Victoria Regional Transit Commission
Chair and Members

September 9, 2025

#9

SUBJECT: Three-Year Expansion Plan

PURPOSE
This report requests **APPROVAL** from the Victoria Regional Transit Commission (the “Commission”) to confirm expansion plans for the 2026/27 Service Plan, and to confirm service levels for the following two fiscal years for budget purposes.

BACKGROUND
BC Transit confirms service expansion plans with Local Government Partners on an annual basis to coordinate the development of three-year budgets and capital plans with the Provincial Service Plan and to allow BC Transit to request funding and resources to implement service expansion.

DISCUSSION

The next three years mark a critical phase for the Victoria Regional Transit System (VRTS). While this year’s expansion request is more modest than previous years, it reflects a deliberate strategy to balance fiscal realities, infrastructure constraints, and long-term growth goals.

BC Transit recommends pursuing annual funding for both conventional and custom service expansions from 2026/27 to 2028/29. This investment path supports rising ridership and aligns with the Commission’s goals. The proposed expansions reflect the maximum feasible growth based on vehicle availability, facility capacity, and projected staffing levels. Plans must be reassessed each year and are contingent on provincial funding, workforce capacity, bus procurement and delivery, and the timely execution of supporting capital and IT infrastructure.

Service expansion priorities are collected through strategic transit planning initiatives, system performance and feedback from local partners and the public. Proposed service improvements are ranked using a range of criteria including population served, potential ridership, environmental impact, accessibility and impact on service reliability.

VRTS System Constraints

The VRTS is facing compounding pressures that affect service reliability, scalability, and operational readiness, all of which influence the pace at which the transit system can grow:

Growth Pressure: With the region’s population growing at 1.35 per cent annually and projected to exceed 533,000 residents by 2035, demand for scalable transit solutions continues to rise. The VRTC’s mode share targets will require significant investment in bus parking and service capacity in order to meet the preferred mode share targets, or a strategic shift toward off-peak service delivery.

Yard Capacity Limitations: The existing conventional facilities at the Victoria Transit Centre (VTC) and Langford transit Centre (LTC) are nearly at capacity and planning for a third conventional facility is underway. Detailed design for the planned deployment of 125 Battery Electric Buses (BEBs) has also determined that more space will be required to accommodate construction activities for BEB infrastructure at existing sites, further limiting parking capacity for the next two years.

Roadway and Traffic Challenges: Municipal speed limit reductions, lane removals, and increased congestion have disrupted on-time performance and increased operating costs. These changes limit maneuverability for larger vehicles and can make scheduling efforts for the region more challenging.

Economic Climate: In an environment of financial constraint, investment recommendations look to balance system goals while ensuring that expansion plans remain feasible.

Strategic Response to System Constraints

To navigate these constraints while maintaining momentum, BC Transit is pursuing several adaptive strategies:

Overflow Yard Planning: BC Transit recommends pursuing temporary overflow parking to alleviate immediate to medium term yard constraints. Details of this approach will brought to the Commission at an upcoming meeting for consideration and inclusion in upcoming budgets.

Double-Decker Fleet Expansion: All fixed-route expansion vehicles are double-deckers, enabling higher capacity per bus and allowing service frequency to be reallocated across corridors.

Network Optimization: Route design guidelines developed through the Victoria Regional Transit Plan (VRTP) will help reduce duplication and improve efficiency.

Transit Priority Initiatives: BC Transit is collaborating with municipalities to improve speed and reliability on key corridors through its Bus Speed and Reliability program.

Custom Transit Growth: The new handyDART facility removes previous infrastructure barriers and opens the door to significant custom service expansion. This facility supports the deployment of the new Custom Transit Solution software implementation, enabling more responsive, accessible, and scalable service delivery.

Long-Term Trajectory

While space constraints are tighter than anticipated, BC Transit’s long-term strategic direction remains unchanged. The organization is focused on maintaining a state of good repair, prioritizing reliability and safety, and preparing for transformational investments like BEBs and the VRTP.

The Victoria Regional Transit Plan, launched through 2025 and scheduled for Commission presentation in mid-2026, will guide transit development over the next 25 years. It will align short-term decisions with regional goals and be shaped through engagement with local governments, First Nations, stakeholders, and the public.

Proposed Expansion Initiatives

The table below outlines the proposed Three-Year Expansion plans for the VRTS, along with estimated costs based on system hourly rates. To move forward with a funding request to the Province, BC Transit needs confirmation of both the investment level and the commitment to proceed with the expansion and its budget.

This plan reflects a pragmatic yet forward-looking approach to transit growth, balancing immediate constraints with long-term opportunity.

PROPOSED EXPANSION INITIATIVES – FIXED ROUTE						
AOA Period	**In Service**	**Annual Hours**	**Vehicle Requirements**	**Estimated Annual Revenue**	**Estimated Annual Total Costs**	**Estimated Annual Net Municipal Share**
2026/27	January	**15,000**	**3**	**418,895**	**3,272,467**	**1,886,962**
		Description	Address passenger comfort and service reliability challenges. Frequent Transit Network improvements.			
2027/28	January	**15,000**	**9**	**418,895**	**3,718,915**	**2,333,410**
		Description	Address passenger comfort and service reliability challenges. Invest in strategic investment priorities as indicated through the Victoria Regional Transit Plan.			
2028/29	January	**20,000**	**9**	**558,527**	**4,735,330**	**2,887,990**
		Description	Address passenger comfort and service reliability challenges. Invest in strategic investment priorities as indicated through the Victoria Regional Transit Plan.			

PROPOSED EXPANSION INITIATIVES - CUSTOM						
AOA Period	**In Service**	**Annual Hours**	**Vehicle Requirements**	**Estimated Annual Revenue**	**Estimated Annual Total Costs**	**Estimated Annual Net Municipal Share**
2026/27	September	**10,000**	**9**	**7,184**	**1,548,599**	**662,896**
		Description	Increase peak handyDART service to address unmet trips			
2027/28	January	**7,500**	**4**	**5,388**	**1,123,851**	**453,592**
		Description	Increase handyDART service to address unmet trips			
2028/29	January	**4,500**	**2**	**3,233**	**645,886**	**257,322**
		Description	Increase handyDART service to address unmet trips			

Expansion Initiatives Agreement

Confirmation of expansion plans for 2026/27-2028/29 is required to:

- Ensure expansion initiatives submitted by BC Transit as part of the provincial service planning process are aligned with the expectations of the Commission.
- Attain a commitment from the Commission necessary for BC Transit to proceed with the procurement and management of resources necessary to implement any proposed expansion (bus purchases to support service expansion).
- Allow staff to develop the Three-Year Service and Financial Strategy for inclusion in the Commission's annual budget presented in November.
- Allow staff to develop the Annual Service Plan, which includes the details of planned service changes (including the use of expansion resources) over the 2026/27 Fiscal period[1].

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Commission:

A. **APPROVE** BC Transit to include up to 15,000 hours for conventional transit, up to 10,000 hours for custom transit as part of the funding request to the Ministry of Transportation and Transit for service expansion in the 2026/27 fiscal year.

B. **APPROVE** the commitment to increase the VRTS conventional bus fleet by up to three buses (high-capacity) starting in January 2027 and increase the VRTS custom bus fleet by up to nine (light-duty) buses starting in September 2026.

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Approved by:	Christy Harrold		
Position:	VP, Strategy, Planning & Public Affairs	Date reviewed:	September 2, 2025

[1] The Annual Service Plan for the following Fiscal period is endorsed by the VRTC in February.