

# Victoria Regional Transit Commission

BC Transit Boardroom, 520 Gorge Road East  
February 25, 2020 at 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.

## APPROVED MINUTES

*The Victoria Regional Transit Commission conducts its business on the homelands of the Songhees and Esquimalt First Nations.*

### **Present:**

Councillor Susan Brice, Chair, Councillor Sharmarke Dubow, Mayor Fred Haynes, Mayor Geoff Orr, Mayor Kevin Murdoch, Mayor Lisa Helps, Mayor Maja Tait, Mayor Rob Martin and Juliet Watts, UVic Student Society (non-voting)

### **BC Transit Staff:**

Christy Ridout, *Vice President, Business Development*; Jonathon Dyck, *Communications Manager*; Kevin Schubert, *acting General Manager, Victoria Regional Transit*; Levi Timmermans, *Director, Infrastructure Management*; Lisa Trotter, *Senior Manager, Government Relations*; Megan Hill, *Director, Budgeting and Forecasting*; Ryan Dennis, *Manager, Sales and Revenue*; Seth Wright, *Transit Planner* and Tina Sulea, *Executive Assistant (Recorder)*

### **Regrets:**

None

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### **1. CALL TO ORDER AND APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

Chair Susan Brice called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m.

**Motion by Mayor Helps and seconded by Mayor Haynes to APPROVE the agenda as presented.**

**CARRIED**

### **2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM NOVEMBER 5, 2019**

**Motion by Mayor Murdoch and seconded by Mayor Martin to APPROVE the minutes with the correction of a typo in the title of item #8.**

**CARRIED**

### **3. BUSINESS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MEETING**

None

#### 4. CHAIR'S REMARKS

The 2020/2021 Provincial budget reflects an ongoing commitment to transit in the upcoming year, including 20,000 additional service hours in the Victoria region. It also indicates funding constraints in the next two years and we are working with the Province to ensure additional funding for the upcoming years.

Transition to greening our fleet is underway. Compressed Natural Gas (CNG) is the bridging technology as we transition to electrification. By the end of Summer 2020 there will be 71 CNG buses in service in the Victoria region. An RFP will be released in Spring 2020 for the first 10 electric buses.

The latest section of bus priority lanes between Tillicum and Boleskine opened mid-February 2020. By the end of April 2020 the final two sections of this 2.3km southbound project will be complete. View Royal, Colwood and Langford will be next for construction.

#### 5. DELEGATIONS

##### a. Rail Rapid Transit – Gwyer Webber

- [CRD Rail Rapid Transit delegate material](#) was presented

##### b. Better Transit Alliance of Greater Victoria – Eric Doherty

Presented on the global climate emergency and how that should be the context of BC Transit's approach. BC Transit should continue to extend bus lanes and Transit Signal Priority as part of the rapid bus system since they are low cost. It was suggested that the VRTC and BC Transit work with other entities such as BC Ferries to develop seamless transportation throughout Vancouver Island. They also support fare-free transit for youth. It was also suggested that BC Transit work on teaching youth how to ride the bus by sending transit ambassadors to schools.

##### c. View Royal Climate Coalition – Gerry Gaydos

Presented on their support for electrification of the conventional and handyDART fleet. In particular, at the handyDART site in View Royal.

##### d. Bus Rider's Union Victoria – Larry Wartels

Presented on their support for and the benefits of fare-free transit for youth in Greater Victoria. Fare-free transit for youth in Greater Victoria would mitigate safety concerns with regard to walking and biking. It would also help make transit accessible and affordable for all.

##### e. Greater Victoria Teachers Association – Winona Waldron

Advocated for fare-free transit for youth in Greater Victoria. Youth who use transit can teach their parents and grandparents how to use public transit. Fare-free transit for all youth in Greater Victoria would increase the number of youth teaching elders how to use transit. It is challenging to get parents to drive for field trips and fare-free transit for all youth would help enable all students to take the bus for field trips. Currently only students who reside in the

municipality of Victoria have free transit. They would also like to see more buses and expanded routing.

## 6. NOTICE OF MOTION – FOR APPROVAL

### a. Expansion of Fare-Free Youth Bus Pass Program – Mayor Helps

#### **Motion by Mayor Helps seconded by Councillor Dubow,**

*“To reconsider that the Transit Commission directs staff to pursue funding partners and develop a business case for fare-free transit for youth, to include a pilot project to provide fare-free transit for youth in the 2021/22 budget year.”*

Commission member discussion ensued with the following comments:

- Communication to the public regarding this motion was inaccurate in that public thought we are voting today on whether or not to implement fare-free transit to all youth in the Capital Region when in fact that is not what we are voting on today
- Fare-free transit for youth in the Capital Region would help support climate action
- There is currently inequality when school catchment boundaries extend beyond municipal boundaries
- Introduction of fare-free transit would put a lot of pressure on the current transit service
- We need to prioritise investment in transit service expansion such as more buses, routing and increased frequency before introducing fare-free transit
- Rural areas don't have the level of service required to make fare-free transit an equitable and viable option for students to get to and from school
- The main factors that motivate people to choose transit over a single occupancy vehicle are coverage, frequency and convenience, not the fare
- Public transit routing and frequency in Sooke does not meet the needs of students to get to and from school
- There was concern that development of a business case for fare-free transit would delay the implementation of the Sooke Local Area Transit Plan
- BC Transit staff would need to evaluate current priorities to ensure there are resources available to generate a business case or outsource the work at a cost to the Commission
- There is a pilot project currently underway in the City of Victoria that is funded by Sunday parking fees
- Staff was asked to report out on the results of the pilot project underway now in City of Victoria after it expires in August 2020
- The only obvious funding partner would be the School Board
- This would impact property taxes

**DEFEATED**

**with Chair Brice, Mayor Haynes, Mayor Martin and Mayor Tait OPPOSED**

**7. handyDART YOUTH PASS – FOR APPROVAL**

*Ryan Dennis*

**Motion by Mayor Helps and seconded by Mayor Orr to:**

1. **APPROVE** the introduction of a youth/senior monthly pass fare for handyDART
2. **APPROVE** the acceptance of all youth U-PASS and similar discount programs

**CARRIED**

**8. INFRASTRUCTURE UPDATE – FOR INFORMATION**

*Levi Timmermans*

A general update on active infrastructure projects was provided including: Bus Shelter Program, CNG Fueling and Facility Modifications, handyDART Centre and the Island Highway Transit Priority Plan.

**Motion by Mayor Helps and seconded by Mayor Haynes to RECEIVE the Infrastructure Update for information.**

**CARRIED**

**9. FINANCIAL AND PERFORMANCE REPORTING SUMMARY YTD – FOR INFORMATION**

*Megan Hill*

As at December 31, 2019, financial and performance reporting was reviewed. The local contribution is \$0.65M (2.8 per cent) below budget and forecasted to reach \$1.56M (4.9 per cent) below budget by year-end. Fuel is \$0.56M (6.2 per cent) below budget due to an average fuel price of \$1.18/L compared to the budgeted price of \$1.21/L. Fuel is forecasted to be \$0.62M below budget. Transit Fund is forecasted to be \$7.9M and the Operating Reserve Fund is forecasted to be \$11.6M at year-end.

**Motion by Mayor Helps and seconded by Mayor Martin to RECEIVE the Financial and Performance Reporting Summary YTD Report for information.**

**CARRIED**

**10. 2020/2021 ANNUAL SERVICE PLAN – FOR APPROVAL**

*Seth Wright*

A 2020/21 annual service plan was recently adopted by the Victoria Regional Transit Commission at the November 5, 2019 meeting. The delivery of eight high capacity buses required for the planned Fall 2020 expansion has been delayed by the manufacturer. As the previously approved annual service plan proposed an eight double-decker expansion for September 2020, a new annual service plan is required that will phase the expansion between September 2020 and January 2021. This report provides a revised expansion schedule and proposed service improvements.

**Motion by Mayor Murdoch and seconded by Mayor Tait to APPROVE the 2020/2021 ANNUAL SERVICE PLAN as presented.**

CARRIED

#### 11. 2020/2021 BASE BUDGET AND TAX REGULATION – FOR APPROVAL

*Megan Hill*

The 2020/21 Budget presented is aligned with the operating and capital projections approved by the Province and forms part of BC Transit's 2020/21 – 2022/23 Service Plan. This budget includes the annualization of operating expenses for the conventional service expansion implemented in September 2019 (20,000 annual hours). At the June 11, 2019 meeting, the Commission also approved an additional 20,000 annual expansion hours to be included in the 2020/21 budget for implementation during 2020/21.

**Motion by Mayor Helps and seconded by Mayor Tait to APPROVE the 2020/2021 Base Budget and option 2 for a Tax Regulation that sets the average residential levy at \$145.50.**

CARRIED

#### 12. COMMISSION TRANSIT FUND ACCOUNTING – FOR APPROVAL

*Megan Hill*

The Transit Fund will be accounted for as a liability on BC Transit's financial statements with disclosure included within the notes to the annual audited BC Transit Financial Statements. BC Transit Management will track the balance of the transit fund, will monitor revenues and expenses and will reconcile the transactions. Amounts for the Commission's share of expenses for the Victoria Regional Transit System will be withdrawn from the Transit Fund on a monthly basis. The Transit Fund balance will be presented to the Victoria Regional Transit Commission at each Commission meeting. No administration fees are charged for this service and interest accrues on the balance monthly.

This option would not generate any material difference from the current administration of the Transit Fund.

**Motion by Mayor Helps and seconded by Mayor Tait to APPROVE the Commission Transit Fund Accounting as presented.**

CARRIED

#### 13. LOCAL AREA TRANSIT PLAN UPDATES – FOR APPROVAL

*Seth Wright & Adriana McMullen*

Local Area Transit Plans for Sooke, Burnside Tillicum and Jubilee areas were reviewed and discussed.

**Motion by Mayor Murdoch and seconded by Mayor Helps to APPROVE the Local Area Transit Plan Updates as presented.**

CARRIED

#### 14. OPERATIONS STAFF REPORT – FOR INFORMATION

*Kevin Schubert*

Operations Update was presented. While the fall schedule experienced impacts to scheduled service, BC Transit was still able to deliver well over 99 per cent of the 3,200+ daily scheduled trips. The most significant impacts to service came from bus availability and on-road disruptions. A significant improvement in scheduled service delivered was realized during the December period due to lower fleet requirements, the opening of the Bay Street Bridge, and the opening of the McKenzie overpass.

We expect that service reliability will continuously improve throughout the year on account of several initiatives coming to fruition in 2020. These initiatives include the completion of the CNG fueling station, maintenance bay upgrades to accommodate the CNG fleet, the arrival of new replacement and expansion buses, and the completion of bus priority lanes.

**Motion by Mayor Tait and seconded by Mayor Helps to RECEIVE the Operations Staff report as presented.**

**CARRIED**

## **15. PLANNING UPDATE – FOR INFORMATION**

*Seth Wright*

### **Winter 2020 (Effective January 6, 2020)**

Service levels for winter 2020 remained consistent with the expansion implemented in the fall of 2019. Some minor changes were required to improve service reliability..

### **Spring 2020 (Effective April 6, 2020)**

The Spring seasonal service change reduces service levels on routes serving post-secondary schools to better match transit demand and allow for service to be focused where demand is greatest. As a regular annual change, service levels are increased on the 75 Saanichton Exchange/Royal Oak Exchange/Downtown and the vehicle is switched from a light-duty bus to a heavy-duty bus on the 81 Brentwood/Saanichton/Sidney/Swartz Bay to better match transit demand to Butchart Gardens.

**Motion by Mayor Tait and seconded by Councillor Dubow to RECEIVE the Planning Update as presented.**

**CARRIED**

## **16. CORRESPONDENCE**

No correspondence received for this meeting.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

**Motion by Mayor Murdoch and seconded by Mayor Martin to ADJOURN the public meeting and move to the IN CAMERA session**

Public meeting adjourned at 12:53 p.m.

## **17. IN CAMERA**

ATAC Nominations were reviewed and approved.

## **NEXT SCHEDULED MEETING**

Tuesday, June 16, 2020 at 9:00 a.m.