

Victoria Regional Transit Commission
Minutes of the Meeting
Held at BC Transit
520 Gorge Road East
Monday, October 28, 2013
12:00 pm

PRESENT: Councillor Susan Brice, Chair
Mayor Dean Fortin
Mayor Carol Hamilton
Mayor Barbara Desjardins
Councillor Marianne Alto
Mayor Larry Cross

REGRETS: Mayor Frank Leonard

BC TRANSIT STAFF: Manuel Achadinha, President & CEO
Mike Davis, VP & COO
Erinn Pinkerton, Director of Corporate & Strategic Planning
Dave Guthrie, General Manager Victoria Operations
Lynn Palmer, *Recorder*

OPEN SESSION

1. CALL TO ORDER AND APPROVAL OF AGENDA

The meeting was called to order at 12:02 PM by Chair Susan Brice who thanked Committee members for finding the time in their busy schedules to attend this meeting.

MOVED BY COUNCILLOR ALTO AND SECONDED BY MAYOR HAMILTON that the agenda be **APPROVED** as circulated.

CARRIED

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

MOVED BY MAYOR DESJARDINS AND SECONDED BY COUNCILLOR ALTO that the minutes of September 10 meeting be **APPROVED** as circulated.

CARRIED

3. BUSINESS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MEETING

None raised.

4. CHAIR'S REMARKS

The Chair noted that the meeting with the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure, Todd Stone, took place September 24th and was well received. The issue of Priority Bus Lanes on Highway 1 was raised. The Commission would like to see work done on municipal roads dovetailing with work scheduled for provincial roads. The Chair has since sent a letter to Ministry staff inviting them to the December VRTC meeting. In addition, the Commission members informed the Minister that in order to support the three year service plan, they are looking at options to increase fuel tax (one of their three funding levers). The Minister indicated he would consider a formal request from the Commission but made no commitments.

DELEGATIONS – NONE

5. TRANSIT SERVICE AND FUNDING STRATEGY

Erinn Pinkerton, Director, Strategic & Corporate Planning, gave an overview of the Transit Service and Funding Strategy report. She noted that the ability to grow transit service with only 15 buses is very limited and that further expansion is dependent on investment in capital infrastructure. The Three Year Service and Financial Strategy (2014/15 – 2016/17) presented in September led to discussion on the need for alternate funding strategies. Mayor Desjardins asked what was learned from the Service Review consultation and also what exactly would be asked of the CRD Board. Erinn commented that the Service Review consultation asked the public what transit's priorities should be and the overwhelming response was more service and more coverage. Chair Brice noted that the CRD doesn't have approval authority but should be in agreement with the strategy.

Mayor Fortin noted that he agrees with the comments in the report regarding property tax increases being less welcome than fuel tax increases. He wants to be sure of public support for this strategy before approaching the CRD. He considers it a 2 step process, the first step being to consult with transit customers before secondly, approaching the CRD Board.

Councillor Alto agreed that a rigorous process is needed and asked Erinn to remind the Commission of the level of consultation that has already taken place.

Erinn commented that when the CRD did the Local Funding Transit Study there was a high level of consultation with a fuel tax increase being identified as the preferred public option. The study included an online survey and workshops. BC Transit also conducted public consultation with the Transit Future Plan. This previous consultation has provided a strong base to move forward. Councillor Alto noted that based on the level of public consultation that has already taken place she is happy to move ahead to seek CRD support.

Mayor Cross informed the Committee that the Town of Sidney did a recent Satisfaction Survey with all Sidney residents. Most people agreed that they would accept a tax increase if the ways in which residents lives would be improved with the increase were identified.

Councillor Alto moved the motions as presented in the staff report.

Mayor Desjardins seconded the motion and suggested a friendly amendment to add the words "continue to" to part 2 of the motion dealing with consultation. The amendment was accepted by Councillor Alto.

MOVED BY COUNCILLOR ALTO AND SECONDED BY MAYOR DESJARDINS

1. That the Victoria Regional Transit Commission receive this report for **INFORMATION**.
2. That staff continue to consult with the public and transit customers regarding the acceptability of a fuel tax increase to address the capital costs of facilities required to support the expansion of transit service in the region.
3. To further ensure that the Commission is working in a direction supported by the consensus of the region, it is recommended that staff seek CRD Board endorsement of the following motion:

Whereas the Victoria Regional Transit Commission faces significant capital expenses to provide for transit service expansion and

Whereas the growth in transit service is a priority of the region's growth and transportation strategy and

Whereas property tax funding cannot reasonably accommodate the increases necessary for capital and service growth and

Whereas the *BC Transit Act* enables a local motor fuel tax surcharge dedicated to Victoria Regional Transit Commission expenses

Therefore the Victoria Regional Transit Commission requests that the Government of BC amend the Motor Fuel Tax Act to increase the dedicated fuel tax applied in the region under the *BC Transit Act* by 2 cents per litre to support transit system development in the Capital Region.

CARRIED

MOTION TO ADJOURN THE MEETING MOVED BY COUNCILLOR ALTO AND SECONDED BY MAYOR CROSS

CARRIED

MEETING ADJOURNED – 12:21 PM.