend from Admirals Walk to Tillicum Centre via Cowper and Obed to support the change to route 11.
- Routes 54 and 55 now operate on the Chidlow connector.

Seasonal changes including the removal of school trips across multiple routes and service improvements to routes 70 and 75 in anticipation of increased tourism demand.

**PLANNING INITIATIVES**

**Local Area Transit Plans**

The [Peninsula](#) and [West Shore](#) Local Area Transit Plans (LATP) are now completed and endorsed, and one additional Local Area Transit Plan is scheduled to begin later in 2022.

**Uptown Local Area Transit Plan**

The Uptown Local Area Transit Plan is being conducted to support the development of the Uptown Mobility Hub from a future service planning perspective. This new planning process is scheduled to begin in summer 2022.

## 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 30 development referrals since the last Commission Meeting between March and May 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 (#9a) provides information on ridership performance over the winter 2022 service period from January 3 and April 3, 2022 and provides information on ridership trends through the period impacted by the COVID pandemic up to April 3, 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. These include the following:

- West Shore-Downtown RapidBus Line
  - The West Shore-Downtown RapidBus Line is tentatively planned to launch in early 2023 with unique branding as well as improved infrastructure and service levels.
    - The proposed routing and stop locations for the initial West Shore-Downtown RapidBus Line are included in the updated West Shore Local Area Transit Plan.

## Active Infrastructure Projects

- **Island Highway Transit Priority Upgrades:** A full tender ready design has been completed for the Island Highway Transit Priority Project to construct transit priority improvements along the Island Highway between the interchange with Highway 1 in the Town of View Royal, and at the Wale Road intersection in the City of Colwood. BC Hydro is finalizing their construction documents to integrate the transit priority improvements. Documentation and negotiations are progressing for statutory right of ways or road dedications with private landowners where the design elements affect their properties. BC Transit has secured financial approvals for construction. Some additional requirements from ICIP involve further engagement with First Nations where a consultant has been engaged to assist with this undertaking. The project will move forward with public tendering process and into the construction phase in 2022, subject to the completion of the statutory right of way and engagement tasks.

## Infrastructure Studies

- **RapidBus Stations:** Collaborative workshops have been completed with the multiple municipalities on the West Shore Line. The majority of station locations have been confirmed and conceptual designs are currently being developed. The study is expected to be complete by the end of 2022.
- **West Shore Transit Priority Study:** BC Transit is working with Colwood staff to determine when to advance further planning work for the transit priority concepts approved in principle for Sooke Rd. and Goldstream Ave. A plan will be developed to complete the detailed design process that includes retaining an engineering consultant and working with local government staff to further develop a design that is agreeable to all stakeholders, and is ready for tendering and construction.

## Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure (MoTI) Studies

- **Highway 1:** MoTI is advancing planning work along the Douglas Street/Hwy 1 Corridor to support existing BC Transit initiatives. This work includes exploring transit priority treatments that align with the BC Transit priorities identified through the Victoria Transit Future Plan and the South Island Transportation Strategy.
- **Uptown Transit Priority** - MoTI is advancing planning work to develop transit and active transportation priorities and improvements to serve near-term goals that will 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 Rapid Bus station on Highway 1 and expanded bus zone capacity on Carey Rd. This plan will support BC Transit advancing long-term plans for the Uptown Transit Hub and Transit Oriented Development (TOD) opportunities.
- **Six Mile Mobility Hub** - MoTI is advancing planning work for 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 exploring transit park & ride options that align BC Transit priorities identified through the Victoria Transit Future Plan and the South Island Transportation Strategy.

- **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 is 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.

#### **MoTI Active Projects Infrastructure**

- **Highway 17:** Construction is underway for the Transit Priority Queue-jump Lanes and RapidBus Stations at the intersection of Highway 17 and Mt Newton. The project will support the VRTC RapidBus Strategy, Transit Future Plan and the South Island Transportation Plan.

- **McKenzie RapidBus**

#### **Active Infrastructure Projects**

- **UVic Exchange:** The University of Victoria (UVIC) Transit Exchange project will bring the outstanding portions of the transit exchange to a similar standard as implemented in Phase 1 on the opposite side of Finnerty Road. The project includes replacing bus pads, curbing and paving, new shelters, addressing pedestrian concerns, and adding designated layover bays. The project also enhances three bus stops on campus located on Ring Road. McElhanney design consultants have completed the design and the tender process was completed recently. UVic has issued a contract to Sparker Construction Limited for \$3.2M for construction. The contractor mobilized on site the week of May 24, 2022 and the construction schedule is on track to complete the exchange refurbishment by September 2022 prior to the university fall semester start. Reports for SAFE Design certification and an electric bus charging feasibility study have been completed and accepted in support of the design. A post project completion operating agreement will be executed between UVIC and BC Transit prior to the in-service date in September 2022.

#### **Infrastructure Studies**

- **McKenzie Corridor Study:** In partnership with the District of Saanich, a consultant has been retained to develop Transit Priority and RapidBus Station concepts while also incorporating Saanich's multi-modal vision for this street. Long-term visioning and option analysis is underway, with a preferred long-term option to be selected by fall 2022. Short-term improvements will also be developed and the study is expected to conclude in early 2023.

## MAJOR FACILITIES UPDATE

### ACTIVE PROJECTS:

**handyDART Centre at 2401 Burnside Road:** Early works construction is underway and includes improvements to Burnside Rd, realignment of the Galloping Goose Regional Trail, landscaping and the addition of two new bus shelters to support the local transit network. The work also includes a creek realignment creating over an acre of new riparian habitat, followed by rough grading and levelling of the site.

Public engagement has transitioned to the construction phase to inform the community of activities on site on a timely basis and respond to any concerns and subscriptions of the project e-newsletter continues to grow.

The project team recently hosted 130 students from nearby Eagle View Elementary School, local stream keepers, and the BC Transit team of biologists, landscape architects and staff who came together to plant the first 500 of 8,000 plants earmarked for the restored stream channel that will soon connect to Craigflower Creek.

Songhees Nation member and ethnobotanist Cheryl Bryce visited the site in May to provide input and guidance to the team on native and traditional plants for integration into planting plans. The potential for interpretive signage at the site was discussed including traditional plant names and the integration of artwork. First Nations continue to be updated on project progress and to explore the potential for naming the 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 team continues to advance discussions with Esquimalt Nation to inform cultural recognition opportunities and provide project updates.

Two key milestones will be realized over the next month including reopening of the Galloping Goose Regional Trail adjacent to the property, providing a reduced grade and improved visibility making it more suitable for all ages and abilities. The second will be the connecting of the newly re-aligned stream channel to Craigflower Creek.

Following completion of this early work, a period of site settlement will occur, and full construction mobilization will take place in spring 2023. Planning is underway for a groundbreaking and blessing ceremony in the near future.

**Saanich Transit Centre:** Early project activities for Saanich Transit Centre in the Victoria area are continuing. Contracts for a Public Engagement consultant and an Indigenous Relations consultant have been awarded and work has begun on strategy and engagement planning. Infrastructure BC has been engaged for a potential partnership on the delivery of the project. A further pre-implementation request has been submitted to continue planning and preparation with the intention of preparing a business case facilitating detailed design and an Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program (ICIP) funding request.

### **Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure Transit Related Projects**

MoTI is advancing transit infrastructure initiatives that supports the development of the Victoria Regional Transit System including:

- **Highway 14 Connie Rd to Glinz Lake Rd Realignment and Park & Ride** – The highway 14 realignment includes a new park & ride near Connie Rd and new transit stops with bus pullouts to improve safety and passenger amenities that are under construction.

## PROJECTS IN PLANNING OR DEVELOPMENT

**Uptown Mobility Hub Transit Oriented Development (TOD) Plan** - BC Transit/MoTI/BCTFA have completed a Conceptual Development Design Technical Feasibility Report April 2022, with Perkins & Will (P&W) and Nelson & Nygaard regarding preliminary concepts of a multi-modal hub with TOD potential. A Colliers Financial Feasibility Report regarding the proposed design was completed May 2022. The objective is to establish an initial concept design to advance to engage local government and Province for further concept development & discussion in the summer/fall of 2022.

### Technical Feasibility Study Findings:

1. A transit hub appears to fit on the site given service planning and sizing assumptions, adequate circulation via testing of layouts for bus access, operational functions, passenger experience and intuitive transfers
2. Site connectivity for the TOD uses appear functional to support redevelopment. Pedestrians, cyclists, private, emergency vehicles and buses are threaded together to make an efficient mobility hub for the entire neighborhood
3. Public realm design approach utilizes the natural grade of the site to create a landscaped public realm & plaza at ground level on top of the bus exchange

Future steps may include a further refinement of technical and financial concepts based on stakeholder inputs, refinement of scope and cost estimates, site investigation studies, development proposal, traffic impact studies, stakeholder engagement, preparing a business case, associated funding applications and approvals.

## RECOMMENDATION

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

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