

Victoria Regional Transit Commission

BC Transit 520 Gorge Road East
June 13, 2023 | 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 Maja Tait, Chair, Commissioner Ryan Windsor, Commissioner Marie-Terese Little, Commissioner Marianne Alto, Commissioner Dean Murdock, Commissioner Kevin Murdoch, Commissioner Chris Coleman, Commissioner Colin Plant, Cleo Philp, Student Representative, University of Victoria

BC Transit Staff:

Chelsea Mossey, Senior Manager, Government Relations; Chris Fudge, Director, Government Relations; Christy Ridout, Vice-President, Strategy and Public Affairs; Matt Boyd, Acting General Manager, Victoria Regional Transit; Greg Hill, Director, Financial Planning & Analysis; Ryan Campbell, Senior Regional Finance Manager; Levi Megenbir, Senior Transit Planner; James Wadsworth, Manager, Project Development; Ryan Dennis, Director, Revenue Development; Tessa Stewart, Acting Manager, Business Development Advisor; Christine Lewis, Executive Assistant and Divisional Coordinator (Recorder)

Regrets:

None

1. CALL TO ORDER AND APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Chair Commissioner Maja Tait called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m.

Motion MOVED by Commissioner Marianne Alto and SECONDED by Commissioner Kevin Murdoch the agenda as written.

CARRIED

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM MARCH 13, 2023

Motion MOVED by Commissioner Kevin Murdoch and SECONDED Commissioner Colin Plant to approve the minutes as written.

CARRIED

3. CHAIR'S REMARKS

I would like start this morning by introducing Chelsea Mossey, the new Senior Manager of Government Relations for the Victoria Regional Transit System. Chelsea brings more than 10 years of experience with BC Transit, and she will be the key liaison for the Commission moving forward. Please join me in welcoming her.

I would also like to welcome our new student representative on the Commission, Cleo Philp. Cleo is a fourth year political science student at the University of Victoria. We look forward to having your contribution on the Commission this coming year. Welcome.

Since we last met in March, a pilot has begun on the new Umo electronic fare system in the Victoria Regional Transit System. We will hear more about this later in the meeting but I wanted to acknowledge the hard work of BC Transit staff to make this happen. This launch has been

years in the making and will make our fare payment system more user friendly and accessible for transit users. I know the official launch is coming and we are looking forward to being part of that.

With the launch of the blink RapidBus from the Westshore to downtown we are focused on helping citizens in this region make the transition to transit as we look to move people out of cars into other modes of transportation.

Its only June and we are already anticipating a bad fire season due the increased warming trends and little rainfall. The actions we take today will help future generations. Just last week, BC Transit and the Victoria Regional Transit Commission provided free transit as part of Clean Air Day. The goal of Clean Air Day is to raise awareness about air quality and climate change, as well as inspire people to consider changing habits in an effort to decrease their individual greenhouse gas emissions.

The arrival of 10 battery electric buses this year is also an important step forward to helping to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions. By moving towards a clean green transit fleet we are heading in the right direction towards addressing the challenges we all face as our climate continues to warm each year.

NOTICE OF MOTION

None

4. 2022/23 FINANCIAL & PERFORMANCE REPORT – FOR APPROVAL

RYAN CAMPBELL

The Commission was presented with a financial performance report for fiscal year 2022/23. Passenger revenue was 11.4% above budget, due to higher than budgeted passenger trips and higher UPASS enrollment. \$10.9 million of Safe Restart Funding was used in the 2022/23 fiscal year. Local contribution was 4.1% below budget due to higher than budgeted passenger revenues Fuel Tax Revenue, which is generated from the 5.5 cent per litre Fuel Tax levy, was 2.9% below budget and down 0.7% from last year.

Operating expenses were 2.1% above budget for 2022/23. Operations costs were very slightly over budget due to general wage increases, higher overtime costs and rising fuel costs. Fleet maintenance was 2.5% above budget due to higher overtime and parts expenses, partly offset by lower labour costs due to ongoing labour shortages. Facilities maintenance was 17.4% above budget primarily due to higher costs of outside services, expenses from CNG facility maintenance, a garage flood and other emergency repairs. Administration costs were 5.4% above budget due to increased expenses related to IT, recruitment, marketing and labour, as well as general wage increases.

MOTION MOVED by Commissioner Ryan Windsor, SECONDED by Commissioner Kevin Murdoch to APPROVE the Financial and Performance Summary

CARRIED

5. FUEL TAX SUMMARY – FOR INFORMATION

RYAN CAMPBELL

The Commission was presented with a report showing a comparison of pre-pandemic fuel tax revenue compared to 2022/23, which showed fuel tax has declined as a proportion of overall funding. The Fuel Tax levy was introduced in the Victoria Regional Transit System in 1993 and has been set at 5.5 cents per litre since 2018. The reduced fuel tax revenue can be attributed to different pressures including increased cost of fuel, flexible working patterns and alternative fuel sources. It is difficult to predict fuel consumption trends in the future, but the slight decrease in fuel consumption over the past few years is apparent.

MOTION moved by Commissioner Ryan Windsor directing staff to create a report on an increase to the fuel tax to coincide with the end of Safe Restart funding in 2025.

CARRIED by unanimous consent

Amendment MOTION by Commissioner Ryan Windsor for the report to include alternative revenue sources beyond the fuel tax as part of the request of the Province.

CARRIED by unanimous consent

MOTION by Commissioner Colin Plant to direct the Chair of Commission to work with staff to write Premier Eby, MOTI Minister Fleming and Finance Minister Conroy to ask for the Province to provide information on its future plans to sustainably support the Victoria Regional Transit System.

CARRIED by unanimous consent

AMENDMENT MOTION by Commissioner Marianne Alto defer sending the letter to the Province to next Commission meeting SECONDED BY Commissioner Dean Murdock.

DEFEATED

MOTION MOVED by Commissioner Ryan Windsor, SECONDED by Commissioner Chris Coleman to RECEIVE the Fuel Tax Summary for INFORMATION

CARRIED

6. FARE STRATEGY – FOR APPROVAL
TESSA STEWART

The Commission was presented with a report providing supporting information and the proposed process to initiate a fare review of the Victoria Regional Transit System. The Commission provided direction to staff to initiate a fare review, and to present the proposed fare options to the Commission for approval at the next meeting in September 2023. This will be followed by consultation with the public. In February 2024 staff will present the Commission with the final report, including engagement results, and Staff will seek approval to implement a fare change in July 2024.

CARRIED by unanimous approval

7. PLANNING & INFRASTRUCTURE UPDATE – FOR INFORMATION
LEVI MEGENBIR, JAMES WADSWORTH

The Planning department presented an update on changes to service delivery this summer, including changes at the Swartz Bay Ferry Terminal and additional service to and from the Peninsula, largely due to rebound in tourism. Staff also presented details of the fall service change, which include the reintroduction of seasonal routes and service levels to align with the start of school and the reintroduction of extended late night service on Fridays and Saturdays. A Local Area Transit Plan update for James Bay and the Jubilee area is planned to start later this year. Engagement will take place regarding service changes along Gorge Road. Positive ridership recovery continues and the launch of the the West Shore-Downtown RapidBus Line on April 10, 2023 has resulted in a 23% ridership increase when compared to the Route 50 last year during the same period.

CARRIED by unanimous consent

8. WESTSHORE LINE RAPIDBUS STATION IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY – FOR APPROVAL
JAMES WADSWORTH

The Commission was presented with a report on phasing to finalize the design and construct RapidBus Stations along the Westshore Line. The selected option will allow for an accelerated ability to establish the Blink RapidBus brand and improve the attractiveness and accessibility of transit service.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Commission **APPROVE** Option 2 for the delivery of RapidBus Stations for the Westshore Line.

MOTION MOVED by Commissioner Ryan Windsor and SECONDED by Commissioner Marie-Terese Little to APPROVE the Westshore Line RapidBus Station Implementation Strategy.

CARRIED

9. OPERATIONS UPDATE – FOR INFORMATION
MATT BOYD

The Commission heard that ridership continues to return at an encouraging rate, and that progress continues on transformational projects including the implementation of the electronic fare collection system (Umo) and the introduction of Battery Electric Buses into regular service. Scheduled service delivered for April and May was above the target of 99.5%. The estimated amount of people who have been unable to board a trip because the bus is at capacity is higher than in 2022. This is related to ridership levels returning to pre-pandemic levels. To address these pass-ups, the planning team is collaborating with Operations to identify opportunities to address them through schedule enhancements or vehicle changes. Heading into the summer months, Victoria Operations will be focusing on upholding the safety of our Operators and customers and preparing for inclement weather, especially heat waves or poor air quality.

MOTION MOVED by Commissioner Chris Coleman and SECONDED by Commissioner Kevin Murdoch to RECEIVE the Operations Update for information.

CARRIED

10. ATAC UPDATE– FOR INFORMATION
MATT BOYD

The Commission received a report on the Accessible Transportation Advisory Committee to approve a new committee. Recruitment began 2022 and included opportunities for the public to participate. The new committee will include new and re-elected members for a two-year appointment.

MOTION MOVED by Commissioner Marianne Alto and SECONDED by Commissioner Chris Coleman to RECEIVE the ATAC Update and for information.

CARRIED

11. STUDENT UPDATE – FOR INFORMATION
CLEO PHILP

The Commission heard that more students are using the McKenzie Corridor as they are living farther out of town. They are interested in seeing a rapid transit route on this corridor as it would benefit students going to and from UVic and Camosun. Currently buses can only accommodate two bicycles and students would like to see if this can be increased so they can use their bicycles on campus while using transit to commute to post-secondary institutions.

MOTION MOVED by Commissioner Chris Coleman and SECONDED by Commissioner Marianne Alto to RECEIVE the student update for information.

CARRIED

MOTION BY Commissioner Marianne Alto and SECONDED by Commissioner Kevin Murdoch to adjourn meeting at 11:24 a.m.

CARRIED

NEXT SCHEDULED MEETING

September 12, 2023