

**Date June 14, 2022**

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**PREPARED FOR:** the Victoria Regional Transit Commission Committee

**PURPOSE**

To provide the Victoria Regional Transit Commission (VRTC) with fall 2022 service level recommendations for **APPROVAL**.

**BACKGROUND**

In January 2022, transit service for the winter 2022 schedule was temporarily reduced by 7% (in comparison to fall 2021) to mitigate against service reliability challenges resulting from increases to operator sick time and ongoing challenges with recruiting new operators into the labour pool. These labour challenges have continued into spring 2022, which has caused ongoing service reliability challenges and a significant number of same-day trip cancellations.

Despite strong efforts to address recruitment and retention and return to fall 2021 service levels, operator numbers are still forecast to fall short of what is required to reliably meet that level of service. Proactively addressing the labour shortages positions BC Transit to consistently deliver scheduled services to riders and minimizes same-day cancellations.

**DISCUSSION**

Fall service levels are typically higher than spring and summer as the return of in-person sessions at post-secondary institutions drive ridership on key routes in the network. As a result, fall and winter service changes are designed to have the highest service hour levels, in comparison to spring and summer when ridership demand decreases slightly.

Service levels that were reduced in January 2022 were expected to be reinstated in September 2022. Unfortunately, estimated operator numbers for fall 2022 are much lower than initially predicted which requires the continuation of service reductions made in January 2022. This is a proactive approach to ensure that BC Transit can deliver its published schedule reliably and minimize the disruption of same day cancellations. Although an increase in customer complaints may be expected, as operator numbers increase, additional trips can be added to the system as necessary, and every effort will be made to reinstate service levels as part of the winter and spring 2023 schedules.

**Fall 2022 Seasonal Service Change (Effective September 5, 2022)**

- Seasonal service changes on the following routes, including the reintroduction of school trips and post-secondary serving trips that are seasonally removed for the spring and summer.
  - 4, 6, 7, 8, 11, 12, 14, 15, 17, 21, 22, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 35, 39, 52, 59, 60, 81
- To ensure service reliability during ongoing labour challenges, the temporary service reductions will be continued in fall 2022. The reductions have been targeted at low

performing trips in order to minimize customer impact and will be reinstated when the labour situation is resolved.

- Due to road safety upgrades in James Bay, Bay G of the Legislature exchange will need to be relocated and associated routes will be realigned within the Legislature precinct. This is the first in a series of changes that will occur over the next decade to adapt to adjacent development activity and scheduled underground and surface infrastructure renewal plans. BC Transit and the City of Victoria are working collaboratively on plans to improve functionality, safety and end of trip amenities for both passengers and drivers as a part of these changes.

### Service Change Outlook For 2023

The following are key initiatives that BC Transit is aiming to implement in 2023 using the expansion hours that were deferred in 2021. Note that these service enhancements are subject to labour availability:

- The reinstatement of service levels that were temporarily reduced in 2022 as a result of the ongoing labour challenges
- Late night service was suspended at the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic for efficient use of resources. With late night activities returning, BC Transit is looking to reintroduce this service in early 2023; and
- Pursue RapidBus expansion and other service priorities included in local area transit plans.

Note that not all the service priorities can be implemented in 2023 and may require prioritization through the transit evaluation process (TEPs). Detailed information will be provided at an upcoming Commission meeting.

### RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Victoria Regional Transit Commission **RECEIVE** the fall 2022 service recommendations for **APPROVAL**.

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