

# Victoria Regional Transit Commission

BC Transit Remote Meeting via WebEx  
August 11, 2020 at 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.

## APPROVED MINUTES

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

### Present:

Councillor Susan Brice, Chair, Mayor Fred Haynes, Mayor Geoff Orr, Mayor Kevin Murdoch, Mayor Lisa Helps, Mayor Maja Tait, Mayor Rob Martin Councillor Sharmarke Dubow and Quinn Cunningham

### BC Transit Staff:

Christy Ridout, *Vice President, Business Development*; Roland Gehrke, *Vice President Finance & CFO*; Kevin Schubert, *General Manager, Victoria Regional Transit*; Levi Timmermans, *Director, Infrastructure Management*; Lisa Trotter, *Senior Manager, Government Relations*; Megan Hill, *Director, Budgeting and Forecasting*; Ryan Dennis, *Manager, Sales and Revenue*; Levi Megenbir, *Senior Transit Planner*, Seth Wright, *Transit Planner*, and Tina Sulea, *Executive Assistant (Recorder)*

### Regrets:

None

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### 1. CALL TO ORDER AND APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Chair Susan Brice called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m.

**Motion by Mayor Helps and seconded by Councillor Dubow to APPROVE the agenda as presented.**

**CARRIED**

### 2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM JUNE 16, 2020

**Motion by Mayor Helps and seconded by Councillor Dubow to APPROVE the minutes as written.**

**CARRIED**

### 3. CHAIR'S REMARKS

On July 20, 2020, BC Transit launched a province-wide marketing campaign focusing on safety and encouraging the use of face coverings onboard buses in transit systems across B.C. The goal of the campaign was to influence the behaviours of transit passengers and to create a feeling of "we are in this together" to help foster considerate and cooperative rider etiquette. I was delighted to participate with the BC Transit street team handing out branded facemasks at transit shelters across the region. Safety has always been a priority for BC Transit and on August 24th the use of face masks will be mandatory while taking transit in British Columbia. Many thanks to our drivers and our customers as we ride together through what has been a challenging time for many.

COVID-19 has also caused financial challenges for many, and transit as we will see today has also been impacted. It is still too early to resolve all the issues this may present as we hope to see ridership and revenue increase in the coming months and joint funding through Canada's

Safe Restart Agreement may provide some relief. We will have a special meeting end of September to discuss next steps on the road to recovery.

**4. 2021 VRTC Meeting Schedule – FOR APPROVAL – Lisa Trotter**

The VRTC meeting schedule for 2021 was reviewed for approval.

**Motion by Mayor Helps and seconded by Councillor Dubow to APPROVE the 2021 VRTC Meeting Schedule with the following amendments:**

- Add review of 10-Year Vision and Key Performance Indicators to the August 10, 2021 meeting schedule

**CARRIED**

**5. Operations Update – FOR INFORMATION – Kevin Schubert**

The operations update was reviewed. As of July 19, 99.90% of scheduled service was delivered. Front door boarding and fair collection was successfully reintroduced June 1. Custom transit ridership is still down but is slowly coming back. Customer service complaints were up slightly vs. the same time last year mainly due to more COVID related issues such as people not wearing face masks and perception of buses that are too full. Complaints related to schedule adherence was down significantly. Working to prepare for the uncertainty regarding Fall 2020.

**Motion by Mayor Helps and seconded by Councillor Dubow to receive the Operations Update for information.**

**Discussion**

- There was question regarding what drivers are doing to enforce the mandatory use of face masks
  - Face masks are mandatory but not being enforced; other transit agencies in Canada that have made masks mandatory are seeing a 85-90% compliance rate BC Transit is currently seeing a 50% compliance rate for encouraging use of a face mask
  - There is a small percentage of people who can't wear a face mask for medical reasons and it's not within BC Transit's jurisdiction to make that determination
  - There is also a risk to drivers due to confrontation so BC Transit is taking an educational philosophy approach as the first step
  - August 24th a face mask will be mandatory on public transit but not enforced which is the same approach for all other transportation agencies in Canada
  - It was suggested to have disposable face masks available for customers who forgot theirs
  - It was requested to report out on face mask compliance at the September 29, 2020 meeting

- To promote mandatory masks between now and August 24 all signage at bus stops will be changed to stronger language, social media messaging will be updated
  - BC Transit had a successful awareness campaign where face masks were handed out to the public and future dates have been set to promote face mask use on transit
- It was suggested to provide face masks on board the bus for customers who don't have a face mask
- Marketing campaigns will include ways public can make masks from common items
- Current capacity is approximately equivalent to a seated load and capacity will be increased in stages as ridership and face mask use increases

**CARRIED**

**6. Q1 Financial and Performance Summary – FOR INFORMATION – Megan Hill**

The forecasts assumptions are very conservative. There are COVID related expenses that are impacting the forecast. Upon instruction of the Ministry, the operating reserve for the VRTC is to be fully drawn down. Passenger revenue is \$7.4M below budget due to no fares collected for April and May 2020 and lower ridership. Provincial operating contribution is \$0.3M below budget due to lower operating costs. Fuel tax is \$154,000 below budget due to a reduction in fuel sales. The local contribution is \$5.7M over budget due to significantly lower passenger revenues offset by lower operating expenses and lease fees net of passenger, advertising and fuel tax revenues. By year-end, it is estimated the local contribution will be \$19.4M over budget.

**Motion by Mayor Helps and seconded by Councillor Dubow to receive the Q1 Financial and Performance Summary for information.**

**Discussion**

- BC Transit continues discussions with the province regarding federal funding
- We will have more information regarding emergency federal funding within the next 60 days to share with the VRTC
- The federal government has identified funding for municipal relief including relief for transit agencies
- The government is in discussions with transit agencies across Canada regarding how the specific funding packages will be managed

- How does BC Transit operate in regard to moving deficits into long-term debt? How long would BC Transit be able to operate?
  - Funding levers are passenger revenue, fuel tax revenue and property taxes (property taxes have already been set for the year)
  - It's legislated that the VRTC Transit fund not drop below zero
  - BC Transit is still in discussion with the province regarding funding options for municipalities that are running a deficit

**CARRIED**

**7. U-PASS Update – FOR INFORMATION – *Ryan Dennis***

Due to post-secondary course delivery moving to mainly online formats for fall 2020 there has been an impact to the U-PASS program. Students who are on-campus will be charged the U-PASS fee and students who are not on campus but live in the VRTS will be able to opt-in. This will result in decreased revenue to the VRTC.

**Motion by Mayor Helps and seconded by Councillor Dubow to receive the U-PASS Update for information.**

**CARRIED**

**8. City of Victoria Youth Bus Pass Program Update – FOR INFORMATION – *Ryan Dennis***

Citing decreased demand and lower transit ridership as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, the City of Victoria is not seeking to pursue a steady-state U-PASS program after the pilot's expiration at the end of August 2020. In place of the U-PASS program, the City of Victoria has reached out to BC Transit to contract a bulk purchase agreement, which is an approved discount program and available to organizations that regularly purchase large volumes of fare products.

**Motion by Mayor Helps and seconded by Councillor Dubow to receive the City of Victoria Youth Bus Pass Program Update for information.**

**Discussion**

- There is a 100 pass minimum threshold for the bulk purchase program for large institutions

**CARRIED**

**9. VRTS 10-Year Vision – FOR APPROVAL – *Levi Megenbir***

The 10-Year Vision document outlines the vision for the Victoria Regional Transit System and summarizes all of the plans, projects and priorities seeking to move the transit system towards that vision. This document is an annually updated, actionable and measureable strategy, providing both the Commission and the public a roadmap for transit development into the future.

**Motion by Mayor Helps and seconded by Councillor Dubow to AMEND the VRTS 10-Year Vision to include:**

**Discussion**

- Update photos to replace images of the old blue bridge and Wharf St. to photos with new infrastructure such as the new bridge and Wharf St. bike lanes

- Ensure the years are correct and reflect the 10-year vision on slide 6 'CRD Population and Employment by 2028
- Improve clarity of maps
- Remove the asterisk note on slide 8 'Victoria Regional Transit System Overview'
- Slide 9 'Key Performance Indicators' find a way to scale the difference over a 10-year period instead of showing the Mode Share Target for 2039
- Slide 10 'Active & Scheduled VRTS Projects and Plans' should start in 2020-2030 and take out 2019
- Slide 11 'Planned VRTS Projects and Plans' add a note that says there will be more clarification between medium and long-term priorities as funding is defined
- Slide 12 'Transit Evaluation Process (TEPS) add another evaluation criteria for GHG reduction
- Are international students and immigration considered in the CRD population projections?
  - It was requested to provide more information regarding how the CRD population estimates were derived and sent to Councillor Dubow

**CARRIED**

#### **10. Infrastructure Update – FOR INFORMATION – *Levi Timmermans***

Active infrastructure projects were reviewed. They include: BC Transit Bus Shelter Program, CNG Fueling and Facility Modifications, handyDART Centre, Island Highway Transit Priority Plan and University of Victoria Transit Exchange Refurbishment.

Projects in planning or development stages include: Operations and Maintenance Facilities Master Plan, Westshore Transit Priority Action Plan and Battery Electric Buses.

Ministry led projects were reviewed including: McKenzie Interchange, Highway 14 Connie Rd to Glinz Lake Rd Realignment and Park & Ride

Ministry led planning studies were reviewed including: Highway 1 Bus Priority Planning and Highway 17 Transit Facilities.

**Motion by Mayor Helps and seconded by Councillor Dubow to receive the Infrastructure Update for information.**

#### **Discussion**

- It was requested that information regarding the Operations and Maintenance Facilities Master Plan be presented at the November 2020 VRTC meeting
- There was a question with regard to Highway 1 Bus Priority Planning study and what that work would include
  - BC Transit has been providing input to the South Island Transportation Plan that is scheduled to be unveiled in fall 2020

**CARRIED**

**11. Planning Update – FOR INFORMATION – Seth Wright**

Fall 2020 Service Changes that will be effective September 7th were reviewed. Planning initiatives were reviewed including: Local Area Transit Plans for Broadmead/Cordova Bay and Esquimalt/View Royal, Rapid Bus Implementation Strategy, Bus Stop Improvements, Development Referral Process and COVID Service Ridership information.

**Motion by Mayor Helps and seconded by Councillor Dubow to receive the Planning Update for information.**

**Discussion**

- There was a question with regard to what BC Transit expects in September for ridership recovery
  - It's hard to predict but we have been in discussions with post-secondary institutions regarding students returning to the classrooms and know what to expect
  - We don't know what to expect with regard to K-12 schools
  - Ridership will depend on what happens with the pandemic
  - BC Transit will be ready with different scenarios for fall 2020

**CARRIED**

**Motion by Mayor Helps and seconded by Councillor Dubow to adjourn at 11:25 a.m.**

**ADJOURNED**

**NEXT SCHEDULED MEETING**

Tuesday, December 1, 2020 at 9:45 a.m.