
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

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

The winter seasonal service change provided 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.

Spring 2021 Seasonal Service Change (Effective April 5, 2021)

The spring seasonal service change will provide modifications to service levels and running times to reflect the ongoing change in travel demand and travel times due to COVID-19. New service will be added to Route 46 during midday and early evening, later evening service span on Routes 3 and 10. There will be a routing change on Route 1 to move service from Humboldt Street onto Fairfield Road. Route 75 will have a schedule redesign to offer better connections to Route 72 at Saanichton Exchange, and will have service level improvements on Saturday to meet increased passenger demand at Butchart Gardens.

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 presented at this Commission Meeting for approval.
- The Peninsula Local Area Transit Plan has begun, with stakeholder engagement slated for April and public engagement in May.
- The West Shore Local Area Transit Plan Refresh will begin in spring 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 is providing a project update to the Commission at this February 23rd Commission Meeting. The final strategy and public release will be completed soon after, and BC Transit will proceed to detailed implementation planning for Phase 1 of RapidBus (Westshore to Downtown Victoria) in

Spring 2021. In addition, additional analysis for Phase 2 corridors (McKenzie and Peninsula) will be initiated as required in collaboration with local governments.

- **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, the Town of View Royal 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 2021/2022 is underway and BC Transit has received requests for shelters from Central Saanich, North Saanich, the District of Saanich, and the District of Sooke.
- **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 20 development referrals since the last Commission Meeting in December and January 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 to December 6, 2020 and provides some evaluation of ridership trends through the period impacted by the COVID pandemic to the end of 2020.

RECOMMENDATION

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

Respectfully,

Levi Megenbir
Senior Transit Planner – Work Lead

Attachment: 13a Fall 2020 Ridership Performance Report

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

1.0 Introduction

This report compares the system-level ridership performance for the Victoria Regional Transit for 2020 in relation to 2019. Further, this report provides more detailed ridership information at the sub-regional and route-type levels for the fall 2020 service period, occurring between September 8 and December 6, 2020¹.

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 December 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 49 per cent in comparison to 2019 by the end of December 2020. December 2020 did see the typical decrease in ridership that occurs due to the holidays.

¹ The previous fall 2020 Ridership Performance Report (provided to the Commission on December 1st) assessed performance for the fall 2020 period using the available ridership data for that period up to October 31, 2020. This revised report provides data from the entire fall 2020 service period up to December 6, 2020.

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 58 and 64 per cent on the rapid, frequent, and local routes and falling 68 per cent for targeted routes.

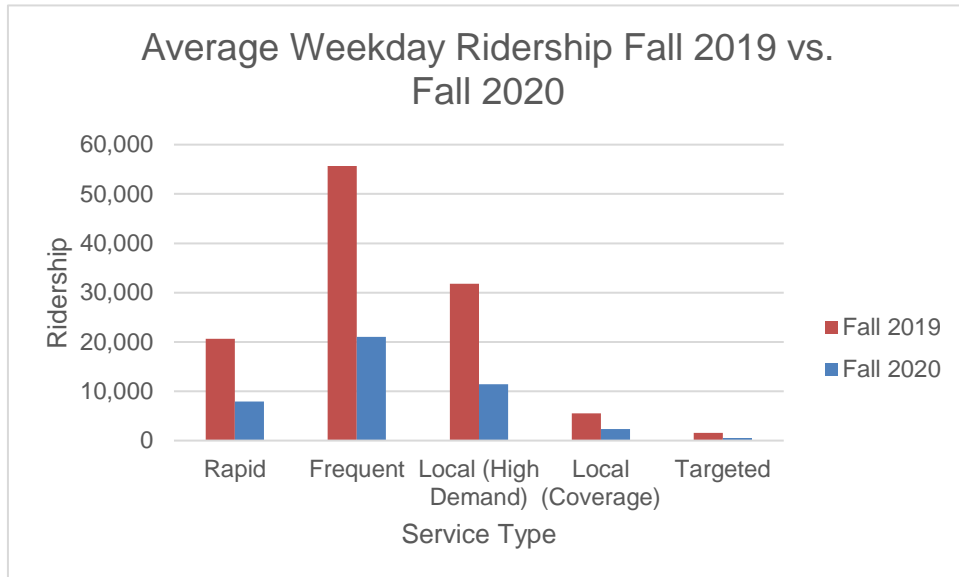


Figure 3: Average Weekday Fall Ridership by Route Type