

Victoria Regional Transit Commission

BC Transit 520 Gorge Road East
March 11, 2025 | 9:00 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.

DRAFT MINUTES

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

Present:

Commissioner Ryan Windsor, Chair; Commissioner Marianne Alto, Vice-Chair; Commissioner Marie-Terese Little; Vice-Chair; Commissioner Dean Murdock; Commissioner Kevin Murdoch; Commissioner Colin Plant; Commissioner Jeremy Caradonna

Regrets:

Commissioner Maja Tait; Prince Solanki, Student Representative

BC Transit Staff:

Chelsea Mossey, Senior Manager, Government Relations; Christy Harrold, Vice-President, Strategy and Public Affairs; Stephen Anderson, General Manager, Victoria Regional Transit; Greg Hill, Director, Financial Planning & Analysis; Levi Megenbir, Senior Transit Planner; James Wadsworth, Manager, Project Development; Chad Berndt, Director, Electrification Program; Christine Lewis, Executive Assistant and Divisional Coordinator (Recorder)

1. CALL TO ORDER AND APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Chair Mayor Ryan Windsor called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m.

Motion MOVED by Commissioner Kevin Murdoch and SECONDED by Commissioner Dean Murdock to approve the agenda as written.

CARRIED

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM NOVEMBER 26, 2024

Motion MOVED by Commissioner Kevin Murdoch and SECONDED by Commissioner Marie-Terese Little to approve Minutes as written.

CARRIED

3. CHAIR'S REMARKS

Good Morning,

We recognize and acknowledge that we work on the unceded traditional territories of the Lekwungen peoples, and the Esquimalt and Songhees Nations.

I would like to start off this morning by welcoming Jeremy Caradonna as a newly appointed member on the Victoria Regional Transit Commission. Commissioner Caradonna is a Councillor with the City of Victoria and we look forward working with you. We also wish to thank our outgoing Commission member Chris Coleman who previously served on the Commission as a representative from the City of Victoria.

This past weekend we transitioned to Daylight Saving Time which signals spring is just around the corner. This time of year also marks the end of one fiscal year and the beginning of another. On April 1, a fare change begins in the Victoria Regional Transit System, and two weeks later, on April 14, the spring service change will take effect, increasing service on routes with tourist-driven demand and seasonally reducing service on routes serving post-secondary schools.

The new handyDART centre in View Royal will be fully operational next month. The new centre will enable a future shift to a fully electric handyDART service, and the repurposing of the existing centre on Glanford Avenue to expand conventional transit service across the region. This centre is also the first BC Transit facility built to meet Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Gold requirements, following best practices to reduce energy, chemical use, water, air pollution, solid waste, and runoff.

April 22nd is Earth Day, and we encourage residents in the region to take transit for free that day and reduce their carbon footprint.

Finally, on behalf of the Commission, I would like to thank Prince Solanki for his contribution as our student representative from Camosun College over the past year. This will be Prince's last meeting, and I think I speak on behalf of us all in wishing him well in his future endeavours.

We have a full agenda today, as we look to continuously improve transit in the region, so let's get on with the meeting.

Thank-you.

4. STAFF REMARKS

On March 4th the Province of British Columbia tabled its 2025/26 Budget. This budget will allow the VRTS to continue to increase ridership and advance key initiatives. Through today's meeting, the 2025/26 budget will be shared for consideration and approval.

Next month, BC Transit will launch its Victoria Regional Transit Plan process. This Plan will replace the 2011 Transit Future Plan. The CRD is also planning to soon begin an update to their Regional Transit Plan. BC Transit is working closely with the CRD to align the Victoria Regional Transit Plan process with the planned Regional Transportation Plan update wherever possible.

The Metro-Region Agreement funding stream of the Canada Public Transit Fund holds \$2B of the program's total \$3B annually, and this \$2B/year is dedicated to Canada's largest metro-regions to support capital investments in transit and active transportation. An Expression of Interest for Metro-Region Agreement funding for the Victoria Region was submitted on Friday, March 7, in partnership between the Province, BC Transit, and the Capital Regional District.

CORRESPONDENCE

5. SUPPORT FOR BETTER ISLAND TRANSIT TO REQUEST TO IMPROVE INTERREGIONAL TRANSIT

A letter was received by the Commission from the Cowichan Valley Regional District seeking the Commission's support in requesting that the Province develops a plan increase to transit service levels between Duncan and Victoria and reduce the passenger fare to \$5.

MOTION BY Commissioner Dean Murdock and SECONDED by Commissioner Jeremy Caradonna to direct the VRTC Chair to sign the letter, and for staff to forward on to the signed letter to the CRD for the Board Chair's signature.

CARRIED

6. ATAC MOTION AND ADVICE: ACCESSIBILITY POSTER

A letter was received from the Chair of the Accessible Transportation Advisory Committee asking the VRTC to consider posting an accessibility poster in a prominent location on all VRTS buses. Staff advised that Lamar Advertising manages this space and that they have offered to post signage when space is available on buses free of charge.

7. DELEGATION

None

8. Q3 FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE REPORT – FOR INFORMATION
GREG HILL

The Commission was presented with a report outlining financial information for the third quarter of this fiscal year. In the financial summary, staff outlined that revenue is currently \$2.8 million below budget due to lower-than-budgeted fare revenue. This includes a reduction in UPASS revenue from the University of Victoria. As a result, the Local Contribution is above budget year to date. Operations is below budget due to savings on fuel charges and wages. The maintenance department continues to trend above budget due to the cost of parts and labour.

9. 2025/26 BUDGET AND TAX REGULATION – FOR APPROVAL
GREG HILL

The Commission was presented with a report that showed an overall budget increase of 9% over last year. The 2025/26 budget includes an increase in service hours, and a corresponding increase in operations and maintenance costs due to this service expansion.

MOTION BY Commissioner Marie-Terese Little and SECONDED by Commissioner Marianne Alto to APPROVE the 2025/26 Budget.

CARRIED

Three tax regulation options were provided to the Commission, with a recommendation for a 35% increase to the transit levy. This equates to an estimated transit levy per household of \$372.66 (an increase of \$96.59).

MOTION BY Commissioner Dean Murdock and SECONDED by Commissioner Kevin Murdoch to APPROVE option 2 for a Tax Regulation to maintain a sufficient Transit Fund balance.

CARRIED

10. ANNUAL SERVICE PLAN – FOR APPROVAL
LEVI MEGENBIR

The Commission was presented with an Annual Service Plan report that showed an additional 25,000 service hours and 10 new buses of expansion was approved for the Victoria Regional Transit System for the 2025/26 fiscal year. Staff recommended allotting 10,000 hours for operational service improvements to enhance service reliability, increase passenger comfort and mitigate pass-ups on busy routes. Staff also recommended 15,000 hours to launch strategic improvements on several routes including implementing the Route 40 Dockyard/UVic, which is a first step towards the implementation of the McKenzie RapidBus line.

MOTION BY Commissioner Dean Murdock and SECONDED by Commissioner Jeremy Caradonna to APPROVE the Annual Service Plan.

CARRIED

11. MCKENZIE RAPIDBUS – FOR APPROVAL
JAMES WADSWORTH

Staff advised that they are currently working with the District of Saanich to move forward a \$4M planning and design project for the McKenzie RapidBus line. The planning and design project will be a multi-corridor study, for which Saanich Council has already allocated \$2M. The VRTC contribution of up to \$2M will be funded through future lease fees that are not incurred until the project is in service. Public engagement will be undertaken to receive feedback on these plans and look at a phased approach to improving this corridor for all users.

MOTION by COMMISSIONER Kevin Murdoch, SECONDED by COMMISSIONER Dean Murdock to APPROVE the development of RapidBus infrastructure on McKenzie Avenue in principle to support the development of the McKenzie RapidBus Line and further 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.

CARRIED

12. ELECTRIFICATION UPDATE – FOR INFORMATION

CHAD BERNDT

The Commission was presented with an overview of BC Transit's current electrification plans. They heard that the Victoria Regional Transit System will receive ten electric buses, expected to start arriving in summer 2025, with an additional 52 buses in the second phase of implementation. New hybrid buses will also be part of the overall electrification plan. Charging infrastructure has already been constructed at the Victoria Transit Centre and will be ready for when the buses arrive later this year.

13. PLANNING UPDATE – FOR INFORMATION

LEVI MEGENBIR

The Planning department presented the Commission with a report outlining upcoming service changes and planning projects. The spring service change is scheduled to happen on April 14, 2025 and will include seasonal changes on post-secondary routes and routes with tourism-driven demand. Summer service changes will take effect on June 30, 2025 and will reduce service on routes serving K-12 schools. The summer schedule will factor in an upcoming bus lane closure on Highway 1, resulting from the Tillicum Active Transportation Bridge project which will cause delays to transit at peak times. Key planning project updates include the Victoria Regional Transit Plan, which is planned for a Spring 2025 launch, and two upcoming engagement processes to support service changes in Fall 2025 and Winter 2026.

14. INFRASTRUCTURE PLANNING AND DELIVERY UPDATE – FOR INFORMATION

JAMES WADSWORTH

The Commission heard that the View Royal portion of the Island Highway Transit Priority project is near completion and will open at the end of March. Infrastructure planning is taking place in the District of Sooke, where a design has been developed for a new transit exchange. Plans will be presented to the District this spring and then brought back to the Commission later this year. Work continues at the new Uptown Mobility Hub that includes new RapidBus stations on Highway 1 and Carey Road which will be completed by the end of the year. The new handyDART centre in View Royal will open in April 2025.

15. OPERATIONS UPDATE – FOR INFORMATION

STEPHEN ANDERSON

Staff presented a report to the Commission on recent operations metrics and advised that the conventional transit system delivered 99.43% of scheduled service between November 1, 2024 and January 31, 2025 owing to a great team effort. On-time performance was slightly below the 70% target; however, on-time performance in January 2025 improved significantly compared to previous months due to operational focus on this area.

16. ATAC UPDATE – FOR INFORMATION
STEPHEN ANDERSON

The Commission received a report on the activities of the Accessible Transportation Advisory Committee (ATAC) that includes minutes from their last meetings on January 6 and February 10, 2025. A call for committee members was publicly posted with 23 applicants. Four new committee members were presented to the Commission for approval, each to serve a term of two years.

MOTION by COMMISSIONER Colin Plant, SECONDED by COMMISSIONER Jeremy Caradonna to APPROVE the appointment of new members to the ATAC Committee.

CARRIED

MOTION BY Commissioner Colin Plant and SECONDED by Commissioner Kevin Murdoch to adjourn meeting at 11:01 a.m.

CARRIED

NEXT SCHEDULED MEETING
June 17, 2025