

Victoria Regional Transit Commission

BC Transit 520 Gorge Road East and WebEx
February 22, 2022 | 9:00 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.

DRAFT MINUTES

The Victoria Regional Transit Commission conducts its business on the homelands of the Songhees and Esquimalt First Nations.

Present:

Susan Brice, Chair, Mayor Fred Haynes, Mayor Geoff Orr, Mayor Kevin Murdoch, Mayor Maja Tait, Mayor Rob Martin, Mayor Lisa Helps, Councillor Charlayne Thornton-Joe

BC Transit Staff:

Christy Ridout, Vice-President, Business Development, Kevin Schubert, General Manager, Victoria Regional Transit; Lisa Mullins, Senior Manager, Government Relations; Megan Hill, Director, Budgeting and Forecasting; Levi Megenbir, Senior Transit Planner, James Wadsworth, Manager, Project Development, Ryan Dennis, Electronic Fare Collection System Manager, Kyle Bowman, Manager, Sales and Revenue, Christine Lewis, Executive Assistant and Divisional Coordinator (Recorder)

Regrets:

None

1. CALL TO ORDER AND APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Chair Susan Brice called the meeting to order at 9:04 a.m.

Motion MOVED by Mayor Rob Martin and SECONDED by Mayor Kevin Murdoch the agenda as written.

CARRIED

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM NOVEMBER 9, 2021

Motion MOVED by Mayor Kevin Murdoch and SECONDED Councillor Charlayne Thornton-Joe to approve the minutes as written.

CARRIED

3. CHAIR'S REMARKS

Good Morning,

I would like to start the meeting by recognizing the tremendous effort of our BC Transit Operations team from the drivers, to the mechanics, to the dispatch and transit supervisors, those workers on the front lines during the ongoing challenges of Covid-19. Their dedication to providing transit service to the community throughout these challenging times has been exemplary. Thank you to all for keeping the buses rolling.

RapidBus implementation planning is moving ahead and I was pleased to hear the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure announced enhancements to the Highway 17 corridor including bus queue jump lanes at Mt Newton Cross Road and the highway. This will allow transit users on the peninsula to enjoy faster commute times and provides infrastructure for our future RapidBus corridor. Work continues on further improvements on the Westshore and we look forward to launching the RapidBus service soon!

BC Transit announced new electronic fare collection! The new system called Umo will allow riders to pay for trips with mobile app, reloadable smart card, debit card, credit card or mobile wallet and we will hear more today on this new system and its implementation here in the Victoria Regional Transit System.

I would like to take a moment to thank Robin Pollard from UVSS for her insight and bringing forward information on the student perspective. She has moved on from her role to continue her focus on her studies, and today we have Mariel Hernandez, Director of Student Affairs attending the meeting on behalf of the post secondary students. In September, we will welcome our new non-voting member from Camosun College.

4. CORRESPONDENCE

Letter to Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure from VRTC dated January 17, 2022

Letter from Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure to VRTC dated February 10, 2022

Correspondence noted as received.

5. NOTICE OF MOTION

None

6. FINANCIAL AND PERFORMANCE SUMMARY Q3 YTD – FOR INFORMATION MEGAN HILL

- Revenue continues to grow during this recovery phase. Price of fuel and labour shortages continue to be a concern.
- If fuel continues to go up in price the budget may need to increase. BC Transit will evaluate other areas of the budget on way to mitigate the increase in costs.
- Staff are reviewing risk exposures and operational impacts if this goes on for a few years.
- We are seeing a rebound in ridership and expect we can maintain our forecast based on 71% ridership recovery.

MOTION MOVED by Mayor Lisa Helps, SECONDED by Mayor Fred Haynes to RECEIVE the Financial and Performance Summary Q3 for information.

CARRIED

7. 2021/22 BASE BUDGET AND ANNUAL SERVICE PLAN – FOR APPROVAL MEGAN HILL

- Looking to implement RapidBus in the West Shore and continue to build resources to ensure service reliability. A fall launch is contingent on number of operators available.
- Seasonal and cost neutral service changes are intended to align service with ridership demand.
- Budget reflects significant investments for coming years. Increases in budget are in response to fuel price increases and reflect implementation of electronic fare collection, electric buses, and RapidBus lines.
- Base budget numbers are based on 77% ridership recovery in 22/23
- Provincial contribution for Free Transit for Children 12 and Under is reflected in passenger and ad revenue

- Majority of Safe Restart funding has been allocated in 20/21 and 21/22 with approximately \$7M remaining to use in 22/23.
- If total ridership numbers were left whole, the request to lift the tax levy would likely be \$14 versus \$22 (or 10% lift on transit tax levy).
- Commission has not reviewed transit fares since 2015. Going forward we will need to have a discussion on transit fares to determine if current rates are sustainable.
- Recommendation that the Commission choose an option that would set them up for future year investments and passenger fare strategies.
- If additional Safe Restart funding is secured by the Province, then the Commission can revisit the approval.
- Commission can approve the base budget and then bring forward the transit tax requisition section of the document before end of March.

MOTION MOVED by Mayor Lisa Helps and SECONDED by Mayor Geoff Orr to approve the 2022/23 Base Budget.

CARRIED

MOTION MOVED by Mayor Geoff Orr and SECONDED BY Mayor Fred Haynes that the commission give provisional approval to funding option 2 subject to further information and revision at a special March meeting.

CARRIED

8. REFUGEE TRANSIT PASS PROGRAM – FOR APPROVAL
KYLE BOWMAN

- Commission discussed extending the length of the pass program beyond a year after year approval system.
- BC Transit staff will engage Inter-cultural Association of Greater Victoria on the impact of program and increase in value if approved annually in the budget.
- Staff to bring back a report to next commission meeting with an option to approve this program in the annual budget.

Motion MOVED by Mayor Lisa Helps and SECONDED by Mayor Maja Tait to approve.

CARRIED

9. WESTSHORE AND PENINSULA LOCAL AREA PLANS – FOR APPROVAL
LEVI MEGENBIR, JAMES WADSWORTH

- Commission presented with service and infrastructure improvements in both the Peninsula and Westshore as part of the local area transit plans.
- Will continue to evaluate priorities and inform future three year service expansion requests and service plans.

Peninsula Local Area Transit Plan

- Finalized local area transit plans for Westshore and Peninsula presented to the Commission.
- Peninsula plan last of original local area plans completed. Comprised of three municipalities and four First Nation communities. Peninsula supports lower density and higher reliance on personal vehicle travel. Significant engagement with key stakeholders to look at issues and opportunities. Online survey with over 350 responses and 900 comments. In the short term, the plan will provide improved service to and from airport and improved connections to both Westshore and UVic. Looking forward to RapidBus implementation and areas of investments in the Peninsula.
- Local First Nations were engaged from the start of the process and provided with the survey so they could share with their members. Highway 17 at Mt Newton will greatly improve access to services. In North Saanich looking to improve Route 85 to improve service. We will continue to monitor and improve.

MOTION MOVED by Mayor Geoff Orr and SECONDED by Mayor Fred Haynes to approve the Peninsula Local Area Transit Plan.

CARRIED

West Shore Local Area Transit Plan

- Westshore growing rapidly and network has not been restructured to accommodate density. This plan realigns the network to accommodate density and implement a RapidBus line. A strong level of support has been received from the community and local government with over 600 survey responses. The plan improves connections to UVic and between West Shore including Royal Bay and Westhills. Initial implementation of RapidBus line improvements tentatively scheduled to launch this fall that includes bus stop and service improvements.
- Medium term service priorities include expanding the RapidBus route, extending route 51 to Westhills and frequent transit route 52 in West Shore. Plan will include additional service on Route 54 in East Sooke.
- Route 61 will have a direct connection to RapidBus. This, in addition to the new intersection at Happy Valley and Hwy 14, will make it easier for students taking the 61 to cross the highway to access Belmont Secondary School.
- Ridership growing on #39 and will see improved service to hospitals.
- Plan will help address growing areas such as Latoria Rd where up to 20,000 residents will reside in the coming years that don't currently live in the area.
- LRT could be considered in future as communities continue to grow and develop.

MOTION MOVED by Mayor Rob Martin and SECONDED by Mayor Maja Tait to approve the West Shore Local Area Transit Plan.

CARRIED

10. ELECTRONIC FARE COLLECTION SYSTEM – FOR INFORMATION

RYAN DENNIS

- Current technology out of date, hard to collect data and riders expecting more on how they pay for service and goods.
- Cubic selected as vendor for EFCS implementation.
- This is a mobility solution and will ensure we are leaders in providing services in future.
- The new system is accessible and provides customers with a range of options. Cash will remain an option for users.
- The app will provide real time bus location and planning to help riders use transit.
- Dedicated customer support will be available.
- Pilot in mid-August in Victoria and looking to October for larger launch.

The Electronic Fare Collection System report was received for information.

11. FACILITY MASTER PLAN STRATEGY – FOR INFORMATION

JAMES WADSWORTH

- Focus on strategy for 600 electric buses over the next 25 years and the need to advance a third facility in Saanich.
- In process of selecting a vendor and don't currently have a date for the arrival of the first buses. In future we know we require lands for additional facility.
- BC Transit staff will prepare a report that includes future costs and forecasting that will be brought forward to the Commission at a future meeting for approval.

The Facility Master Plan Strategy report was received for information.

12. PLANNING, RAPIDBUS & INFRASTRUCTURE REPORT – FOR INFORMATION

LEVI MEGENBIR, JAMES WADSWORTH

- Seasonal service change this spring include changes to Routes 3 and 10 to better align service levels and demand.
- Working with local government on bus stop improvements.
- RapidBus looking towards a fall launch pending sufficient operators.
- Final approval for Island Highway upgrades underway.
- BC Transit staff working with Colwood, Langford and View Royal on RapidBus stations, a new bus lane from Royal Roads to Colwood Corners.
- Staff working with MOTI on Highway 1 bus on shoulder lanes and some improvements at Uptown.
- On McKenzie, working with Saanich on a corridor plan to implement RapidBus and other improvements.
- Work is advancing on the UVic transit exchange with construction this summer.
- Highway 17 RapidBus will give better access to Tsawout peoples.
- Active handyDART project in View Royal underway and public updated through e-newsletters and a working group.

- Advancing plans for new operations centre and will be engaging community and local government on the project.

The Planning, RapidBus and Infrastructure Update was received for information.

13. OPERATIONS UPDATE – FOR INFORMATION

KEVIN SCHUBERT

- Despite lower service levels on road, experiencing low level of pass-ups.
- Continuing to recruit to mitigate labour shortages and have a strong response from applicants – well over 100 applicants with 30 new hires. It takes 7 weeks training before operators can start working.
- Hiring rate is strong and looking at increasing capacity to train number of trainees.
- Operator attrition rate has remained relatively flat. Will continue to look at ways to improve retention and improve work life balance for operators. Aging workforce is seen throughout the industry and are looking at ways to address in future.

The Operations Update was received for information.

14. ATAC MINUTES – FOR INFORMATION

KEVIN SCHUBERT

ATAC minutes from the December 17, 2021 ATAC meeting were provided.

The ATAC Update and Minutes were received for information.

MOTION BY Mayor Rob Martin and SECONDED by Councillor Charlayne Thornton-Joe to adjourn meeting at 11:23 a.m.

CARRIED

1. IN CAMERA

MOTION BY Mayor Lisa Helps and SECONDED by Mayor Kevin Murdoch to adjourn in camera meeting at 11:55 a.m.

CARRIED

NEXT SCHEDULED MEETING

Tuesday, March 28, 2022 at 10:00 a.m.