

Victoria Regional Transit Commission

Chair and Members

November 18, 2025

#15

SUBJECT: Airport (YYJ) Short-Term Service Option Report

PURPOSE

To seek the Victoria Regional Transit Commission's (the "Commission's") **APPROVAL** for BC Transit staff to proceed with public engagement on an option to provide a direct connection between Downtown Victoria and the Victoria International Airport (YYJ).

BACKGROUND

As part of the 2025 Victoria Regional Transit Plan (VRTP) engagement process, members of the public expressed strong interest in improved transit connections to the Victoria International Airport¹.

Based on input from the public and Commission and anticipating potential service expansion restraints in the coming years, staff have developed a network optimization option that could enable a one-seat ride between Downtown Victoria and YYJ sooner than the options developed in the *November 2024 Airport Service Review Report* (Appendix 14A).

However, this option involves trade-offs and may have impacts to existing riders discussed below. Given these impacts, staff recommend that public engagement on this new service concept be undertaken in early 2026 prior to any formal service change decisions by the Commission.

DISCUSSION

Restructure Existing Network for YYJ Direct Route

This service option would restructure the existing Peninsula network to enable a direct YYJ service with limited additional resources required. The proposal includes:

- **Extending Route 72** to serve YYJ on all trips
- **Discontinuing Route 88** (Airport/Sidney) and reallocating those service hours
- **Realigning Route 81** to cover areas currently served by Route 88 along Canora Rd, Ocean Ave, Stirling Way, and the West Sidney Industrial Park.

The revised Route 72 would operate every 30 minutes from 5:30 a.m.–8:30 p.m. on weekdays, 6:30 a.m.–8:30 p.m. on Saturdays, and 10:30 a.m.–7:30 p.m. on Sundays, with hourly service outside those times.

¹ From a subset of 12 key regional destinations, 65 per cent of respondents indicated that YYJ was within their top 3 priority destinations for the fewest connections in the network.

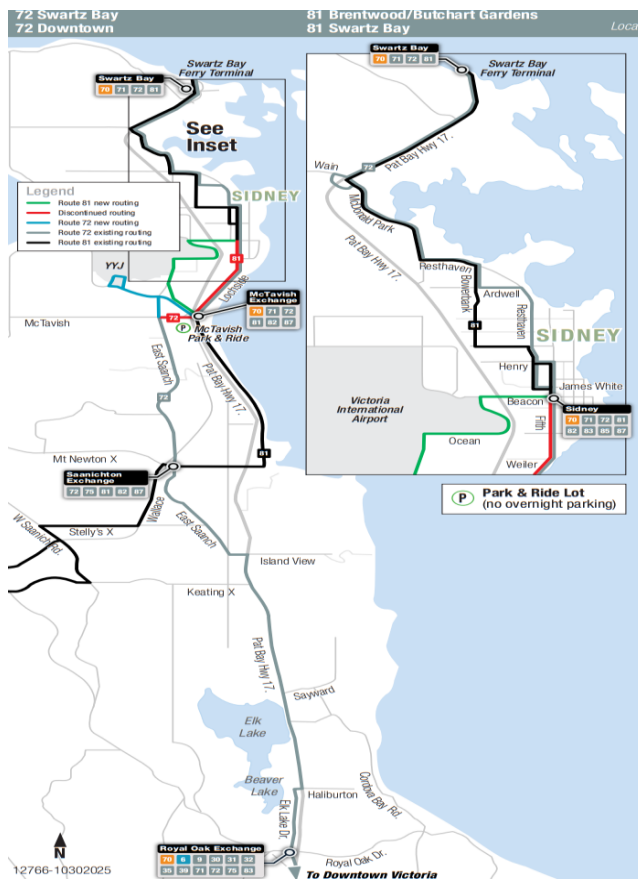


Figure 1: Routing Change Map for Service Option

Benefits

- **Earlier Implementation:** This service option does not require new infrastructure and could be implemented as early as September 2026, following public engagement and Commission approval.
- **Cost Neutral:** Although this service option is anticipated to cost an additional 750 annual service hours, it could be accommodated cost-neutrally through service optimization efforts.
- **Improved Directness:** Provides a 1-seat connection between Downtown Victoria and YYJ as requested through public engagement and direction from the Commission.
- **Improved Evening and Weekend service to YYJ:** Route 72 has a later service span and more service frequency on weekends² than the current Route 88. This would be an overall service improvement to YYJ.

² Route 88 currently has 60-minute service on weekends, with Route 72 providing 30-minute service for significant portions of the day on weekends.

Considerations

- **Service Impacts:**

- Travel time between Victoria and Sidney/Swartz Bay would increase by ~10 minutes on Route 72 for current riders.
- Frequency reduced from 30 to 60 minutes to West Sidney Industrial Area and Canora Rd/Ocean Ave/Stirling Way. Service frequency to West Sidney will be increased in January 2026; this change would revert this upcoming improvement.
- Reduced service along Lochside Drive in South Sidney due to the Route 81 realignment.
- South Sidney would lose direct access to the Brentwood Bay Ferry and Butchart Gardens.
- Potential for crowding or pass ups on Route 72 trips from Swartz Bay due to combined ferry and airport demand.

- **Equity and Accessibility:**

- Reduces convenience for many existing riders, particularly those traveling to/from Sidney and Swartz Bay, and residents in West Sidney and South Sidney.

Resources

This option would require minimal new investment (up to 750 annual service hours) and could be implemented cost-neutrally through service optimization efforts.

Ridership Estimate

This service option is anticipated to generate an additional 43,800 annual boardings from YYJ (60 weekday boardings and 60 alightings at YYJ within 2–3 years), representing a 75% increase in airport bus stop boardings and a 150% increase in overall airport-related ridership.

However, it is anticipated that the increased travel time to Sidney and Swartz Bay based on the change to Route 72 and the reduction in service on Lochside Dr. in South Sidney and on Canora Rd/Ocean Ave/Stirling Way and the West Sidney Industrial Park will reduce ridership by a comparable amount, leading to an overall lack of change in overall ridership levels.

Engagement

Engagement would include a two-week online survey and supporting open house events on the Saanich Peninsula. BC Transit would engage further with key stakeholders including but not limited to YYJ, BC Ferries, the Saanich Peninsula Chamber of Commerce, and the Central Saanich, Sidney, and North Saanich Community/Resident Associations as part of the public engagement process.

Timeline

Milestone	Target Date
Commission Direction to Proceed with Engagement	November 2025
Public Engagement	Early 2026
Commission Approval of Service Option	March 2026
Earliest Implementation	September 2026

Next Steps

Pending Commission approval, staff will:

- Conduct targeted public and stakeholder engagement in early 2026 to assess community and rider perspectives on the low-cost restructure option.
- Incorporate feedback into the 2026/27 Annual Service Plan for Commission approval in March 2026.

RECOMMENDATION

BC Transit staff recommend that the Commission **APPROVE** proceeding to public engagement on the YYJ direct service option as outlined in this report.

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Position: Vice President, Strategy, Planning and Public Affairs

Date prepared: November 6, 2025

Attachment(s):

Appendix 15a: Airport Service Review (2024)