

From: Tony St-Pierre <tstpierre@sooke.ca>
Sent: Friday, March 8, 2024 9:03 AM
To: #VictoriaCommission <Victoria_Commission@BCTransit.Com>
Subject: Delegation Request

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Free LTN-C Pilot Project

Dear Commissioners

I am writing the VRTC on behalf of the District of Sooke Council to propose a motion requesting the exploration of a cost and benefit analysis for implementing a pilot project that would make a number of underperforming LTN-C routes in Sooke, Metchosin and the Peninsula free for users as a part of your fare review process. This initiative aims to address the challenges faced by transit users with regards to equity and sustainability, while aligning with the goals outlined by the Victoria Regional Transit Commission.

The pandemic highlighted that public transit was an essential service for lower income individuals to access employment and services. Transit costs disproportionately affect these individuals and eliminating fares would provide a significant benefit. This is particularly true in rural areas where mobility options are limited.

With the introduction of the day pass system, replacing the previous transfer policy, transit costs for users in Sooke travelling one way have effectively doubled due to the necessity of transferring from routes 63 and 64 to routes 61 and 65. This situation creates an equity issue, as it disproportionately impacts individuals who rely on public transit to these more remote areas, arguably contradicting the Commission's mission to "contribute to stronger, more sustainable communities" ([BC Transit website](#)). Further, as BC Transit recognizes "the need to realize this potential in the Victoria Region is increasingly important because of factors such as climate change, affordability, population growth, increasing traffic congestion, and an aging demographic" it is important to highlight Sooke's emission data and emphasize the significance of traffic congestion when travelling to and from Sooke ([BC Transit website](#)).

70% of Sooke's GHG emissions are the result of transportation. This is split, more or less, in half between commuting and trips within Sooke. Due to infrequent service, transit usage remains low, offering no real incentive for residents to shift towards more sustainable transportation options. This is not a situation unique to Sooke and by exploring an incentive such as free LTN-C service specifically on underperforming routes such as 63/64, the Commission may meaningfully assist with emission reductions, ease some of the considerable traffic congestion around Sooke and have opportunity to enhance transit culture.

It is anticipated that implementing these free LTN-C routes would incur minimal costs, as fares currently represent only a fraction of the overall service hour expenses ([Summer 2023 Ridership Performance Report](#)). Additionally, when combined with public education and engagement initiatives, this pilot project could facilitate the achievement of the ambitious 15% mode share targeted by the Commission in its 10-year vision. Rural areas with poor service frequency will find this target especially challenging under the status quo.

I urge the Victoria Transit Commission to consider our proposal for exploring the feasibility of making routes 63 & 64 free as a pilot project (NB: Routes 54, 82, 83, 85 are very similar though not in Sooke). By doing so, we can address the equity issues faced by some transit users, promote sustainable transportation, and contribute to the Commission's overarching goals of fostering stronger, more resilient communities.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. I look forward to your favourable consideration of a motion, suggested as follows:

THAT the Victoria Regional Transit Commission request of staff a report providing a cost and benefit analysis of a pilot project making LTN-C routes 63 & 64 free as a part of your fare review process.

Yours,
Tony St-Pierre (he/him)
M.Sc. Rural Planning & Development
Councillor District of Sooke

I give thanks to the T'Sou-ke Nation in traditional Coast Salish Territory for sharing the land on which I live and practice regenerative farming. I further commit to working in right relationship with the Indigenous People of the land on which I find myself. — Hych'ka .

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