

September 16<sup>th</sup>, 2014

---

**SUBJECT: PLANNING REPORT**

The purpose of this report is to provide the Victoria Regional Transit Commission (VRTC) an update of transit planning activities for **INFORMATION**.

**1.0 SERVICE PLANNING SUMMARY**

The Annual Service Plan, approved by the Commission in February 2014 outlined a series of service changes that have been implemented this summer and fall with additional changes planned for service in Winter 2014/15.

**Fall 2014 (Starts: December 29, 2014)**

A number of service improvements were implemented on September 2, 2014, including an expanded UVic Exchange, restructuring of routes serving the Quadra and Esquimalt areas, additional late night service, and additional service to UVic and both Camosun College campuses.<sup>1</sup> BC Transit staff were posted at key locations in the system for the first two weeks of service to promote awareness of the changes, provide information and gather feedback from passengers and transit operators.

Public response to the changes has been mainly positive. Service will continue to be monitored through September, particularly as post-secondary travel patterns solidify and secondary school resumes. Minor schedule and trip adjustments will be included in the winter 2014/15 service change as needed to respond to any significant issues.

**Winter 2014/15 Service (Starts: December 29, 2014)**

Changes include a reallocation and restructuring of community bus services in the core, Westshore and Saanich Peninsula areas to better match service to demand, and improve service coverage and evening service availability. Service change highlights also include new community bus service to Bear Mountain and the Westhills area.

---

<sup>1</sup> The complete summary of fall 2014 changes can be found here:  
[http://www.bctransit.com/regions/vic/pdf/VRTS\\_Fall\\_2014\\_Service\\_Summary.pdf](http://www.bctransit.com/regions/vic/pdf/VRTS_Fall_2014_Service_Summary.pdf)

## Winter 2014 – Service Change Highlights

<b>Various</b>	Minor schedule and trip adjustments will be included in the winter 2014/15 service change as needed to respond to any changes in service demand and significant issues arising from the September 2 <sup>nd</sup> service change.
<b>10 Dockyard/Royal Jubilee</b>	Restructured as the <b>10 Royal Jubilee/Songhees</b> , this route will operate between Songhees area and Royal Jubilee Hospital in order to improve frequency on all service days. Passengers to/from Esquimalt will now transfer at Esquimalt at Catherine.
<b>25 Maplewood/Admirals Walk</b>	Service in Songhees area (on Kimta and Tyee) will now be covered by 10 Royal Jubilee /Songhees. No changes to other areas of the route
<b>52 Colwood/Langford</b>	Route extends to provide additional service to Millstream Rd. and new service to Bear Mountain.  Commuter trips that serve downtown now extend to growing residential neighbourhoods on Happy Valley Rd. and Latoria Rd. and become the separate route <b>48 Happy Valley/Downtown</b> .
<b>53 Atkins</b> <b>54 Metchosin / 55 Happy Valley</b> <b>58 Langford Meadows</b>	Schedules have been adjusted on these routes to best match service to demand, more evenly distribute service between Westshore neighbourhoods and ensure connections to area secondary schools.
<b>56 Florence Lake/ 57 Millstream</b>	Restructured routing and schedules to make service easier to understand, plus new extension of service to the Westhills area.
<b>57x Downtown</b>	Route is renumbered to become the <b>47 Goldstream Meadows/ Downtown</b> to better distinguish it from local bus service.
<b>59 Triangle Mountain / 60 Wishart</b>	New schedule with extended evening service.
<b>63 Otter Point</b>	Extension of last trip to Whiffen Spit.
<b>81 Butchart Gardens</b> <b>83 Sidney/Royal Oak</b> <b>85 North Saanich</b> <b>88 Airport</b>	New schedules to improve the spacing between trips, particularly to the Victoria International Airport and other major employers in the West Sidney area.
<b>86 Deep Cove</b>	Service cancelled due to low ridership and reallocated to

## Winter 2014 – Service Change Highlights

other local Saanich Peninsula services.

---

The attached draft Winter 2014/15 Service Summary provides a more a detailed description of the changes by route. Once final scheduling is complete it will be updated and available in the Customer Alerts section of the BC Transit website at <http://www.bctransit.com/regions/vic/>.

**Spring Service 2015 (Start date to be confirmed)** – No significant schedule changes from the winter service are proposed. Minor changes will include the annual seasonal reduction of post-secondary trips to UVic and Camosun and minor schedule adjustments.

Further improvements to the Frequent Transit Network may be considered depending on the final date of delivery for two additional buses planned to join the Victoria Regional fleet in 2015.

### **2015/16 Annual Service Plan**

This fall, BC Transit staff will begin to develop the 2015/16 Annual Service Plan. The plan is guided by recommendations of the Service Review, Local Area Transit Plans and the Three Year Service and Financial Strategy. The plan forecasts allocation of service hours by time of year and route type, identifies service change dates and describes significant changes and expansions to service. The 2015/16 Annual Service Plan will be submitted to the Commission in early 2015 for approval with the 2015/16 Budget and Taxation Regulation.

## **2.0 PLANNING INITIATIVES**

**Downtown Circulator Proposal** – A report has been prepared and is included as item 9 on the September 16, 2014 VRTC agenda.

**Westshore Transit Plan** – The VRTS 2013/14 Service Review identified the need to develop a number of Local Area Transit Plans to identify in detail the transit needs and priorities of specific areas within the region. Each Local Area Transit Plan will include consultation with the public and local municipal partners. The level of consultation will vary depending on the scope of the plan. These plans will also provide further guidance to the development of future Annual Service Plans to the Commission. The first local area plan in the process of being developed is a Westshore Transit Plan. The next steps will be to finalize the plan and provide it to the Commission for information. Additional public consultation may be required prior to implementing future initiatives identified in the plan.

**Development Referrals** – This process enables local governments to send larger-scale development or rezoning proposals to BC Transit for comment. From June through August 2014, BC Transit received and commented on 18 development referrals from four of the 13 municipal partners. The following development referrals were received by BC Transit; Langford (13), Oak Bay (1), Saanich (2), Sooke (1), and View Royal (1).

**CRD Regional Transportation Plan (RTP)** – The Capital Regional District (CRD) Board approved a Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) developed in collaboration with all area local governments and other regional and provincial authorities, including BC Transit. The RTP was developed in response to a region-wide desire for an integrated regional multi-modal transportation network, and recognition of the need to align future land use and transportation decisions. The RTP identifies immediate priorities, governance options and long-term strategies

to guide planning and development of a multi-modal transportation system that meets future growth demands and is focused on sustainability.

The RTP builds upon existing mode-specific plans such as the Transit Future Plan and the Pedestrian and Cycling Master Plan with an enhanced role for transit. At the core of the plan is the identification of a Regional Multi-Modal Transportation Network that connects regional mobility hubs or centres, and provides residents and visitors a choice in their transportation decisions.

The CRD has indicated that BC Transit staff will be invited to participate as a member of the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) and formal consultation and engagement processes with the region would continue to be embedded in the existing Victoria Regional Transit Commission model. Transit would not fall under the service mandate except as it relates to the consideration of multi-modal transportation issues. BC Transit staff will continue to consult and work with local municipal staff and CRD staff on transit related issues.

**CRD Regional Sustainability Strategy (RSS)** –The Capital Regional District (CRD) is updating its Regional Growth Strategy to a Regional Sustainability Strategy (RSS). On September 11th, BC Transit staff participated in a workshop to provide final input into the draft policies of the CRD Regional Sustainability Strategy—as well as further develop a monitoring framework--before the document is then presented to the CRD Committee of the Whole at the end of October 2014. It is expected that further engagement on the draft would then formally take place.

**Related Municipal Plans & Initiatives** – On July 17<sup>th</sup> the City of Victoria Council held a special public hearing to discuss reducing posted speed limits to 40 km/h along several corridors to allow residents to provide input on the idea.

The roads for consideration as 40 km/h zones included Richmond Road (south of Fort Street), Southgate Street, segments of Quadra Street not already 40 km/h, Bay Street between Blanshard Street and Richmond, Gorge Road, Richardson Street, Douglas Street south of Belleville Street, and those streets in the area described as the downtown core in the Official Community Plan.

BC Transit sent a letter to City of Victoria Council noting that in general BC Transit is supportive of initiatives that improve or encourage active modes of transportation, such as cycling and walking. The letter highlighted that Douglas Street has been identified as a Rapid Transit Corridor, where a very high frequency of transit operates and where transit priority lanes have been installed. Reducing speed on this corridor may negate some of the benefit of the transit priority improvements. Posted speed limit changes on Frequent Transit Corridors such as Gorge, Quadra, Douglas (south of Belleville) and the Downtown Core may moderately reduce on-time performance at peak travel times. In the case of corridors where less frequent local transit services are provided--such as Bay, Cook and Richardson Street--impacts would likely be negligible.

City of Victoria Council passed a motion directing staff to prepare a plan to implement amendments to the Streets and Traffic Bylaw reducing the posted speed limit from 50 km to 40 km on the roads identified above. At its August 28, 2014 meeting, City of Victoria council

approved amending the bylaw to exclude Douglas St. and Blanshard St. from the 40km changes.

**Quadra Street Transit Priority** – In regards to BC Transit’s request to mitigate impacts of speed limit reductions on transit, Mayor Fortin suggested that BC Transit staff meet with City of Victoria staff to discuss transit priority opportunities on Quadra Street. While Quadra Street has been identified in prior reports to the Commission as a corridor that could benefit from transit priority, other corridors such as Douglas, Hwy 1 & 17, McKenzie, Fort and Yates Street are considered of higher priority. In the meantime, City of Victoria and BC Transit staff suggest that a review of bus stop spacing along Quadra Street could improve transit operations.

### **3.0 INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS**

**Transit Priority Update Douglas Phase 2** - The first phase of the Douglas Street corridor is now complete, with the provision of a one-kilometre segment of peak period bus lanes between Herald Street and Hillside Avenue.

The City of Victoria and BC Transit are now ready to advance the next phase of the project, which includes an extension of the northbound bus lane through to Tolmie Avenue (“Phase 2”). The northbound bus-only lane would include using the existing curb lane for buses during the afternoon peak (3-6pm). Some minor changes to the southbound lanes will be required, including modifications to bus stops. Once complete, the Douglas Street corridor would continue to support two northbound and southbound lanes for general purpose traffic as well as a dedicated northbound bus lane during the afternoon peak period. A design consultant has been hired and the Phase 2 design should be completed this fall with construction planned for spring 2015.

Planning and discussions are ongoing with Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure to ensure alignment and to prioritize further enhancements on their segment of the corridor from Tolmie to Uptown and beyond. It is assumed that a southbound bus lane would need to be created south of Tolmie Avenue to Hillside Ave and retain two general purpose lanes in each direction, as described in the Corridor Plan.

**BC Transit Shelter Program** – All bus shelter installations under the 2013/4 Bus Stop Improvement Program are now complete. Applications for new shelters for the 2014/15 program continue to be solicited and vetted, with the expectation that units will be installed over the fall and winter months, as resources become available.

**UVic Exchange Expansion** – Construction was completed on the expanded UVic exchange and the new facility was operational for the start of the September 2, 2014 service change. A formal grand opening ceremony took place on September 3, 2014 at 10:00 AM, with dignitaries from the Province, the University, the Victoria Transit Commission and BC Transit attending.

**Facilities Upgrades** - Business case development for the first phase of the Master Plan is underway, with completion expected by the end of 2014. This phase is expected to recommend a solution for the future of the east shop at the Victoria Transit Centre (VTC), which has met the end of its useful life and requires seismic upgrades. A number of options will be analyzed to ensure the best and most practical long term solution for housing the paint, body shop, and stores functions at VTC is identified and recommended. Of primary importance to the analysis is

BC Transit's ability to maximize parking capacity at VTC, thus reducing annual deadhead costs and improving service efficiency.

**Victoria Third Conventional Operations and Maintenance Facility** - In 2013, the VRTC provided approval for BC Transit staff to conduct a search for suitable properties in the region for the eventual construction of a third conventional operations and maintenance facility. The report, which is now finalized, focused on properties presently on the market, those owned by provincial entities, and land assembly opportunities. The summary findings of the report are as follow:

- The opportunities for acquisition of a 12 to 15 acre site in the core communities of Greater Victoria are very limited given environmental concerns, difficult terrain, Agricultural Land Reserve boundaries, and development pressures (i.e. high land values);
- After initial screening, a total of eight candidate properties were identified with the potential to meet a number of BC Transit's technical requirements;
- The candidate properties were further screened and a short list of three priorities identified; however, all identified sites would substantially increase existing deadhead operating costs (the time required for buses to travel to/from the operations and maintenance facility to the start or end of service);
- The opportunities for public sector land acquisition and development partnerships are limited at this time. BC Hydro and local governments have no plans for expansion or relocation of works yard facilities. Lands being disposed of by the Provincial Capital Commission were not suitable for BC Transit use. In general, School Districts have been selling surplus lands over the past ten years given declining enrollments.

It is recommended that no action be taken at this time and a subsequent market scan be conducted in approximately six months to evaluate potential new opportunities.

## **4.0 SERVICE MONITORING**

### **Winter and Spring Ridership Reports**

The Victoria Regional Transit System Winter 2014 and Spring 2014 Service Performance Reports are provided as attachments to the Planning Report. These reports provide information on the ridership performance at the system and route level over the Winter 2014 period of January to March and the Spring 2014 period of April to June against the performance design guidelines developed through the service review process. Ridership is trending upward in the last two quarters likely due to service increases, efficiency improvements and a recovery in ridership from the labour disruption in 2012.

**RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended that the Victoria Regional Transit Commission receive this report for **INFORMATION**.

Respectfully,



Manuel Achadinha  
President and Chief Executive Officer

Attachments:

- Winter 2014/15 Service Change Summary
- Winter 2014 Route Performance Summary
- Spring 2014 Route Performance Summary