

Victoria Regional Transit Commission

Chair and Members

November 7, 2023

#12

SUBJECT: PLANNING AND INFRASTRUCTURE UPDATE

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. TRANSIT SERVICE CHANGES

Holiday 2023 Seasonal Service Change

Effective December 4, 2023, the holiday service change includes the following:

- Service will be seasonally reduced to better align with the lower ridership demand from post-secondary education institutions.
- Service reductions in December allow us to provide additional service in seasons with higher ridership demand.

January 2024 Service Change

Effective January 8, 2024, the winter service change includes the following:

- Reintroduction of seasonal routes and service levels to align with the start of school.
 - Includes cost-neutral adjustments to Route 15 to improve peak service levels within Esquimalt to match changing demand patterns.
 - Additional Friday and Saturday night service on Routes 27 and 28 due to recurring pass-ups.
- Reinstate the Route 11 to its alignment prior to June 27, 2022.
 - The frequency of buses on Route 11 will be maximized to the greatest possible extent, acknowledging that resources are limited. Current estimates place service frequency at approximately 20 minutes during peak periods on weekdays, and every 25-35 minutes for off peak periods and weekends.
 - The recent modification made to the Route 25 to provide service along Gorge between Admirals and Tillicum will remain in place for this service change.
 - Further public engagement, including an online survey being launched on October 30th, aims to collect feedback on subsequent service enhancements that could be implemented as early as April 2024.
- Implementation of the short-term West Shore Network Restructure.
 - Better aligns network design and service levels to recent development and density changes within the West Shore area over the last decade (Figure 1). This includes introducing the new Route 52 Colwood Exchange/Bear Mountain, which is planned

- to eventually operate at frequent transit service levels¹ as future ridership growth warrants further service improvements.
- Significant service improvements to Royal Bay, Millstream Village and developments along Happy Valley Road, Latoria Road, and Metchosin Road between Latoria Road and Sooke Road.
 - Includes introductory service to new developments along the south-west portion of Bear Mountain (Skirt Mountain).
 - Significant public engagement was conducted to support this network restructure, and a summary of engagement feedback can be found in the attached West Shore Local Area Transit Plan Engagement Summary Report (#11b).
 - Direct service to Royal Roads is to be provided by Route 39 as opposed to the existing Route 52. Route 52 will continue serving Royal Roads via Sooke Road, but will not deviate into Campus to serve the stop at West Campus Road.
 - Information sessions are also planned over the next few months to notify key stakeholders of the changes (including Royal Roads University). BC Transit will also be monitoring the changes closely after implementation and any adjustments will be made as required.
- Reintroduction of two stations in the City of Langford on Route 95 to improve access to the Goldstream Avenue and Veterans Memorial Parkway area based on recurring public feedback.

¹ Minimum 15-minute service frequency, 7am-10pm, seven days a week

Proposed Immediate Term West Shore Transit Network Changes

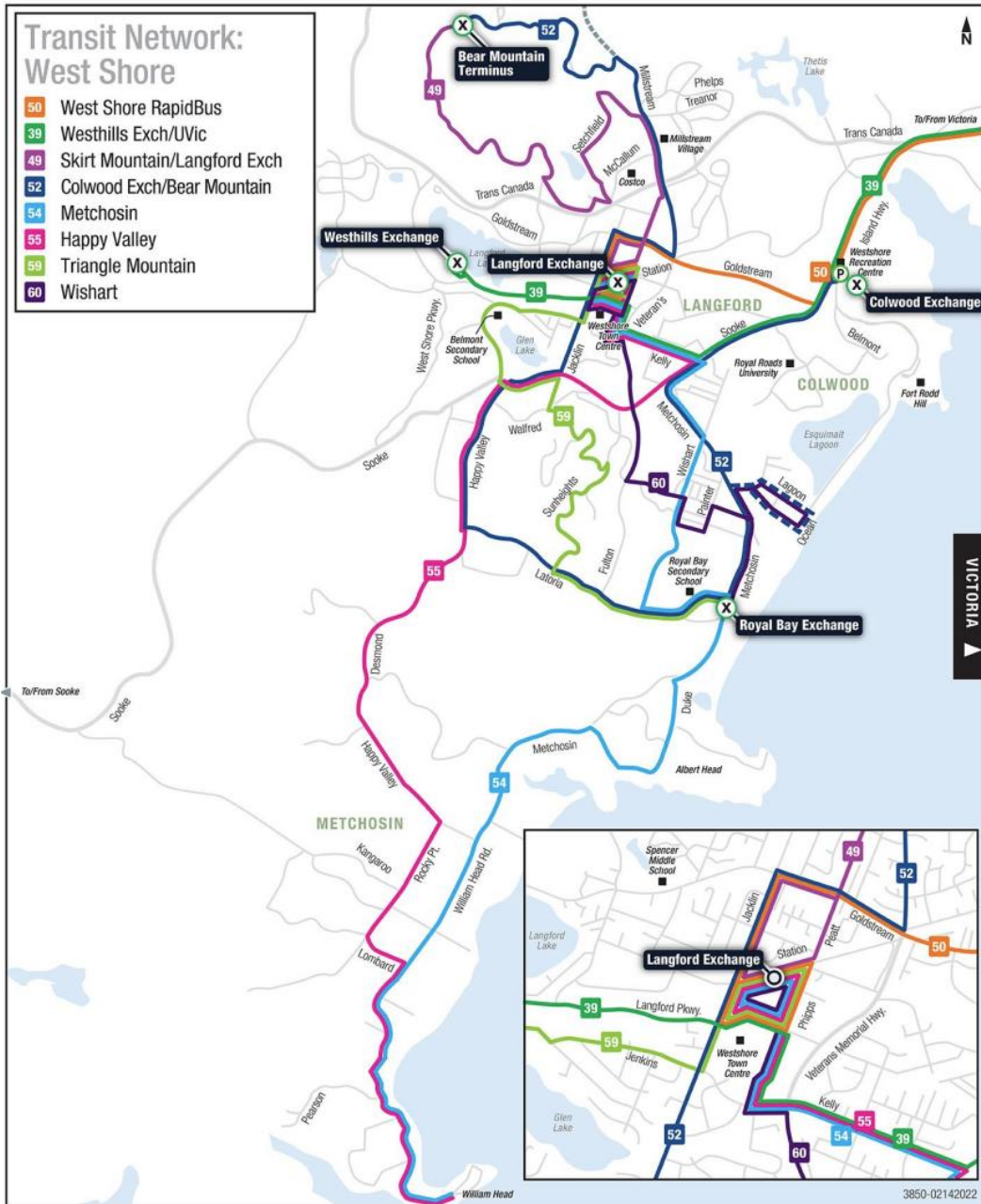


Figure 1: West Shore Network Restructure

2. TRANSIT SERVICE PLANNING INITIATIVES

Local Area and Corridor Transit Plans (LATP)

Regional Corridor Strategy

Project Timeline

The Regional Corridor Strategy began in January 2023, with the goal of completion before the end of the 2023/24 Fiscal Year.

Project Goals

The intention for this biennially updated strategy is to:

- Collaborate with local government partners to identify and analyze the most important corridors in the transit system to support future service enhancements, transit priority improvements and land-use opportunities.
- 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.

The Corridors have been identified and a Multiple Accounts Evaluation (MAE) Assessment has been completed. Recommended adjustments to corridor classifications and future strategic planning project prioritization is underway in consultation with Local Government staff.

Regional Map of Greater Victoria



Transit maps show transit routes, exchanges and relevant landmarks to help riders use the transit system. They are not complete street maps.

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Legend

- | | | |
|----------------------|------------------------|----------------------|
| — Douglas | — Fort/Foul Bay | — Finlayson Corridor |
| — Gorge/Tillicum | — Craigflower/Helmcken | — Quadra Corridor |
| — Glanford | — Fairfield/Foul Bay | — Cook Corridor |
| — Hillside/Henderson | — Interurban, Markham | |
| — Quadra | — Hwy 17 | |
| — Tillicum | — Royal Oak/Shelbourne | |
| — McKenzie | — Oak Bay/James Bay | |
| — Admirals | — West Shore/Hwy 1 | |
| — Shelbourne | — Bay | |
| — Esquimalt | — Wilkinson | |

Legend

- P Park & Ride Lot (no overnight parking)
- X Major Stop/Exchange

The next top three priority Corridor Plans have been confirmed in consultation with Local Government staff, including the Quadra Corridor, McKenzie/Tillicum Corridor, and the Hillside Corridor. These are planned to be initiated in the near future.

Next steps involve further engagement with Local Government staff to finalize the Network Map and associated corridor classifications and refine corridor planning sequencing before completing the draft Strategy for presentation to and endorsement by the Victoria Regional Transit Commission, tentatively scheduled for February 2024.

Quadra Corridor Transit Plan

As a key priority emerging from the Regional Corridor Strategy, BC Transit is launching the Quadra Corridor Transit Plan in late 2023 or early 2024 with the District of Saanich and City of Victoria. The goals of the corridor study include the following:

- Confirm future service levels on Quadra Street in accordance with planned land use and population growth
- Consider routing and network opportunities to integrate Quadra Street with the future Uptown Mobility Hub and downtown Mobility Hub (Legislature Exchange)
- Confirm the future transit network along the Quadra Street corridor, including whether a future RapidBus designation makes sense
 - Consider network opportunities to integrate with the future Uptown Mobility Hub
- Identify key opportunities for infrastructure upgrades and transit priority measures.
- Review bus stop spacing and amenity investment prioritization.

Engagement for the Quadra Corridor Study will be aligned with District of Saanich's land use and transportation planning processes as well as the City of Victoria's Official Community Plan engagement processes, tentatively planned for early 2024.

McKenzie/Tillicum Corridor Transit Plan

As a key priority emerging from the Regional Corridor Strategy, BC Transit is kicking off the McKenzie/Tillicum Corridor Transit Plan in 2024 to engage on required network changes to support the launch of the future Uptown/UVIC RapidBus Line. The goals of the corridor study include the following:

- Confirm the future transit network along the McKenzie Corridor, including how transit service connects to and through the future Uptown Mobility Hub from a cross-town network perspective.
 - This process will confirm the associated network changes required to support the McKenzie RapidBus Line implementation.
- Summarize key opportunities for future Transit Priority Measure improvements, bus stop spacing, and bus stop amenity improvements as indicated in the McKenzie Avenue Corridor Study currently underway in partnership between the District of Saanich and BC Transit.

Upcoming Public Engagement

Gorge-Burnside-Tillicum-Esquamalt Engagement

In response to feedback received from customers, a decision was made to reinstate Route 11 Tillicum Centre/UVic to its previous routing (prior to June 2022) on January 8, 2024. The recent, temporary modification made to the Route 25 to provide service along Gorge between Admirals and Tillicum will remain in place pending further engagement. This Gorge-Burnside-Tillicum-Esquamalt engagement is planned to begin on October 30th. To better understand the priorities and needs of those in these communities, BC Transit is seeking feedback on additional service options.

Through this engagement, changes are being considered for the following routes:

- Route 9 Royal Oak/UVic
- Route 11 Tillicum Centre/UVic

- Route 24 Cedar Hill/Tillicum Centre
- Route 25 Maplewood/Tillicum Centre

As part of this engagement, BC Transit will also be seeking feedback on a potential new route that would serve the Admirals/Dockyard/UVic areas.

September 2024 Service Change Engagement

Given the recent rapid growth in ridership and traffic congestion, in addition to ongoing constraints to service expansion before January 2025, the Planning team will be looking at some service optimization opportunities to support the September 2024 service change. Given that the options under consideration may require significant service level or routing changes, BC Transit is proposing to conduct public engagement before making any recommendations to the Commission. Routes currently being considered for adjustments include Routes 14, 21, 27, 28, 39, 51, 75 and 81.

Fairfield/Gonzales Neighbourhood Engagement

The Planning team previously identified an update to the James Bay and Jubilee Local Area Transit Plans for 2024, including some deferred service planning for the Fairfield/Gonzales Neighbourhood.

Strategic planning priorities have been evolving through ongoing engagement with Municipal staff as part of the Regional Corridor Strategy process. Based on these evolving priorities, the Planning team is planning to defer the broader James Bay and Jubilee Local Area Transit Plan Update process, in order to move forward on several other higher-priority Corridor Plan processes.

In the interim, Planning will be conducting some targeted stakeholder engagement with the Fairfield/Gonzales Neighbourhood Association in late 2023 / early 2024. The intention of this engagement is to identify possible short-term service optimizations and improvements within that neighbourhood.

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 11 development referrals since the last Commission meeting between September and October 2023, and provided feedback to five 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 and travel patterns.

The attached Ridership Performance Report (#11a) provides information on ridership performance over the Summer 2023 service period from July 3 to September 4, 2023, and provides information on ridership and service reliability trends through the period impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic up to September 4, 2023.

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 West Shore RapidBus Strategy on the Island Highway between the intersection of the Highway 1 exit and entrance ramps at the Island Highway in the Town of View Royal, and Wale Road in the 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 to construct transit priority improvements. BC Hydro has completed their detailed design for construction documents related to the transit priority improvements. Documentation and negotiations are continuing for statutory rights-of-way or road dedications with private landowners where the design elements affect their properties. To date, three of the six required contracts have been completed, and BC Transit is working closely with the City of Colwood to complete the remaining three. A new funding application to the Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program (ICIP) was approved in August 2023. On-going First Nations engagement is being managed by an external consultant. Asset Benefit Agreements have been officially signed by all parties for each of the two municipalities to meet the Eligible Capital Funding requirements. The project will move forward with a public tendering process in the fall/winter of 2023 and into the construction phase in the spring of 2024, subject to the completion of the statutory rights-of-way and engagement tasks.

Infrastructure Studies

- **Downtown Douglas Street RapidBus Study:** The Downtown Douglas RapidBus Study is being advanced to support the overall RapidBus strategy on Douglas Street between Belleville and Bay Street with a focus on the downtown core in collaboration with City of Victoria. The intent of the planning work is to establish a multi-modal vision for this portion of the corridor and develop design concepts to inform future upgrades to roadway infrastructure, intersections and passenger amenities. A report and presentation will be provided to the City of Victoria Council in late 2023 and will include a recommended concept for transit priority and RapidBus stations. Plans will be presented to the VRTC once support is secured from City of Victoria Council. Future steps could include further design work, a business case to secure funding and construction subject to securing

support of all parties.

- **McKenzie Corridor RapidBus Study:** The McKenzie Corridor Study is being advanced to develop the infrastructure components of a McKenzie RapidBus Strategy. The study is in partnership with the District of Saanich and the objectives are to establish a multi-modal vision which combines transit priority, RapidBus stations and active transportation improvements on McKenzie Avenue from Highway 17 to UVic. The preferred long-term vision has been finalized. Short-term improvements are currently being developed, and the study is expected to conclude by the end of 2023.
- **Peninsula RapidBus Infrastructure Studies:** Two Peninsula RapidBus infrastructure studies have been initiated to develop the infrastructure components of the Peninsula RapidBus Line. The first study, in collaboration with MoTI, is a RapidBus Station study on Highway 17 from McKenzie Avenue to Sidney to identify quick win improvements at existing transit stops for conversion to RapidBus Stations, as well as future longer-term RapidBus Station locations. The second study, in collaboration with the Town of Sidney, is for a transit hub to provide options to integrate a RapidBus Station and local transit service. The technical studies are forecasted to conclude in Spring 2024.

Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure (MoTI) Studies

- **Highway 1 –** To support the West Shore RapidBus Strategy, MoTI is advancing planning work on Highway 1 to support existing BC Transit initiatives. This includes transit priority treatments that align with the BC Transit priorities identified by the Victoria Transit Future Plan and the South Island Transportation Strategy:
 - MoTI is currently completing the designs for bus-on-shoulder lanes between the McKenzie Interchange and Six Mile Road. Subject to project approval and funding, the construction is forecasted to start construction in 2025/26.
 - MoTI is currently completing designs to add bus-on-shoulder lanes to the Burnside Bridge (between Tillicum Road and McKenzie Avenue).
- **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. A Memorandum of Understanding is being developed between BC Transit and MoTI to clarify each agency's roles and responsibilities to advance phase 2 planning for the project. Next steps will include further site investigations, a traffic impact assessment, and further engagement on the designs with Local Governments and stakeholders. Subsequent steps will also include the selection of a preferred concept for advancement to a final proof of concept, which will be used to prepare a business case for associated funding applications and approvals. Current planning activities include developing concepts of how the right-of-way surrounding the exchange will be used to ensure the efficient movement of people, buses, goods, and vehicles.
- **Uptown Transit Priority –** MoTI is advancing design work to develop transit and active transportation priorities and improvements that support near-term RapidBus Strategy objectives that align with the future development of the Uptown site and do not preclude the long-term plan. The plan includes a proposal for a bus lane on Ravine Road, RapidBus

Stations on Highway 1 and expanded bus zone capacity on Carey Road. The project is in the design and planning stage, with MoTI-led public consultation underway. A construction date has not yet been confirmed. This plan aligns with long-term plans for the Uptown Transit Hub and Transit Oriented Development (TOD) opportunities.

4. TRANSIT FACILITY PROJECTS

Active Projects

- **handyDART Centre at 2401 Burnside Road** – The final phase of the building construction is now underway. The handyDART Centre has been designed to accommodate a fully electric fleet, laying critical infrastructure during this construction phase to support the future transition to battery electric buses (BEB).
First Nations continue to be updated on project progress. The project team is working with the Esquimalt Nation to plan the naming ceremony for the new creek. Indigenous economic opportunities related to current and future on-site work are being explored and specific opportunities are under discussion with the Nations. The project team continues to advance discussions with the Nations to inform cultural recognition opportunities and are in the process of developing a ‘Call for Artists’ for all the Nations being consulted on the project.
- **Saanich Transit Centre** – Planning for the Saanich Transit Centre includes Phase 1A which prepares the site for construction and Phase 1B construction of the facility on the prepared site. An application for ICIP funding for Phase 1A was submitted in March 2023 and approval of ICIP funding is still pending. The Treasury Board business plan for the Phase 1B is being prepared in collaboration with Infrastructure BC. The design team and quantity surveyor are progressing an indicative design that establishes the budget for the Phase 1B funding request. This includes meeting with BC Hydro to confirm sizing and costing to provide power to the site that accounts for fleet electrification. Supported by consultants, early outreach efforts have been completed with Indigenous and First Nations groups with a focus on engaging First Nations in upcoming activities. This includes establishing effective communication channels and support for the archaeological overview assessment.
- **Victoria and Langford Transit Centre Upgrades** – Two facility modernization projects developed to support the implementation of the Transit Facility Master Plan have received ICIP funding approval this fall. The projects are intended to optimize operations to increase maintenance capacity. Detailed design of the training centre has progress to 90 per cent. Design consultant services are being procured for additional upgrades at both transit centres, including designs for the initial phase of Langford Transit Centre electrification.

RECOMMENDATION

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

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