
SUBJECT: McKenzie RapidBus

PURPOSE

To provide an update to the Victoria Regional Transit Commission (the “Commission”) on the infrastructure planning activities to support the McKenzie RapidBus Line and the next steps necessary to continue advancing RapidBus infrastructure delivery.

This report is presented to the Commission in principle to advance a transit infrastructure Planning, Design and Engagement Project to support the implementation of the McKenzie RapidBus Line
FOR APPROVAL.

BACKGROUND

A key strategy to achieve increased transit mode share is the implementation of RapidBus service in the Victoria Regional Transit System (VRTS). The Victoria Regional Transit Future Plan (2011) identified a future McKenzie RapidBus Line as a key investment to increase transit mode share. This was followed by the RapidBus Implementation Strategy, approved by the Victoria Regional Transit Commission (VRTC) in 2021, which looked to accelerate ridership growth along key corridors and included the implementation of strategic customer-facing infrastructure investments.

RapidBus service is planned be implemented across several additional key corridors in the VRTS to create a high-capacity transit system in three phases. Phase 1 of the RapidBus Implementation Strategy (2021) was the introduction of the West Shore RapidBus line, which connects Langford, Colwood, and View Royal to the metropolitan core. Phase 2 includes the establishment of the McKenzie and Peninsula Lines.

Transit infrastructure is a critical component of transit systems such that, as investments are made to expand RapidBus service, corresponding investments in new transit infrastructure are often required, such as transit priority measures and improved bus stops. Transit priority measures, such as bus lanes, transit signal priority, or queue jump lanes help improve transit speed and reliability, while expanded RapidBus stations improve accessibility features, provide increased passenger capacity, and allow for “Blink” branding opportunities. These infrastructure investments will complement additional RapidBus service to support attracting new ridership and increasing the transit mode share.

Several infrastructure investments have already been completed or are underway to support increased transit service levels on McKenzie Avenue. For example, the UVic Exchange included additional bus capacity when it was upgraded in 2022. The Ministry of Transportation and Transit is also currently constructing upgrades to the western end of the RapidBus Line at Uptown, which include additional bus stop capacity and a bus lane on Ravine Way. Additionally, the District of Saanich (DoS) is currently developing a Quadra McKenzie Plan (QMP) to provide a land use and transportation plan to guide transit investments and infrastructure over the next 20 years. The QMP is a strategy to focus growth near frequent and rapid transit routes and ultimately to improve the function of McKenzie and Quadra as complete streets, which

requires the accommodation of RapidBus service on McKenzie, active transportation facilities, and an improved public realm. The QMP is supported by Saanich's Active Transportation Plan, which identifies McKenzie as a preferred corridor for an All Ages and Abilities (AAA) bike route. Saanich Council received a draft version of the QMP on October 21, 2024, and received a subsequent update in February 2025. DoS received extensive community input on the QMP which will be reviewed and incorporated into the design to improve the accommodation of all transportation modes.

RapidBus Project Scope

The study included conceptual designs and cost estimates for transit priority measures in targeted locations, 18 RapidBus stations, 14 regular transit stops and active transportation facilities that can be completed in the short-term and will build towards the long-term vision that will be phased in over time. The transit priority improvements could consist of queue jump lanes at targeted locations which could have time-of-day restrictions. These time restrictions could be expanded as required and warranted, as transit service levels and ridership increase over time.

Delivery of the improvements is anticipated to occur over multiple phases, with the first phase likely at the eastern end near UVic, which is the portion of the corridor with the highest existing service levels and ridership. A detailed phasing plan will be developed following detailed design.

DISCUSSION

To continue advancing the McKenzie RapidBus Line, BC Transit must secure approval in principle from the VRTC to fund the design phase. Once approved, the parties will begin advancing preliminary and detailed designs through a Planning, Design and Engagement project, which will be a collaborative effort with the DoS, with the following key milestones:

- Development and execution of a Memorandum of Understanding establishing milestones, governance, approval phases, scope, roles, and responsibilities for BC Transit and the DoS
- Development and execution of a public engagement plan that targets local and regional users of McKenzie Ave
- 30, 60, 90 per cent design for all targeted improvements along the corridor
- Class B cost estimate
- Business case preparation

The design phase is anticipated to take approximately 24 months with an estimated cost of up to \$4M, of which Saanich Council has already allocated \$2M. The VRTC share of the planning and design budget will be funded through future lease fees that are not incurred until the project is in service. If the project does not proceed, the costs will be recovered as a one-time operating expense. After the design phase is complete, staff will come back to the Commission to seek VRTC approval to proceed with submitting a funding application. Completion of the design phase will support the pursuit of potential future federal funding programs, which are expected in 2026.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Commission:

- **APPROVE** the development of RapidBus infrastructure on McKenzie Avenue in principle to support the development of the McKenzie RapidBus Line.
- **APPROVE** a planning, design and engagement project for the McKenzie RapidBus Line to further develop designs and cost estimates for the development of a business case and future funding application, with the VRTC and the Province contributing up to a combined \$2M.

Prepared by: James Wadsworth

Position: Infrastructure Planning Manager

Date prepared: February 5, 2025

Approved by: Christy Harrold

Position: VP, Strategy and Public Affairs

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