

**DATE:** May 12, 2026

**PREPARED BY:** Jacob Burnley, Transit Planner

**SUBJECT:** Victoria International Airport (YYJ) Service Options Report

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## RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Victoria Regional Transit Commission (Commission):

- Review short-term service options as presented by staff.
- **APPROVE** one of the following options for service delivery supporting the Victoria International Airport (YYJ).

Attachment(s):

Appendix A: YYJ Service Option Details and Scenario Planning Specifications

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

There is a strong and consistent desire from both the public and the Commission to improve transit service to the Victoria International Airport (YYJ). Public engagement highlighted that while direct service from Victoria to YYJ is preferred, the most immediate concern is the current span of service, particularly early morning and late evening connections. Overall, 70% of respondents supported pursuing a medium- or long-term solution, with 75% favouring a direct route option.

At this time, expansion funding is not available to implement a new direct service. As a result, BC Transit, in collaboration with the Commission, has developed and evaluated short-term options that use existing resources to improve airport access. Engagement feedback on earlier concepts, such as diverting all Route 72 trips to YYJ, indicated support for direct service but raised concerns regarding travel time, on-board capacity, and impacts to existing riders.

In response, refined options have been developed for consideration, including further analysis of select short-term alternatives that could be feasibly implemented in the upcoming year. A new hybrid option, Option 3: Route 72 Hybrid: Select AM/PM Trips to YYJ, has also been introduced to balance improved airport access with minimized impacts to current service.

Regardless of the preferred short-term approach, the future implementation of direct service to YYJ will remain a primary expansion priority through the Victoria Regional Transit Plan, subject to the availability of expansion resources.

### **PURPOSE**

Based on public feedback, detailed service scenario planning, and ongoing engagement with the Commission, this report is intended to provide the Commission with a comprehensive and focused review of various short-term specific options for YYJ service, highlighting benefits and impacts, and to seek resolution on one of the options.

### **BACKGROUND**

#### Current Transit Service

Transit service to the Victoria International Airport is currently provided by Routes 87 and 88, which collectively provide service every 30-60 minutes, providing timed transfers to Routes 70, 71, and 72 at the McTavish Transit Exchange to Downtown Victoria.

Route 87 and 88 services operate between 6:30am and 9:00pm on weekdays and between 8:00am and 9:00pm on weekends.

#### Historical Airport Service Planning Context

In November 2023, the Commission passed a motion for staff to develop a report exploring options and implications of establishing a direct route from Downtown Victoria to the Victoria International Airport. To support this motion, planning staff brought back a YYJ Service Options Report in November 2024, which included four options to improve airport service. Two of these service options provided a direct route and two options required maintaining the current transfer at McTavish Exchange.

Given additional resource funding constraints, a short-term, cost-neutral option was requested by and presented to the Commission in November of 2025, identifying an opportunity to direct service to YYJ by altering Routes 72 and 81 and discontinuing Route 88. This cost-neutral service option was presented through public engagement in February 2026 along with three other medium and longer-term airport service options that require additional funding resources.

The summary report from this engagement was presented to the Commission on March 10<sup>th</sup>, 2026, and can be accessed via the [BC Transit-VRTC website](#).

Through this reporting, the Commission directed staff to return in May 2026 with more detailed information on the following options:

- Short-Term Service Option 1: Status Quo (with inclusion of YYJ direct service as Key Future Expansion Priority in the Victoria Regional Transit Plan)
- Short-Term Service Option 2: Route 72- All Trips to YYJ- Pilot Program (1-2 Year Only)
- Short-Term Service Option 3: Route 72 Hybrid Option- Select AM/PM trips to YYJ

### Current Funding Constraints

As indicated in the 2026/27 Annual Service Plan, while existing service levels are to be maintained across the network, there are no expansion resources available for 2026/27. This lack of additional resources means there are limited opportunities for airport service improvements. The planned increase in double-decker buses on high-frequency routes is expected to relieve capacity pressures and could free up to about 3,000 service hours and two peak buses for redeployment without reducing minimum service standards. Although staff recommend retaining these resources for addressing emerging operational needs within the system, a portion of these resources could be used to make minor improvements in airport service.

### **DISCUSSION AND SERVICE OPTIONS**

Based on extensive feedback and supportive engagement, a direct service to YYJ from downtown will be prioritized as a key future expansion priority in the Victoria Regional Transit Plan regardless of direction taken at this time. In the interim, staff have summarized the following three short-term airport service options for Commission consideration:

#### **Short-Term Service Option 1: Status Quo**

This option would retain existing routing, with BC Transit continuing to offer timed connections with Routes 87/88 service at McTavish Exchange. Existing Route 87/88 service would remain as currently scheduled and no change would be made to the Route 72.

#### **Benefits**

- This option would minimize disruption to existing riders while recognizing the strategic importance of a direct route as a key investment priority
- No additional service hours or buses are required, allowing any additional resources found through optimization to be redeployed to service reliability and on-time performance improvements on existing routes in the region.

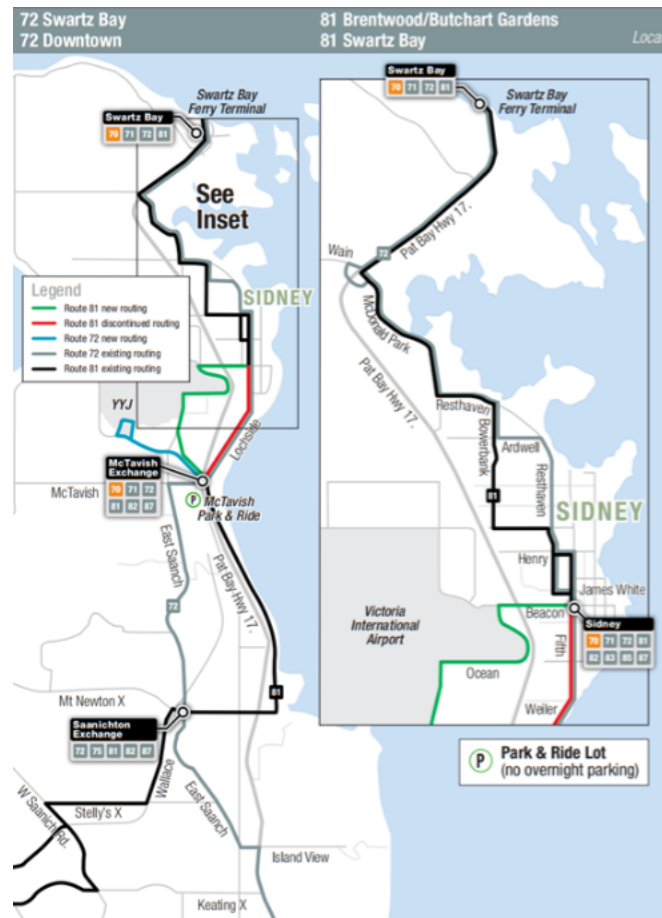
#### **Considerations**

- A direct service would not be implemented until new expansion funding is available.

#### **Short-Term Service Option 2: Route 72- All Trips to YYJ- Pilot Program (1-2 Yr. Only)**

This option would reroute all Route 72 trips to connect to YYJ. This service change would be implemented for 12-24 months as a pilot project and the Commission would make a future decision on whether to retain it permanently based on additional engagement and analysis.

As part of this service option, Route 88 (Airport/Sidney) would be discontinued, with those service hours reallocated to support the change. Route 81 would be realigned to cover areas currently serviced by Route 88 along Canora Rd and the West Sidney Industrial Park.



### Benefits

- This option would provide direct routing between Downtown Victoria and YYJ.
- This option would support earlier morning and later evening service to/from YYJ. How early to how late service operates (service span) was identified as a key concern in stakeholder and public engagement.
- This option would support improved regional access to employment at YYJ and simplify access for visitors arriving to/departing the region through YYJ.
- A pilot provides the opportunity to validate ridership demand for airport routing to inform a long-term service decision

### Considerations

Various service impacts to Sidney and the Peninsula, including:

- Reduced convenience for existing riders of Route 72 north of McTavish Exchange due to an additional 10 minutes of travel time (minimum) each way
- Reduced frequency to West Sidney Industrial Area and Canora Rd/Ocean Ave/Stirling Way, as well as along Lochside Drive in South Sidney
- Increased travel times between West Sidney and Downtown Victoria by up to 30 minutes due to broken connections at McTavish Exchange

- Upon detailed service planning, it is noted that modifications to Route 72 would also impact connections to other routes throughout the service day, particularly the first and last trips of various routes, impacting regional connectivity to YYJ and Swartz Bay Ferry Terminal
- Due to perceived rider convenience of Route 70 as compared to Route 72, this option would have an increased risk of passenger crowding on Route 70, with potential of buses passing people up (due to available on-board capacity, known as “pass-ups”)
- Based on route performance data from 2025, Route 70 was noted as having the highest rate of overcrowding across all routes across Greater Victoria
- With consideration to this option as a pilot project, noting the potential ridership lost due to Route 72 change. If route is returned to pre-pilot program service after 1-2 years, ridership could take several years to recover (based on historical precedent),

Additional details related to service planning and design for this Option is included in Appendix A: YYJ Service Option Details and Scenario Planning Specifications.

### **Short-Term Service Option 3: Route 72 Hybrid Option- Select AM/PM trips to YYJ**

This option would modify select trips on Route 72 to operate via YYJ to provide access to the airport during times when Route 88 does not operate.

#### **Benefits**

- Similar to Option 2, this option would support earlier morning and later evening service to/from YYJ. Span of the existing service (From how early to how late the current service operates) was identified as a key concern in stakeholder and public engagement.
- Via this option, Route 72 later morning trips (which currently fall within the service span period of the Route 87/88) would remain unimpacted. Noting these trips, which would be impacted via Option 2, facilitate significant commuter travel, as well as connections from various local services that would see later arrival times, reduced access, and increased travel times to YYJ versus the service currently being provided (with connection at McTavish Exchange).
- This option provides the opportunity to validate demand for direct service to the airport and inform future growth of the service.
- This option would provide a direct ride between Downtown Victoria and YYJ during key desired times of day (based on engagement and stakeholder feedback), while preventing larger impacts to existing service and Peninsula transit riders during peak periods.

#### **Considerations**

- Limited trip availability and opportunity for flexibility. Existing Route 72 trips are scheduled and timed to the Swartz Bay Ferry and commuter travel from Sidney.
- As with Option 2, the deviated trips may impact connections to various local and regional routes within Greater Victoria, albeit at a lower rate, and during select periods of the day only. Particular challenges are noted for the first/last trips of the day, and with heightened risk on weekends due to reduced service levels.

Additional details related to service planning and design for this option, including a prospective draft schedule of departure/arrival times, and a comprehensive list of impacted connections, is included in this report under Appendix A: YYJ Service Option Details and Scenario Planning Specifications.

### **Other Options Explored**

#### *Additional service span on Route 88*

This option considered an extension of the span of service by 30 minutes in the morning (6:00a.m.) and by 2.5-3 hours later in the evening (11:30p.m.-12:00a.m.)

- This option was noted for addressing the concern around the current span of service, which was noted consistently through stakeholder/public feedback, and in supporting ridership opportunities to/from YYJ and adjacent industrial areas.
- The extension of Route 88 service via this option did note a lower risk from the perspective of impacts to existing services but would still always require a transfer from Route 70/72 at McTavish Exchange.

#### *Operating every 2nd Route 72 trip via YYJ*

- This option was explored by BC Transit staff but was found to result in uneven and inconsistent arrival/departure times to/from Swartz Bay and Downtown Victoria, which could contribute to additional overcrowding on both Routes 70 and 72. Additionally, this option would require significant additional funding resources as Route 88 would need to be maintained to support service levels and coverage.

#### *Additional Route 71 service to offset Sidney impacts*

- This option was noted as requiring a significant service hour expansion funding investment to accommodate all-new round trips from Downtown Victoria.

#### *Out-of-service trips in the morning and late evening to and from the Peninsula operating as in-service (with consideration to peak direction of travel) to YYJ*

- This option was reviewed by BC Transit staff, however this was determined to be unable to facilitate additional access to YYJ in the early morning and late evening.

**Short-Term Service Option Trade-Offs Summary**

	Option 1: Status Quo	Option 2: Route 72 – All Trips to YYJ (Time limited Pilot: 1-2 years)	Option 3: Route 72 Hybrid Option- Select early AM and late evening trips to YYJ
<b>Transfer Required</b>	Yes	No	Sometimes  No transfers at select times in the morning/evening. Transfer required for most trips throughout the day.
<b>Travel Time Impact</b>	No change	High  Increases of 10 minutes each-way for all Route 72 trips	Medium  Increases of 10 minutes each-way for select Route 72 trips
<b>Service Hour Cost Impact</b>	No change	Cost-neutral  Replaces the Route 88	Cost-neutral  750 service hours would be reallocated from other parts of the system by realigning double decker use
<b>Passenger Comfort and Capacity Impact</b>	No change	High  Overcrowding risks during peak periods of service	Low
<b>Service Span to YYJ Improvements</b>	No change	Yes  Additional 30 minutes- 1 hour in morning. Additional 2-3 hours in evening (Depending on day of week).	Yes  Additional 30 minutes- 1 hour in morning. Additional 2-3 hours in evening (Depending on day of week).
<b>Other Regional Routes Impact</b>	No change	High  Impacts to/from connecting routes throughout the service day (including early morning and late evening)	Medium  Impacts to connecting routes during early morning, late evening (risk of missed connections to late trips of evenings on select routes)

## 11.1 – YYJ SERVICE OPTIONS

As per public feedback from recent and historical public engagement on the importance of improving connections to the Victoria International Airport, it is recommended that the Commission:

- Review short-term service options as presented by staff
- **APPROVE** one of the following options for service delivery supporting the Victoria International Airport (YYJ)

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Title: Transit Planner

Date: April 22, 2026

Reviewed by: Christy Harrold

Title: Vice President, Strategy,  
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Date: April 30, 2026

Appendix A: YYJ Service Option Details and Scenario Planning Specifications

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The following routes have been noted for existing service impacts as per Option 3: Route 72 Hybrid Option- Select AM/PM trips to YYJ.

Noting that these impacts would also be present via Option 2, but extended through the service day, with a significant number of additional broken connections noted later through morning and later evening peak periods, and during the midday.

DRAFT- Option 3: Route 72 Hybrid Option- Select AM/PM trips to YYJ

<b>Weekdays- Mornings (Departing from Downtown Victoria)</b>	<b>Weekdays- Evenings (Departure from YYJ)</b>
5:15a.m.-5:30a.m	10:15 p.m.-10:30 p.m.
	11:15 p.m.-11:30 p.m.
	12:15 a.m.-12:30 a.m.

<b>Saturday- Mornings (Departing from Downtown Victoria)</b>	<b>Saturday- Evenings (Departure from YYJ)</b>
5:15a.m.-5:30a.m.	10:15 p.m.-10:30 p.m.
6:15a.m.-6:30a.m.	11:15 p.m.-11:30 p.m.
	12:15 a.m.-12:30 a.m.

<b>Sunday- Mornings (Departing from Downtown Victoria)</b>	<b>Sunday- Evenings (Departure from YYJ)</b>
6:15a.m.-6:30a.m.	10:15 p.m.-10:30 p.m.
	11:15 p.m.-11:30 p.m.

Weekdays- Morning

On Weekdays in the morning, one northbound Route 72 trip would access YYJ directly. All trips after this on the Route 72 have current connections to the Routes 87/88 at McTavish Exchange (for access to YYJ). This trip would depart from Downtown Victoria between approximately 5:15a.m.-5:30a.m.

This trip would impact connections from the Route 15 from Esquimalt (first trip of day), and the Route 6 at Royal Oak Exchange. No additional major impacts noted.

Weekdays- Evening

On Weekdays in the later evening, three southbound Route 72 trips would access YYJ directly. These trips would extend service span of transit at YYJ by approx. three hours. These trips would depart YYJ at approximately the following times:

- 10:15p.m.-10:30p.m.
- 11:15p.m.-11:30p.m.
- 12:15a.m.-12:30a.m.

These trips would impact connections to the last trips of the day on the following routes:

- Route 6A (via Emily Carr)
- Route 31 (via Glanford/Carey)

Trips via select other routes would note additional wait times and overall travel times due to impacted connections from the Route 72.

### Saturday- Morning

On Saturdays in the morning, two northbound Route 72 trips would access YYJ directly. All trips after this on the Route 72 have current connections to the Routes 87/88 at McTavish Exchange (for access to YYJ). These trips would depart from Downtown Victoria between approximately the following times:

- 5:15a.m.-5:30a.m.
- 6:15a.m.-6:30a.m.

Noting that the 6:15a.m.-6:30a.m. most notably would impact connections with the Route 15 from Esquimalt (first trip of day).

Additional impacts noted would include:

#### *Departing from Downtown Victoria between 6:15-6:30.*

- Impacted connections with Route 15 from Esquimalt (first trip of the service day).
- Impacted connection from Route 26 (eastbound from Esquimalt, and westbound from UVic).
- Impacted connection from Route 40 at Highway 17 at McKenzie.

### Saturday- Evening

On Saturdays in the later evening, southbound Route 72 trips from YYJ would mirror weekday evening PM trips:

- 10:15p.m.-10:30p.m.
- 11:15p.m.-11:30p.m.
- 12:15a.m.-12:30a.m.

Noting that these trips would impact connections to the last trips of the day for various routes, including the following:

- Route 6A (via Emily Carr)
- Route 7N (via Fairfield)
- Route 31 (via Glanford/Carey)

Similar to weekday evenings, trips via select other routes would note additional wait times and overall travel times due to impacted connections from the Route 72.

### Sunday- Morning

On Sundays in the morning, one northbound Route 72 trip would access YYJ directly. This trip would depart from Downtown Victoria between approximately 6:15a.m.-6:30a.m. Noting that before 11:00a.m., extended wait times between the Route 72 and Routes 87/88 at McTavish Exchange currently exist. There is currently no northbound alignment between Routes 87/88 and Route 72 due to reduction in service in response to the COVID-19 pandemic (now hourly service instead of 30 min. service).

Noting that this trip would impact connections from the Route 6 at Royal Oak Exchange. No additional major impacts noted.

### Sunday- Evening

On Sundays in the later evening, two southbound Route 72 trips would access YYJ directly. These trips would depart YYJ at approximately the following times:

- 10:15p.m.-10:30p.m.
- 11:15p.m.-11:30p.m.

Noting that these trips would impact connections to the last trips of the day for various routes, including the following:

- Route 4 (Hillside)
- Route 6 (Quadra)
- Route 11 (Gorge-Tillicum)
- Route 14 (Craigflower)
- Route 27 (Shelbourne/Gordon Head)
- Route 31 (via Glanford/Carey)

With risk of impacted connections to last trips on major core routes, sensitivity is noted around the impacts to existing ridership. Instances of impacted regional connections to last trips (on Sundays) were previously reported by the public in response to recent service changes and addressed by BC Transit in early 2026.

Similar to other service days, trips via select other routes would note additional wait times and overall travel times due to impacted connections from the Route 72.