

# Victoria Regional Transit Commission

Chair and Members

September 12, 2023

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**PREPARED FOR:** Victoria Regional Transit Commission

## PURPOSE

To provide the Victoria Regional Transit Commission (“the Commission”) with a summary report regarding the delivery of service and key activities since the last Commission meeting. This report is presented to the Commission for INFORMATION.

## INTRODUCTION

Stephen Anderson assumed the role of General Manager of the Victoria Regional Transit System (VRTS) as of July 17, 2023. Since starting with BC Transit in 2009, Stephen has been intimately involved in both Victoria and Regional transit operations through his role as Manager of Corporate Safety and Security, and since August 2020, as Director, Regional Operations.

As transit ridership continues to return at a pace higher than similar systems across Canada, the VRTS remains focused on delivering transit service that is safe, reliable, and easy to use. The team continues with the roll out of Umo, our electronic fare collection system, and the introduction of our battery electric demonstration bus into regular service. These and other planned projects coming to the VRTS are being set up to succeed with planning and coordination at all levels.

Since the last report to the Commission in June, service in the VRTS has continued to meet scheduled service targets with few exceptions. Scheduled service delivered between June and August met the target of 99.5 per cent.

Recruitment efforts continue for key frontline positions. Operator numbers are nearing the target of 575, currently at 564 as of August 2023. Likewise, under the skilled workers category of mechanics, we are currently 6 below our target of 56.

## NOTABLE UPDATES

### Always Safe

- **Canadian Urban Transit Authority (CUTA) Transit Safety Taskforce:** There have recently been a number of violent incidents reported on transit throughout Canada. In response, CUTA’s Transit Safety Taskforce, along with the Federal and Provincial governments are seeking changes to make transit safer. While incidents of this type are rare in the VRTS, societal issues that play out on public transit, including homelessness, substance use, and mental health concerns continue to challenge the perception of safety on board buses. In response, BC Transit is partnering with CUTA on an ongoing, focused effort to develop plans for addressing concerns related to violent acts taking place on transit systems in BC and across Canada.

- **Incident Management:** BC Transit’s Safety and Security teams continues to collaborate with local law enforcement and community partners on strategies to address the perception of unsafe transit and reported events in our communities. A recent incident on August 11, 2023, included a request by the Victoria Police Department to intercept a bus with an individual who had made threat with a knife in our community. Due to a swift collaborated response, the incident was quickly resolved.
- **Canada Day:** The BC Transit team worked exceptionally hard on Canada Day to ensure thousands of visitors got to and from downtown Victoria’s celebrations safely. Coordination of this event takes many months, and it would not be possible without our partnerships and the collaborative efforts of many agencies in the Capital Region. This year, BC Transit updated its policy, which previously prohibited all alcohol on board buses on Canada Day. Instead, the policy on Canada Day is now the same as any other day, with open alcohol or consumption of alcohol prohibited on board. This updated policy posed no challenges to the safe delivery of transit service on this busy day.



### Engaged People

- Collective bargaining begins shortly with the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) 451 Local. This follows two successful contract ratifications in the VRTS with Unifor and MoveUp earlier this year.
- BC Transit has a long-standing history of employee recognition. Employee-created and driven, the Recognizing Excellence and Values (REV) program recognizes employees for outstanding accomplishments including length of service, safe driving and safe working, retirement, the achievement of “Million Miler” status, as well as the demonstration of BC Transit's Core Values.

REV Week concludes annually with the Employee Recognition Ceremony, which was held this year on June 7, 2023.



Operator, Coralie Leslie receiving 40 years Safe Driving Achievement

### Satisfied Customers

- Service Delivered:** Since the last report to the Commission in June, the VRTS has continued to meet scheduled service targets with few exceptions. Scheduled service delivered was 99.5 per cent between June and August (Figure 1). Note that the drop in service delivery in December was related to the inclement weather.

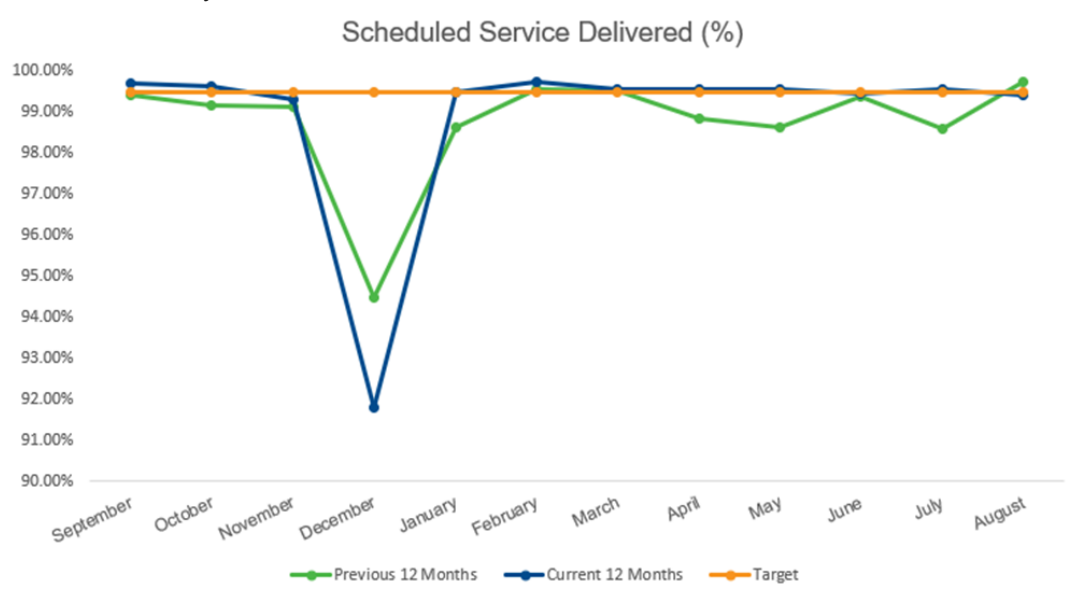


Figure 1: Scheduled Service Delivered

- Pass-Ups:** In June through August 2023, the estimated number of people who were unable to board a bus because it was at capacity was 11,579, which is higher than the 7,332 pass-ups in 2022. This is related to ridership levels returning to pre-pandemic levels. The Planning team is collaborating with Operations to identify opportunities to address these pass-ups through schedule enhancements or vehicle changes. The table

below provides a summary of the estimated number of people who were unable to board a bus because it was at capacity.

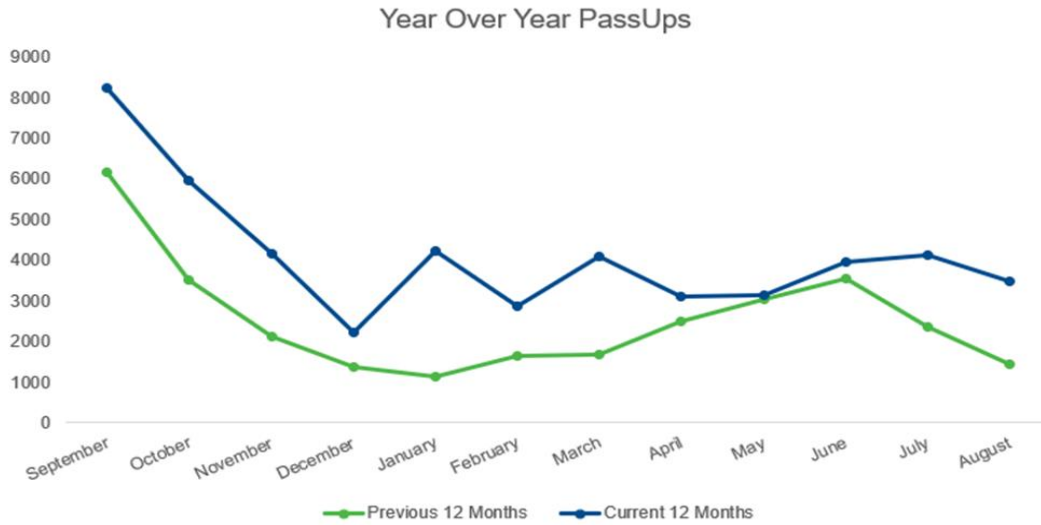


Figure 2: Year Over Year Pass-Ups

- On September 5<sup>th</sup> service changes were introduced in the VRTS. Changes included introducing extended late-night service to eight routes and adding service on those routes serving schools. There were also changes to the schedule for the routes serving the Swartz Bay ferry terminal. September is typically BC Transit's highest ridership month, as students begin their school year, and many people are adjusting to new travel habits.
- **Umo:** BC Transit launched Umo in the VRTS August 22, marking BC Transit's first system-wide roll-out of our new electronic fare system. This launch followed a pilot period, during which BC Transit employees, family and limited external participants could trial the system. The launch will be closely monitored by the BC Transit and the VRTS team over the coming weeks and months. Results will be shared with the Commission later this year.



Umo Validators

- **handyDART Service:** The goal for handyDART service for the 2023-24 fiscal year is to continue to maximize service delivery. We are targeting delivering a minimum of 95% of available service hours; however, our ability to meet this goal will be dependent on hiring and maintaining the required operators and support staff. We will continue to maximize service delivery by using Taxi Supplement<sup>1</sup> when and where it makes sense, and we are looking to have an updated Taxi Supplement agreement in place to provide better oversight into the taxi service dispatched by the operating company. Hiring campaigns are ongoing to start preparing for when we move into the new facility and expand the handyDART bus fleet.
- On Time Performance (+/- 15 minutes of expected arrival) remains in line with last year's results at 87.5%. Subscription Trips (repetitive bookings) outnumbered reservation trips (ad hoc bookings) for the first time with 61.5% subscription trips versus 38.5% reservation trips.

### Thriving Communities

- On July 9, 2023 BC Transit participated Victoria's annual Pride Parade. This, and other parades are great opportunity to showcase BC Transit, and to be an active participant in the community.



2023 Victoria Pride Parade

### Responsible Stewardship

- **Battery Electric Bus:** Construction is now complete at the Victoria Transit Centre on the 10 Electric Bus charging stations. The demonstration Battery Electric Bus went into service on July 26, 2023.

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<sup>1</sup> Taxi Supplement is the program through which custom transit dispatch can dispatch a taxi instead of a dedicated handyDART vehicle, when a dedicated handyDART vehicle is not available. The customer pays a standard handyDART fare.

## LOOKING AHEAD

Heading into the fall months, the VRTS team will be focusing on the following key initiatives and events:

- Continuing to focus on the safety of our Operators and customers
- Advertising and attending Career Fairs to promote BC Transit opportunities (specifically Transit Operator and Mechanic positions)
- The launch of Umo
- Training on the BEB buses
- Upcoming changes to Nextride
- Preparing for and adapting to any inclement weather, especially snow day protocols
- National Day for Truth and Reconciliation
- National Customer Service week

## RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Victoria Regional Transit Commission receive the Victoria Transit update for INFORMATION.

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Date prepared: September 12, 2023