
SUBJECT: PLANNING UPDATE

PURPOSE

This update on transit planning activities in the Victoria Region is provided to the Victoria Regional Transit Commission (the “Commission”) for **INFORMATION**.

SERVICE CHANGES

Additional Service Change (Effective November 2, 2020)

This additional service change adjusted runtimes to improve on-time performance on select routes within the Victoria Regional Transit System. Due to impacts from COVID-19 on roadway congestion, select routes coming from the Westshore in the AM peak period were running ahead of schedule. This schedule change adjusted running times on these routes to improve service reliability within the transit system.

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

The winter seasonal service change will provide 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.

PLANNING INITIATIVES

Work undertaken or proposed since the last Commission meeting includes:

Local Area Transit Plans

- The Broadmead-Cordova Bay and Esquimalt-View Royal Local Area Transit Plans have both been completed, and will be coming back to the Commission in February for approval.
- The Peninsula Local Area Transit Plan is slated to begin in early 2021.

Related Municipal Work and Transit Initiatives

BC Transit participated in a number of local initiatives on behalf of the Commission over the last few months, including the following:

- **RapidBus Implementation Strategy** – BC Transit continues to develop a RapidBus Implementation Strategy for the Victoria Region with the support of Urban Systems and ongoing engagement with local governments. A project update will be provided to the Commission on December 1st, 2020 and the final plan will be presented to the Commission for endorsement at the February 23rd, 2021 meeting after further engagement with local governments within the Victoria Region.
- **Legislature Exchange Work** – In collaboration with the City of Victoria, BC Transit is working to develop future capacity needs and functional requirements for the Legislature

Exchange. This work is to support future RapidBus implementation along with a series of land use and roadway projects currently being planned within the James Bay Precinct.

- **Bus Stop Improvements** - BC Transit staff work with operators and customers to track concerns with bus stops on an ongoing basis. Since the last Commission meeting, BC Transit has worked with the City of Victoria, the District of Saanich, the Township of Esquimalt, the Town of Sidney, the District of Sooke, the City of Langford, and the City of Colwood to coordinate improvements to stop configuration and layout to improve accessibility and customer experience. The bus stop shelter program process for the beginning of 2021 has begun and BC Transit is gauging interest for shelters in all municipalities of the Greater Victoria region. Key stop improvements are underway at Uptown (southbound Blanshard at Ravine). BC Transit is also working on improving bus stop capacity at a major intersection for the Town of Sidney.
- **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.

Since the last planning report, planning staff have received 24 development referrals and provided comment to five local governments.

SERVICE MONITORING

COVID Service Ridership Report

The attached Service Ridership Report provides information on ridership performance. It summarizes ridership over the Fall 2020 service period from September 8, 2020 to October 31, 2020 and provides some evaluation of ridership trends through the period impacted by the COVID pandemic.

RECOMMENDATION

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

Respectfully,

Levi Megenbir
Senior Transit Planner – Work Lead

Attachment: Fall 2020 Ridership Performance Report

**Attachment: Victoria Regional Transit System
Fall 2020 Ridership Performance Report**

1.0 Introduction

This report presents the ridership performance for the Victoria Regional Transit System for the Fall 2020 service period up to the end of October (September 8 – October 31, 2020).

1.1 Data

Ridership information is collected through Automated Passenger Counter (APC) units, which are in place on over 60 per cent of the buses assigned to the Victoria Region's conventional fleet. This system counts the number of persons boarding and disembarking from a vehicle. If a person boards multiple buses in a single journey or in a specific day, this is reflected as multiple boardings.

1.2 External Factors

In addition to service changes, there are a number of external factors that may affect transit ridership. Some of these include fare increases, changing fuel prices, changing community economics, land use changes and major interruptions, such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

2.0 Performance Trends

This report presents ridership performance information at the system, sub-regional, and route-type level.

2.1 System Level Performance Trends

For the purposes of this report, overall system ridership has been presented weekly from January to the end of October for both 2019 and 2020. As of March 12, when non-essential travel was discouraged, the transit system experienced a significant decline in ridership of about 75 per cent. Since that time, as the Province's Restart Plan has come into effect, BC Transit has moved to enact measures that support safe and reliable travel options – from the introduction of vinyl barriers to the phasing of physical distancing standards. Through the implementation of these measures and the reopening of the economy, BC Transit has realized a gradual and steady return of ridership with ridership down only 58 per cent in comparison to 2019 by the end of October, 2020. September 2020 did not see the large increase in ridership that typically occurs in September as the increase in activity that comes with the return to schools and post-secondary institutions did not occur due to the ongoing impacts of COVID-19.

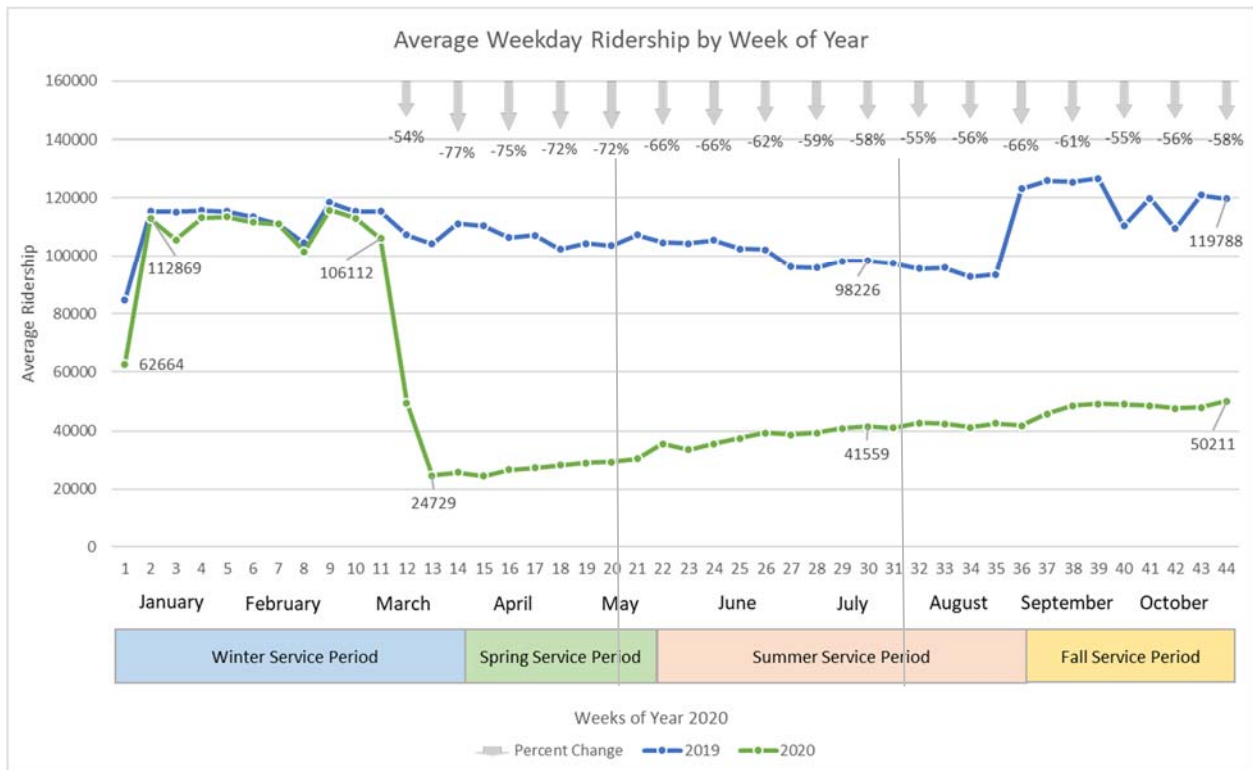


Figure 1: Average Weekday Ridership

2.2 Sub-Regional Performance Trends

Ridership was also reviewed sub-regionally, comparing ridership impacts between the Core, Peninsula, and the West Shore. Looking at routes at a sub-regional basis, we see that the impact of the pandemic is fairly consistent across the regions; with ridership decreasing by 53 per cent in the Peninsula, 57 per cent in the Core, and 59 per cent in the West Shore

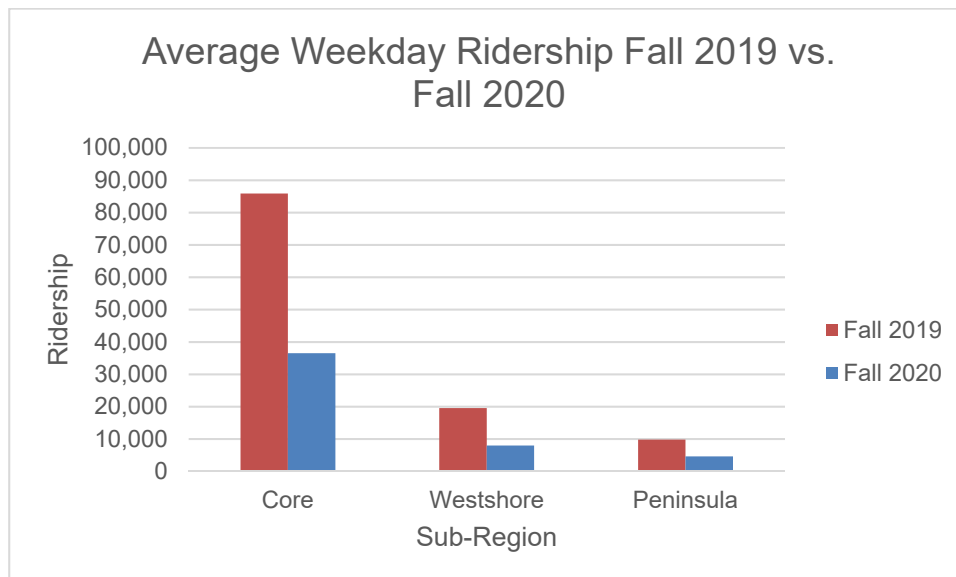


Figure 2: Average Weekday Ridership by sub-region

2.3 Route Level Performance Trends

For the purposes of this report, ridership performance has been aggregated and presented in five route-type categories, including Rapid Transit, Frequent Transit, Local Transit (High Demand), Local Transit (Coverage) and Targeted Transit. In accordance with the 2011 Transit Future Plan and the Victoria Regional Transit System 2013/14 Service Review.

Looking at route by route type, we similarly see that impact has been quite consistent across all route types with the exception of targeted routes which provide school trips, peak commuter trips, and unique routes.

When comparing Fall 2019 with Fall 2020, ridership has fallen due to the impacts of COVID-19, falling between 52 and 58 per cent on the rapid, frequent, and local routes and falling 70 per cent for targeted routes.

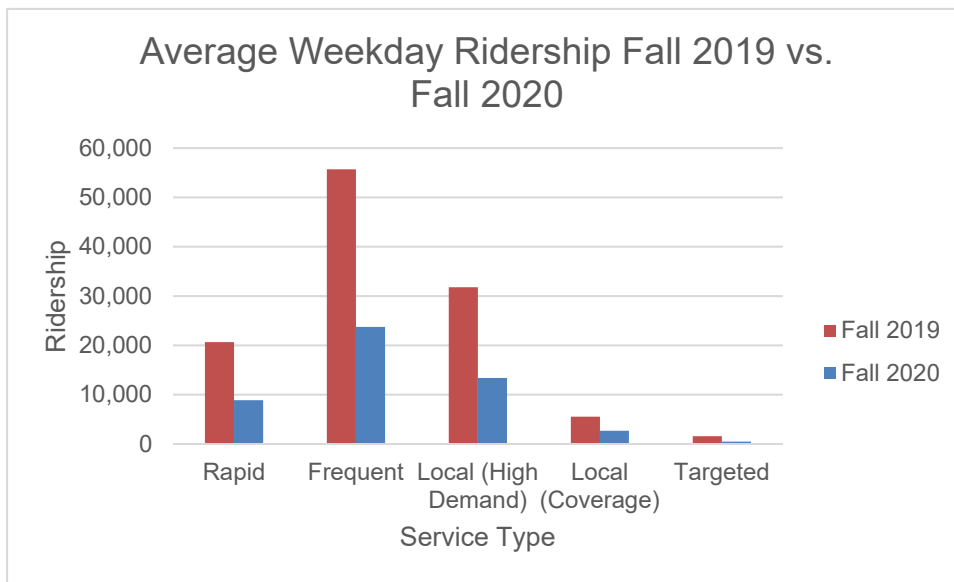


Figure 3: Average Weekday Fall Ridership by Route Type