

Victoria Regional Transit Commission

Chair and Members

November 26, 2024

#13

SUBJECT: Corporate Security Update

PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to provide the Victoria Regional Transit Commission (the “Commission”) with an update on work being conducted with industry and community partners to support safety and security on transit in the Victoria Regional Transit System (VRTS) and in all communities BC Transit serves. This report is presented to the Commission for **INFORMATION**.

BACKGROUND

In 2023 the Canadian Urban Transit Association (CUTA) published a report entitled ‘[Prioritizing Safety on Public Transit](#).’ CUTA recognized that violence on transit is a societal issue and that public transit systems reflect the communities they serve. Issues such as homelessness, substance use, and mental health, when left unaddressed, can impact transit systems.

Meetings have taken place at a national and provincial level with government to address these broader concerns which extend beyond the purview of transit agencies. BC Transit’s Manager of Corporate Security is a member of the national Transit Safety Taskforce and is the Chair of CUTA’s national Safety and Security Sub-Committee, whose objectives include, ‘to build and share knowledge of best practices in transit and urban mobility safety & security in Canada’.

The Corporate Security team remains focused on supporting BC Transit’s mission of ‘Delivering transportation services you can rely on’ and our objective of ‘Always Safe’. We do this by working with partners in the transit industry, law enforcement and the broader community.

DISCUSSION

As part of Corporate Security’s approach to dealing with safety on our buses, we have partnerships with law enforcement throughout the VRTS. We also have staff representation on the Greater Victoria Police Diversity Advisory Committee. A goal for all members of the Corporate Security team is to identify opportunities for new community partnerships, including outreach services and mental health service providers. Local governments are another stakeholder we remain in close contact with, particularly with regards to community safety planning.

As police remain a key partner in addressing security issues on buses, one of our strategies to improve public safety is to encourage more police officers, both on and off-duty, to ride transit. As the 2016 VRTS Tariff states **“Police officers in uniform or upon presentation of a police identification badge may board without fare on all services in the Victoria Regional Transit System.”** The corporate security team plans to work with local police departments to ensure their members are aware of this policy and that members are being encouraged to have a presence on buses. The benefits of this fare-free policy are as follows:

- More police officers riding transit at various times of the day
- Stronger relationships between BC Transit and law enforcement, solidifying our position as a community service partner and showing support for the work they do to keep our passengers and staff safe
- Opportunities for police officers in uniform to travel by bus when on foot patrol, which could allow for greater movement and visibility throughout the region
- Opportunities for marketing campaigns that would support staff and passenger safety

A corporate Safety & Security marketing campaign is also being developed to enhance the public’s perception of safety on transit. Through this campaign, we will educate riders on what to do if they feel unsafe or witness an issue on the bus; furthermore, it will address some of the concerns we hear through our Voice of the Rider surveys, including communicating expected bus etiquette for passengers.

With regards to upholding safety and security, there are closed-circuit television (CCTV) cameras installed on all buses in the VRTS fleet. Corporate Security reviews and investigates all security incidents and, when appropriate, shares CCTV recordings with the police. In addition to CCTV, all buses are equipped with two-way radios that are linked directly to the transit control room. There are also covert switches that, when pressed, send a signal to the control room to inform them of an emergency on board. The location of the bus is automatically detected through the GPS system.

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