

# Victoria Regional Transit Commission

Chair and Members

September 12, 2023

# #11

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## **SUBJECT: PLANNING AND INFRASTRUCTURE UPDATE**

**PREPARED FOR:** Victoria Regional Transit Commission

### **PURPOSE**

To provide the Victoria Regional Transit Commission (“the Commission”) with an update on transit service planning, infrastructure planning and construction activities in the Victoria Region. This report is presented to the Commission for INFORMATION.

## **1. TRANSIT SERVICE CHANGES**

### **Fall 2023 Service Change**

Effective September 5, 2023, the fall service change includes the following:

- Reintroduction of seasonal routes and service levels to align with the start of school.
- Reintroduction of Friday and Saturday extended late-night service that was discontinued through the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Reintroduction of service on Gorge Road between Admirals and Tillicum via route 25 with the completion of District of Saanich infrastructure road works.
- Service level improvements on route 12 in weekday midday periods to address passenger crowding and service reliability. Service reductions on Saturdays to improve service reliability.
- Schedule changes to route 6 to improve service reliability

### **Holiday 2023 Seasonal Service Change**

Effective December 4, 2023, the holiday service change includes the following:

- Service will be seasonally reduced to better align with the lower ridership demand from post-secondary education institutions.
- Service reductions in December allow us to provide additional service in seasons with higher ridership demand.

### **January 2024 Service Change**

Effective January 8, 2024, the winter service change includes the following:

- Reintroduction of seasonal routes and service levels to align with the start of school.
- Implementation of the short-term West Shore Network Restructure
  - Better aligns network design and service levels to recent development and density changes within the West Shore area over the last decade (Figure 1), including introducing a new future Frequent Transit Route alignment (52 Colwood Exch/Bear Mountain)

- Significant service improvements to Royal Bay, Millstream Village and developments along Happy Valley Road, Latoria Road, and Metchosin Road between Latoria Road and Sooke Road
- Includes introductory service to new developments along the south-west portion of Bear Mountain (Skirt Mountain)

## Proposed Immediate Term West Shore Transit Network Changes

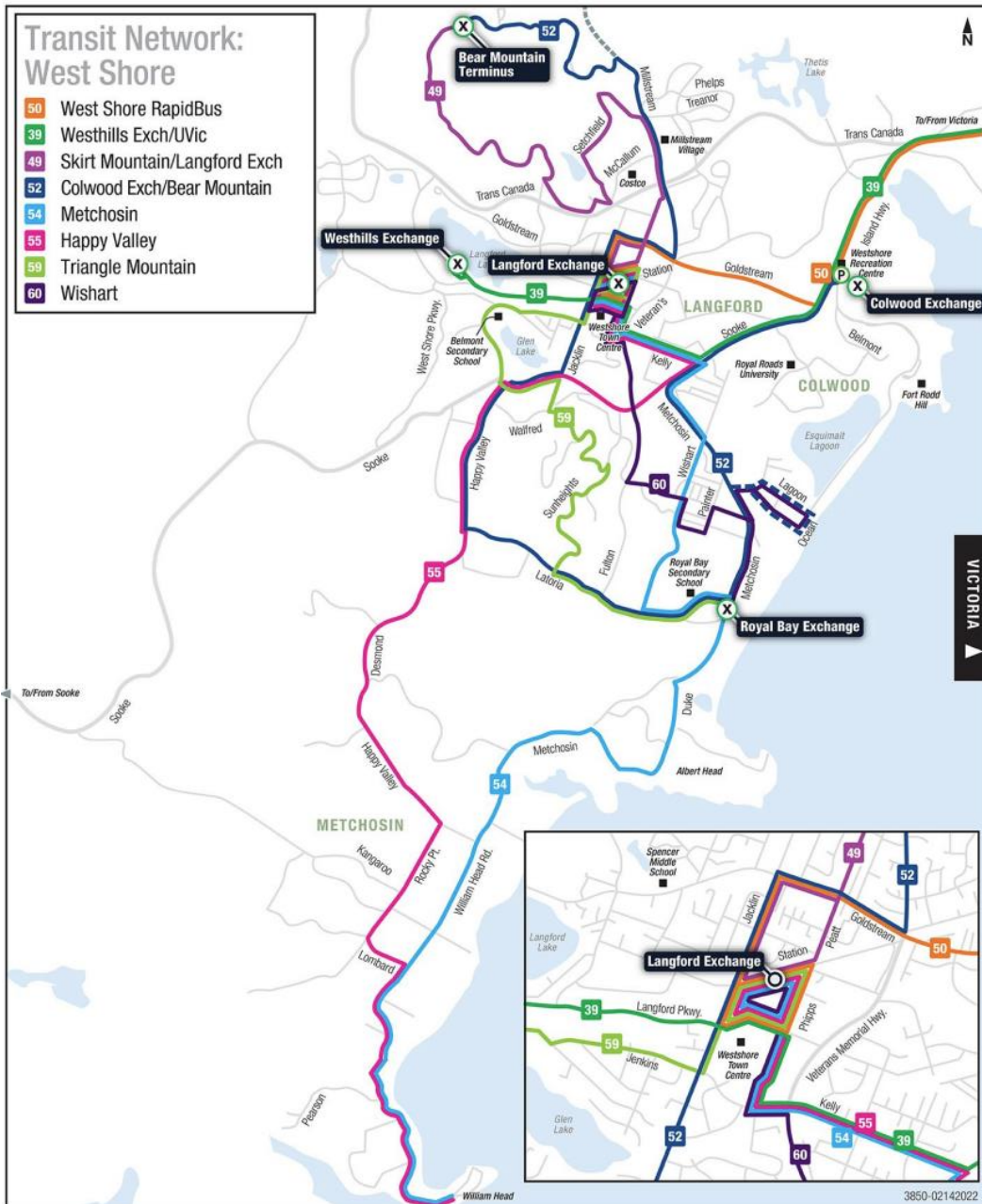


Figure 1: West Shore Network Restructure

## 2. TRANSIT SERVICE PLANNING INITIATIVES

### Local Area and Corridor Transit Plans (LATP)

#### Gorge/Hillside Corridor Study

BC Transit kicked off the Gorge/Hillside Corridor Study in summer 2023 in alignment with City of Victoria and District of Saanich bike lane infrastructure planning along the corridor. The goals of the corridor study include the following:

- Confirm the future transit network along the Gorge Road corridor, including opportunities to build out the cross-town network.
- Identify key opportunities for future Transit Priority Measures.
- Review bus stop spacing and amenity investment prioritization.

Public engagement for the Gorge Corridor Study is planned for Fall 2023.

#### Quadra Corridor Study

BC Transit is kicking off the Quadra Corridor Transit study in Fall 2023 in alignment with District of Saanich's land use and transportation planning processes along the corridor. The goals of the corridor study include the following:

- Confirm the future transit network along the Quadra Street corridor, including whether a future RapidBus designation makes sense
  - Consider network opportunities to integrate with the future Uptown Mobility Hub
- Identify key opportunities for future Transit Priority Measures
- Review bus stop spacing and amenity investment prioritization

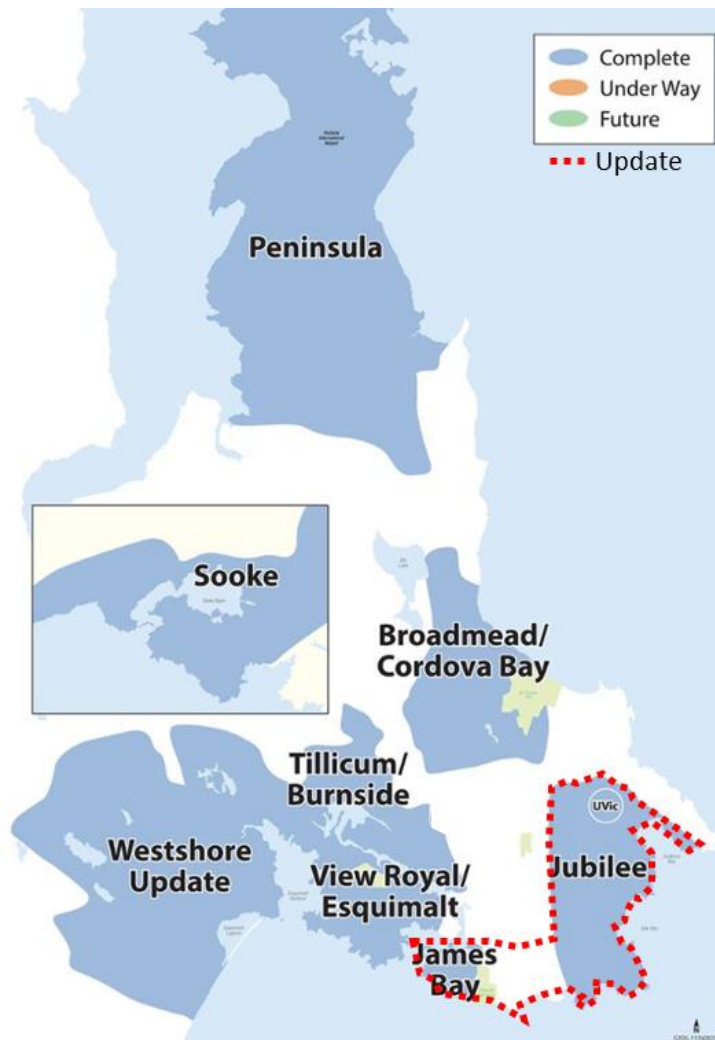
Engagement for the Quadra Corridor Study will be aligned with District of Saanich engagement for their land use and transportation planning processes, tentatively planned for early 2024.

#### James Bay and Jubilee LATP Update

An update for both the James Bay and Jubilee Local Area Transit Plans is planned to start in early 2024.

The original James Bay LATP was completed six years ago in 2017 and is due to be revisited. Despite being completed in 2020, there are no remaining proposals in the Jubilee LATP that can be implemented before further public engagement is conducted. Finally, the Fairfield and Gonzales Neighbourhood Association has requested to have input on the transit service within their area. Given the connectivity of routes between these sub-regions, there are benefits to reviewing the transit network and priorities in each of these areas simultaneously.

Consequently, this LATP Update process would look to revisit the transit network and service and infrastructure priorities over the next 5-7 years in this larger area as a cohesive process with consultant support.



## Regional Corridor Strategy

### Project Timeline

The Regional Corridor Strategy began in January 2023, with the goal of completion before the end of 2023.

### Project Goals

The intention for this biennially updated strategy is to:

- Provide an updated Transit Future Network, which was originally developed through the 2011 Transit Future Plan.
- Support the 10 Year Vision, with a more technical focus on network planning and development.
- Develop and prioritize a strategic transit planning work plan over the next 5-10 years, intended to:

- Support broader network developments, including the Uptown Mobility Hub development and implementation, crosstown network development, and RapidBus planning and implementation.
- Increase collaboration with Local Government Partners and alignment between land use and transit planning processes to better achieve collective sustainability goals.
- The strategy's resulting work plan will include a phased list of Corridor Plans and Local Area Transit Plans needed to support the goals of the Regional Corridor Strategy and 10 Year Vision.

The draft corridors for assessment have now been developed and feedback is currently being requested from Local Government Partners within the project working group. Once the corridors have been finalized, next steps include submitting them for analysis and conducting a Multiple Accounts Evaluation (MAE) assessment.

### 10 Year Vision

Initial work is underway on the 2023 update of the 10 Year Vision.

As part of the update, two new Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and associated targets are being considered within the service reliability category, including the following:

- On-Time Performance (% of trips departing timing points between 1 minute before and 3 minutes after scheduled departure times)
  - This KPI allows BC Transit to better track how the transit system is doing from an on-time performance perspective
  - Ensuring that transit runs on time is crucial, leading to increased customer satisfaction and ridership
  - Target set ambitiously at 70% in alignment with Victoria Operations KPI
    - VRTS achieved a 66% On-Time Performance in the Winter 2023 service period (Attachment 8A)
- Passenger Comfort (% of trips meeting passenger capacity guidelines)
  - Tracks challenges from a passenger crowding and pass up perspective
  - Passenger comfort guidelines vary by vehicle type and service frequency, but generally translates into a fully seated load with a partial standing load on the bus
  - Initial system-level target set at 98%

**Referrals** – Referral-related work undertaken or proposed since the last Commission meeting includes:

- **Bus Stop Improvements** – BC Transit continues to work closely with local government partners within the Victoria Region to coordinate improvements to stop configurations and layout to improve accessibility and customer experience.
- **Development Referral Process** – BC Transit receives and responds to development referrals from local governments considering rezoning and large-scale development proposals. BC Transit provides comment on opportunities for transit supportive development, improvements to transit supportive infrastructure such as bus stops and sidewalks and provides comments on the feasibility of future transit service to the proposed development.

Planning staff have received approximately 16 development referrals since the last Commission meeting between June 2023 and July 2023, and provided feedback to six local governments.

## Service Monitoring

- **Ridership Performance Report** – Planning regularly monitors service performance against the service standards and performance guidelines identified in the 2013/14 Service Review document. Regular performance monitoring allows for a better alignment between service levels and ongoing changes in demand and travel patterns.

The attached Ridership Performance Report (#8a) provides information on ridership performance over the Spring 2023 service period from April 10 to July 2, 2023, and provides information on ridership and service reliability trends through the period impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic up to July 2, 2023.

## 3. ON-STREET TRANSIT INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS

### Active Infrastructure Projects

- **Island Highway Transit Priority Upgrades:** The Island Highway Transit Priority Project is being advanced to support the Westshore RapidBus Strategy on the Island Highway between the intersection of the Highway 1 exit and entrance ramps at the Island Highway in the Town of View Royal, and Wale Road in the City of Colwood. The scope of the project includes transit queue jump lanes, bike lanes, sidewalk widening, accessible wheelchair ramps, intersection improvements, crosswalk signage and road painting, street lighting and traffic signals upgrades. A full tender-ready design has been completed to construct transit priority improvements. BC Hydro has completed their detailed design for construction documents related to the transit priority improvements. Documentation and negotiations are continuing for statutory rights-of-way or road dedications with private landowners where the design elements affect their properties. A new funding application to Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program (ICIP) was submitted in February 2023 to obtain funding approvals to move forward with the project construction execution. On-going First Nations engagement is being managed by an external consultant. Asset Benefit Agreements have been officially signed by all parties for each of the two municipalities to meet the Eligible Capital Funding requirements. The project will move forward with a public tendering process in the fall of 2023 and into the construction phase in the spring of 2024, subject to ICIP approval, the completion of the statutory rights-of-way and engagement tasks.

## Infrastructure Studies

- **Downtown Douglas Street:** The Downtown Douglas RapidBus Study is being advanced to support the overall RapidBus strategy on Douglas Street between Belleville and Bay Street with a focus on the downtown core in collaboration with City of Victoria. The intent of the planning work is to establish a multi-modal vision for this portion of the corridor that includes transit, walking and cycling improvements. Recommended concepts will be presented to the City of Victoria Council in October 2023 and will include a recommended concept for transit priority and RapidBus stations. Plans will be presented to the VRTC once support is secured from City of Victoria Council.
- **McKenzie Corridor Study:** The McKenzie Corridor Study is being advanced to develop the infrastructure components of a McKenzie RapidBus Strategy. The study is in partnership with the District of Saanich and the objectives are to establish a multi-modal vision which combines transit priority, RapidBus stations and active transportation improvements on McKenzie Avenue from Highway 17 to UVic. The preferred long-term vision has been finalized. Short-term improvements are currently being developed, and the study is expected to conclude by the end of 2023.
- **Peninsula RapidBus Infrastructure Studies:** Two Peninsula RapidBus infrastructure studies are being advanced to develop the infrastructure components of a Peninsula RapidBus Strategy. The first study, in collaboration with MoTI, is a RapidBus Station study on Highway 17 from McKenzie Avenue to Sidney to identify quick win improvements at existing transit stops for conversion to RapidBus Stations, as well as future longer-term RapidBus Station locations. The second study, in collaboration with the Town of Sidney, is for a transit hub to provide options to integrate a RapidBus Station and local transit service. Consultants for both studies are currently being procured and the study is scheduled to begin in the fall 2023.

## Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure (MoTI) Studies

- **Highway 1 –** To support the Westshore RapidBus Strategy, MoTI is advancing planning work on Highway 1 to support existing BC Transit initiatives. This includes transit priority treatments that align with the BC Transit priorities identified by the Victoria Transit Future Plan and the South Island Transportation Strategy:
  - MoTI is currently completing the designs for bus-on-shoulder lanes between the McKenzie Interchange and Six Mile Road. Subject to project approval and funding, the construction is forecasted to start construction in 2025/26.
  - MoTI is currently completing designs to add bus-on-shoulder lanes to the Burnside Bridge (between Tillicum Road and McKenzie Avenue).
- **Uptown Mobility Hub Transit Oriented Development (TOD) Plan – BC** Transit/MoTI/BCTFA have completed a Conceptual Development Design Technical Feasibility Report and Financial Feasibility Report. A Memorandum of Understanding is being developed between BC Transit and MoTI to clarify each agency's roles and responsibilities to advance phase 2 planning for the project. Next steps will include further site investigations, a traffic impact assessment, further engagement on the designs with local governments and stakeholder, as well as a selection of a preferred concept for

advancement to a final proof of concept, to prepare a business case for associated funding applications and approvals.

- **Uptown Transit Priority** – MoTI is advancing design work to develop transit and active transportation priorities and improvements that support near-term RapidBus Strategy objectives that align with the future development of the Uptown site and do not preclude the long-term plan. The plan includes a proposal for a bus lane on Ravine Road, RapidBus Stations on Highway 1 and expanded bus zone capacity on Carey Road. Subject to project approval and funding, it is forecasting to start construction in 2024. This plan aligns with long-term plans for the Uptown Transit Hub and Transit Oriented Development (TOD) opportunities.

#### **MoTI Active Infrastructure Projects**

- **Highway 14 Connie Road to Glinz Lake Road Realignment and Park & Ride:** The Highway 14 realignment included a new Park & Ride at the new Gillespie Road exit and new transit stops with bus pullouts and shelters to improve safety and additional passenger amenities that are now complete.

## **4. TRANSIT FACILITY PROJECTS**

### **Active Projects**

- **handyDART Centre at 2401 Burnside Road** – The “Early Works” phase of the Project is substantially complete and the final phase of building construction is now underway. First Nations continue to be updated on project progress. The project team is working with the Esquimalt Nation to plan the naming ceremony. Indigenous economic opportunities related to current and future tender packages are incorporated and specific opportunities are under discussion with the Nations. The project team continues to advance discussions with the Esquimalt Nation to inform cultural recognition opportunities and are in the process of developing a ‘Call for Artists’ for all the Nations being consulted on the project.
- **Saanich Transit Centre** – Planning for the Saanich Transit Centre includes Phase 1A which prepares the site for construction and Phase 1B construction of the facility on the prepared site. An application for ICIP funding for Phase 1A was submitted in March 2023 and approval of ICIP funding is still pending. The Treasury Board business plan for the Phase 1B is being prepared in collaboration with Infrastructure BC. The design team and quantity surveyor are progressing an indicative design that establishes the budget for the Phase 1B funding request. Supported by consultants, early outreach efforts have been completed with Indigenous and First Nations groups with a focus on engaging First Nations in upcoming activities. This includes establishing effective communication channels and support for the archaeological overview assessment and bird nesting surveys.
- **Victoria and Langford Transit Centre Upgrades** – Two business cases were approved in February 2022 to construct a maintenance training centre and to make facility upgrades to



improve facility operations and maintenance capacity. An application for ICIP funding was submitted in March 2023 and approval of ICIP funding for the project is still pending. In preparation for project execution after receiving the approval, the project teams are developing a request for proposal for design consultant services. Notification of the projects to local First Nations was issued in a combined letter that included other Victoria region projects where ICIP funding was pursued.

**RECOMMENDATION**

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

Prepared by:	Levi Megenbir	Phone:	_____
Position:	Senior Transit Planner Work Lead	Date prepared:	_____
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Prepared by:	James Wadsworth	Phone:	_____
Position:	Manager, Infrastructure Planning	Date prepared:	_____
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