

Victoria Regional Transit Commission

BC Transit 520 Gorge Road East and WebEx
February 23, 2021 | 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.

APPROVED MINUTES

The Victoria Regional Transit Commission conducts its business on the homelands of the Songhees and Esquimalt First Nations.

Present:

Susan Brice, Chair and Directors: Fred Haynes, Geoff Orr, Kevin Murdoch, Maja Tait, Rob Martin, Lisa Helps, Sharmarke Dubow and Quinn Cunningham, Student Representative

BC Transit Staff:

Christy Ridout, *Vice President, Business Development*; Kevin Schubert, *General Manager, Victoria Regional Transit*; Matt Boyd, *Director, Corporate and Strategic Planning*; Levi Timmermans, *Director, Infrastructure Management*; Lisa Trotter, *Senior Manager, Government Relations*; Megan Hill, *Director, Budgeting and Forecasting*; Chris Gregory, *Senior Revenue Advisor*; Levi Megenbir, *Senior Transit Planner* and Tina Sulea, *Executive Assistant (Recorder)*

Regrets:

None

1. CALL TO ORDER AND APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Chair Susan Brice called the meeting to order at 9:01 a.m.

Motion MOVED by Director Helps and SECONDED by Director Tait to approve the agenda as written.

CARRIED

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM JANUARY 19, 2021

Motion MOVED by Director Murdoch and SECONDED by Director Tait to approve the minutes as written.

CARRIED

3. CHAIR'S REMARKS

On February 10th, I was made aware of the sustainable transit-funding announcement from the Government of Canada. While we have yet to delve into the details of the impacts of this announcement I am pleased to see The Government of Canada continuing to support the essential role transit plays and this funding will have a positive effect in advancing our vision for public transportation our region. We met with Minister Wilkinson to discuss federal support for public transit in BC.

We look forward to celebrating project announcements, milestones, and completions with the Government of Canada and Province of BC in the years to come.

The handyDART custom transit system request for proposals process has concluded and been awarded to First Canada to continue operating custom transit services for the region, and of course, BC Transit continues to operate our conventional services.

In addition, our student member will provide a brief update at meetings to give insight into transit from the perspective of our post secondary students. Thank you Quinn for bringing forward this update.

I am pleased to report BC Transit staff have been out in the region both in person and virtually at council meetings in Saanich, Victoria, View Royal, and at the CRD Transportation Committee, with more communities planned for future months. Staff have provided updates on our VRTC 10 year Vision, plans for RapidBus, and have done a wonderful job of communicating all the great work done here at this table and keeping the region informed on transit ridership and recovery.

4. CORRESPONDENCE

Claremont Secondary School email from Parker, a grade 11 student, asking for free fares for no more than a week to encourage Claremont students to use greener transportation.

Discussion

- It was recommended to address this with agenda item 12 Special Fare Days

Motion MOVED by Director Murdoch and SECONDED by Director Haynes to defer the correspondence to agenda item 12 Special Fare Days.

CARRIED

District of Saanich letter of support for transit climate action targets was received.

Motion MOVED by Director Haynes and SECONDED by Councillor Dubow to receive the correspondence for information.

CARRIED

City of Victoria letter of nomination to appoint Councillor Ben Isitt to the VRTC was received. The request has been sent to the Province to make the final decision. Councillor Dubow has finished serving a two year term on the VRTC.

Motion MOVED by Director Helps and SECONDED by Councillor Dubow to receive the correspondence for information.

CARRIED

Vancouver Island Rail Transit report was received.

Discussion

- It was acknowledged that Gwyer Webber has put a lot of effort into generating the report
- It was recommended that when referring to staff that staff address the concepts in terms of costing and the planning involved in Gwyer Webbers report.

Motion MOVED by Director Orr and SECONDED by Director Dubow to receive the correspondence for information and refer to staff for review.

CARRIED

UVSS Request Letter asking for the VRTC's support to make the student seat a voting member was received.

Motion MOVED by Quinn Cunningham and SECONDED by Director Haynes to move the correspondence for discussion with agenda item 9 Notice of Motion.

CARRIED

5. NOTICE OF MOTION – MAYOR HELPS, CITY OF VICTORIA

Motion MOVED by Director Helps and SECONDED by Director Dubow that the Commission Chair write a letter to the Minister of Transportation requesting that the student seat on the Victoria Regional Transit Commission be made into a voting seat.

Discussion

- There was concern that VRTC voting members are elected officials representing taxpayers within their respective municipalities to legislate taxes and student members are not elected by residents to vote on financial decisions.
- Support would be given if there was an option to have the student member vote on issues that do not have a financial impact to residents.
- It was recommended to form a student committee body that would inform the VRTC of student issues
- There was concern regarding the impact to municipalities that are not represented on the VRTC and how they are responsible for financial decisions made by the VRTC that impact their constituents

Motion to REFER: MOVED by Director Orr and SECONDED by Director Helps to refer to staff to report back to the Commission with a summary of similar transit authorities that include citizen representatives with voting privileges with options to encourage more formal student representation.

DEFEATED

with Chair Brice, Directors Martin, Tait, Murdoch and Haynes OPPOSED

Main Motion: That the Commission Chair write a letter to the Minister of Transportation requesting that the student seat on the Victoria Regional Transit Commission be made into a voting seat.

DEFEATED

with Chair Brice, Directors Martin, Orr, Tait, Murdoch and Haynes OPPOSED

Motion ARISING: MOVED by Director Murdoch and SECONDED by Director Haynes that staff be directed to bring options for an Educational Advisory Committee to a future Board meeting for consideration.

CARRIED

6. FINANCIAL AND PERFORMANCE SUMMARY: Q3 YTD – MEGAN HILL

Financial and performance summary was presented. Year to date actuals to December 31, 2020 were reviewed including: revenue and passenger trips, provincial operating contribution, fuel tax, local contributions, operations expenses, maintenance, administration, lease fees and the transit fund. Performance metrics were reviewed for conventional and custom transit service.

Discussion

- There was a question regarding if lowering fares would increase ridership.
 - Fares are inelastic meaning that changes in fare structures in the past have had no significant affect on ridership
 - When Universities, Colleges and businesses bring people back in-person that will have a significant impact on ridership

Motion MOVED by Director Martin and SECONDED by Director Orr to receive the Financial and Performance Summary: Q3 YTD for information.

CARRIED

7. 2021/22 ANNUAL SERVICE PLAN BUDGET & TAX REQUISITION – MEGAN HILL

Due to complexities associated with COVID-19 the 2021/2022 Annual Service Plan includes two distinct plans including base level service and the expansion plan subject to securing additional expansion funding in the provincial budget. The base level service plan proposes gradual increase in service levels to meet requirements of the Safe Restart Agreement including improving service reliability, service level changes to better match demand, minor improvements from endorsed local area transit plans, seasonal service changes and the realignment of route 53 to extend to the Victoria General Hospital with improved year round service to Thetis Lake and select trips continuing to downtown Victoria. The expansion plan seeks to expand service to new areas, improve reliability, improve frequent transit and rapid transit networks and further develop the local area transit network.

Discussion

- Correction: Titles on Table 5: Options for Average Per Household Transit Levy say 2020/21 but the correct title is 2021/22
- It was recommended to keep transit affordable during the upcoming year while recovering from the pandemic
- There was concern that a 0% increase would have a negative impact on the transit fund and could result in larger increases in the future

Motion MOVED by Director Martin and SECONDED by Director Orr to APPROVE Option 1 for Average Per Household Transit Levy of the 2021/22 Annual Service plan budget & tax requisition.

DEFEATED

with Chair Brice, Directors Martin, Dubow, Murdoch and Haynes OPPOSED

Motion MOVED by Director Murdoch and SECONDED by Director Martin to APPROVE Option 2 for Average Per Household Transit Levy of the 2021/22 Annual Service plan budget & tax requisition.

CARRIED

with Directors Helps and Tait OPPOSED

Motion MOVED by Director Murdoch and SECONDED by Director Haynes to APPROVE the local commission share of expansion in 2021/22 be funded 100% from the Transit Fund.

CARRIED

8. SPECIAL FARE DAYS – CHRIS GREGORY

A summary of special fares days to reduce the need for ad hoc approvals outside of the regular meeting cycle was reviewed. Annual Special Fares Days approved included complimentary transit to current and retired armed forces and police officers in uniform on Remembrance Day, complimentary transit to customers after 6:00 p.m. on New Year's Eve, complimentary transit to all customers on municipal, provincial and federal election days and also approved additional free fares days for Earth Day, Clean Air Day and Go By Bike Week and Day for those utilizing bike racks or carrying a helmet.

Discussion

- BC Transit has not yet been approached by Island Health with regard to providing free transit to public going to vaccination centres
- There was question with regard to financial implications would be for the additional three free fare days
 - It would cost approximately \$100k per year in lost revenue
- The request from Claremont Secondary School for free transit for a week for Claremont students will instead be addressed by providing free transit to the entire Victoria Regional Transportation System for Earth Day, Clean Air Day and Go By Bike Week and Day.

Motion MOVED by Director Martin and SECONDED by Director Orr to APPROVE the continuation of existing special fare days for conventional and handyDART service on: Remembrance Day, New Year's Eve, Election Days and the addition of Earth Day, Clean Air Day and Go By Bike Week and Day.

CARRIED

Motion MOVED by Director Martin and SECONDED by Director Tait to refer staff to engage with Island Health Authority regarding opportunities to provide transportation to vaccination centres.

CARRIED

9. PLANNING UPDATE – LEVI MEGENBIR

Winter 2021 Seasonal Service Change (Effective January 4, 2021)

The winter seasonal service change provided minor modifications to service levels and running times to reflect the ongoing changes in travel demand and travel times due to COVID-19. Significant analysis was carried out to appropriately target service levels to minimize overcrowding, maintain frequency and coverage and ensure service reliability within the transit system.

Spring 2021 Seasonal Service Change (Effective April 5, 2021)

The spring seasonal service change will provide modifications to service levels and running times to reflect the ongoing change in travel demand and travel times due to COVID-19. New service will be added to route 46 during midday and early evening, later evening

service span on routes 3 and 10. There will be a routing change on route 1 to move service from Humboldt Street onto Fairfield Road. Route 75 will have a schedule redesign to offer better connections to route 72 at Saanichton Exchange, and will have service level improvements on Saturday to meet increased passenger demand at Butchart Gardens.

Motion MOVED by Director Tait and SECONDED by Director Helps to receive the Planning update for information.

CARRIED

10. LOCAL AREA TRANSIT PLANS (LATP) – LEVI MEGENBIR

The local area transit plans that were reviewed for approval were the Broadmead-Cordova Bay and Esquimalt-View Royal.

The Peninsula LATP has begun, with stakeholder engagement slated for April and public engagement in May. The West Shore LATP Refresh will begin in spring 2021.

Motion MOVED by Director Helps and SECONDED by Director Martin to APPROVE the LATPs Broadmead-Cordova Bay and Esquimalt-View Royal.

CARRIED

11. INFRASTRUCTURE UPDATE – LEVI TIMMERMANS

Infrastructure updates for the following projects were provided: handyDART Centre in View Royal, Operations and Maintenance Facilities Master Plan, Westshore Transit Priority Plan and Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure Transit Related Projects.

Motion MOVED by Director Helps and SECONDED by Director Tait to receive the infrastructure updates for information.

CARRIED

12. OPERATIONS UPDATE – KEVIN SCHUBERT

Operations update was provided. Delivery of scheduled service remains very high at an average rate of 99.85% throughout September to December. During the fall and December schedules, an average compliance to our mandatory face covering policy was been observed through random audits to be 97%. Since the week of November 23rd, compliance has remained consistently at 99%. Customer complaints have overall seen a reduction since the beginning of October. We continue to maintain a capacity aboard our buses at the equivalent of a seated load to a maximum of 66% of normal capacity. Despite this reduction in capacity, a little over 4% of trips reach this threshold and the number of pass-ups remains relatively low.

Motion MOVED by Director Tait and SECONDED by Director Helps to receive the operations updates for information.

CARRIED

13. ATAC MINUTES – KEVIN SCHUBERT

ATAC minutes from the December 11, 2020 ATAC meeting were provided.

Motion MOVED by Director Helps and SECONDED by Director Murdoch to receive the ATAC minutes for information.

CARRIED

14. STUDENT UPDATE – QUINN CUNNINGHAM

A verbal update was given. There is uncertainty regarding classes resuming in-person in fall 2021. Until vaccines are rolled out Camosun will continue the hybrid approach that sees many programs being delivered online and approximately 3,000 students traveling to the Interurban and Lansdowne campuses for learning programs that require students to be in-person. UVic Student Society conducted a survey on student transit experiences during the pandemic. Survey results were reviewed and sent to VRTC members.

ADJOURNMENT

Chair Brice indicated meeting would move IN CAMERA.

Motion MOVED by Councillor Dubow and SECONDED by Director Martin to adjourn the public meeting and move IN CAMERA.

ADJOURNED at 11:33 a.m.

NEXT SCHEDULED MEETING

Tuesday, June 8, 2021 at 9:00 a.m.