

Victoria Regional Transit Commission



DATE: July 28, 2026

PREPARED BY: Elise Wren, Government Relations Manager

SUBJECT: VRTS Custom Transit Service Area (Amendment – Highlands and Willis Point)

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Victoria Regional Transit Commission (VRTC) **APPROVE** the amendment to the Victoria Regional Transit System (VRTS) Custom Transit Service Area to include the northern portion of the District of Highlands and the Willis Point area (Juan de Fuca Electoral Area), improving alignment with service principles and equity in taxation and access.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report recommends including the northern portion of the District of Highlands and the Willis Point area (Juan de Fuca Electoral Area) in the VRTS Custom Transit Service Area. While the VRTC approved a more inclusive, region-wide service boundary in November 2025, these areas remain excluded despite being within the regional service area and contributing to the transit levy.

The proposed amendment addresses this gap by improving boundary consistency, responding to equity concerns, and reflecting the support from the District of Highlands and the Electoral Area Director. This change represents a refinement of the approved boundary.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to seek approval from the VRTC for an amendment to the approved 2025 Custom Transit Service Area. The amendment would expand the boundary to include the northern portion of the District of Highlands and the Willis Point area (Juan de Fuca Electoral Area), addressing a service gap and improving alignment between taxation and service eligibility.

BACKGROUND

The VRTS provides handyDART service to customers who are unable to use conventional transit without assistance. Service delivery is guided by a defined geographic service area boundary, which determines where trips can be scheduled and provided.

Historically, the Custom Transit Service Area has been structured using a 1.5-kilometre radius from the conventional fixed-route transit network, following the *Americans with Disabilities Act service boundary*. Under Title II of the *ADA*, this Accessible Service Delivery standard dictates that public transit agencies operating fixed-route bus or rail systems must provide

complementary paratransit service to anyone within a $\frac{3}{4}$ mile radius of their fixed routes and stations.

This approach aligns handyDART service with areas that are proximate to transit corridors and generally refers to the “ $\frac{3}{4}$ mile corridor rule.” As there is no Canadian federal accessibility standard that establishes fixed distance around conventional transit routes, BC Transit adopted this American standard as a provincial transit policy in accessibility planning and service delivery.

The previous service area, approved in 2011, was highly corridor-based and resulted in irregular boundaries that excluded portions of rural and low-density communities. In November 2025, the VRTC approved a revised service area that transitioned to a more inclusive, region-wide boundary to reduce fragmentation and improve regional consistency.

CUSTOM TRANSIT SERVICE AREA



Figure 1: Approved VRTS Custom Transit Service Area (November 2025)

CUSTOM TRANSIT SERVICE AREA

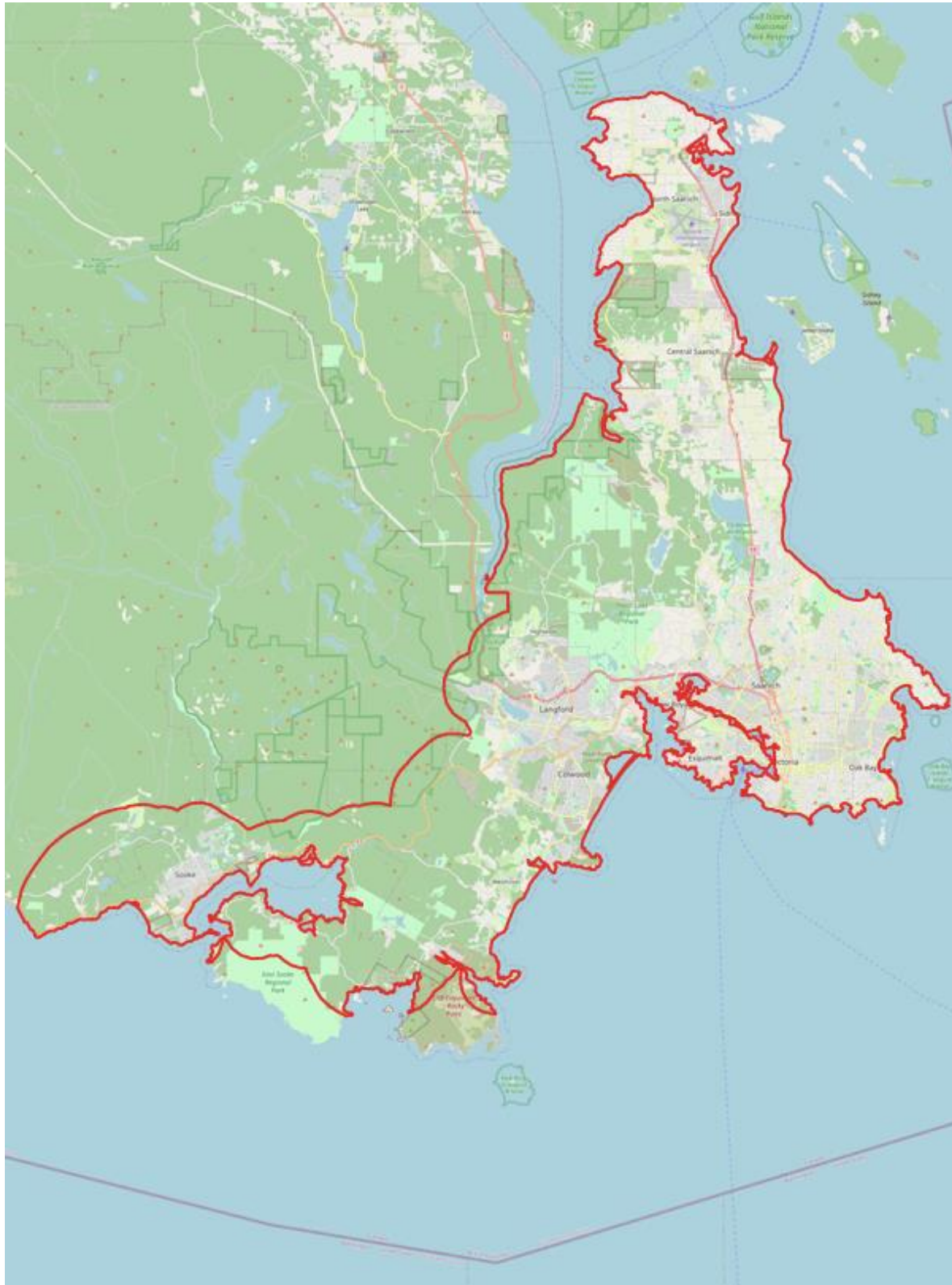


Figure 2: Proposed expanded VRTS Custom Transit Service Area

While the 2025 update improved coverage, portions of the northern District of Highlands and the Willis Point area remain outside the approved boundary.

DISCUSSION

The approved 2025 Custom Transit Service Area reflects a shift toward inclusivity, consistency, and a more community-oriented service philosophy. However, a gap remains in the northern District of Highlands and Willis Point.

The service area is generally informed by a 1.5 km proximity to conventional transit routes; however, the current boundary does not consistently reflect this principle in the Highlands and Willis Point areas. Some locations within or adjacent to this threshold remain excluded, creating misalignment between the intended methodology and actual coverage.

Residents of the northern District of Highlands and Willis Point are within the Victoria Regional Transit Service Area and contribute to the regional transit levy. Their exclusion from handyDART raises equity concerns, as they contribute financially but cannot access the service.

Local government support for this amendment has been identified. The District of Highlands Mayor supports inclusion and the Juan de Fuca Electoral Area Director, representing Willis Point, also supports extending the boundary.

From an operational perspective, this amendment represents a refinement to the existing boundary rather than a fundamental change to the approved 2025 approach. It is consistent with the intent to eliminate gaps and improve consistency. Existing handyDART resources would remain unchanged; however, a small increase in demand may occur.

Financial and Resourcing Implications

The proposed amendment is not expected to result in immediate significant financial impacts. Demand from newly included areas is anticipated to be incremental and will be monitored through ongoing service planning. Any future resource implications will be addressed through regular budget processes.

NEXT STEPS

Subject to VRTC Approval:

- Update the official Custom Transit Service Area map
- Incorporate the revised boundary into operational mapping tools
- Communicate the approved changes to the District of Highlands, the Juan de Fuca Electoral Area Director, and other regional partners to ensure awareness and alignment
- Update public-facing materials
- Monitor ridership and service demand, with any operational or resource implications brought forward through future service planning and budget processes.

CUSTOM TRANSIT SERVICE AREA

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