

**CHAIR & MEMBERS  
VICTORIA REGIONAL TRANSIT COMMISSION**

**#11**

June 17<sup>th</sup>, 2014

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**SUBJECT: PLANNING UPDATE**

The purpose of this report is to provide the Victoria Regional Transit Commission (VRTC) an update of transit planning activities for **INFORMATION**.

**1.0 SERVICE PLANNING SUMMARY**

The Annual Service Plan was approved by the Commission in February 2014. The plan forecasts allocation of service hours by time of year and route type, identifies service change dates and describes significant changes and expansions to service. The development of the Annual Service Plan was based on the recommendations of the 2013/14 Victoria Regional Service Review developed through a detailed analysis of ridership results, as well as customer and front line staff feedback.

The Plan proposed a number of cost neutral service changes along with service expansion of 5,000 hours and two vehicles in January 2015 to align with the availability of new buses. At the meeting, the Commission requested that, if possible, the service expansion commence in September 2014. While the vehicles are still scheduled to arrive in January 2015, a portion of the 5,000 service hours is scheduled to be implemented this fall to improve off peak service, with improvements to fall peak service accomplished through reallocation of existing vehicles.

**Summer Service 2014 (June 23, 2014 – September 1, 2014)**

The summer schedule will be implemented on June 23<sup>rd</sup>. The summer service changes include the seasonal cancellation of express and school special trips oriented to secondary schools and post-secondary institutions. These seasonal adjustments allow BC Transit operations to conserve hours during underutilized summer months and to maximize service hours during peak ridership periods when schools are in session.

**Summer 2014 – Service Change Highlights**

**Implement Key Infrastructure to Meet Future Demand**

**Douglas Street Transit Priority** All routes using Douglas Street will now take advantage of the Phase 1 Douglas Street Transit Priority lanes which opened on June 9, 2014.

**Downtown Terminus Changes** **27 Gordon Head** and **28 Majestic** will now terminate at Fairfield and Blanshard rather than at the Legislature during the daytime, Monday through Saturday. The purpose of this change is to alleviate congestion and improve reliability from the extremely busy Legislature terminal. This change will also adjust downtown routing and terminus points for routes **4 UVic/Downtown** and **21 Interurban/Downtown** (which move their terminus point across the street on Fairfield) and the **75 Saanichton** (which will now terminate at the Legislature with all other regional routes).

**Serve Key Seasonal Destinations**

<b>53 Atkins</b>	Extends to Thetis Lake on trips after 9:00am during the summer; this extension was a popular customer request heard during public consultations in fall 2013.
<b>75 Saanichton, 81 Brentwood/Swartz Bay</b>	Added trips and capacity during the summer to accommodate extra visitors to Sidney, Brentwood Bay, Butchart Gardens and Swartz Bay.
<b>Reallocate Service to Match Demand</b>	
<b>13 Ten Mile Point</b>	Will now terminate at the UVic Exchange (where connections to several other McKenzie Ave. routes are available) and will no longer operate along McKenzie between UVic and University Heights Mall. Reducing this duplication enables resources to be reinvested back into the network.
<b>49 Langford Exchange</b>	The route is permanently discontinued due to low ridership far below performance guidelines. The resources from this route are intended to be reallocated to other Westshore services.
<b>Adjust Stopping Policy and Routing to Meet Passenger Demand, Increase Consistency</b>	
<b>7 Gonzales/UVic</b>	Will now route from Douglas to Fairfield via Burdett rather than via Humboldt and Blanshard to streamline service.
<b>51 Langford</b>	Adjusts stopping policy to now serve identical stops as the 16x Uptown/UVic Express on McKenzie from McKenzie at Quadra to UVic to improve consistency with other services and shorten passenger travel times.
<b>70x Downtown/Swartz Bay</b>	Adjusts stopping policy to now serve the southbound Hwy. 17 at McKenzie stop and the realigned Douglas Street stops to improve consistency, address passenger feedback and take advantage of the Douglas Street Priority Lanes.

The attached Summer 2014 Service Summary presents a detailed description of the changes. A comprehensive list of changes by route is available in the Customer Alerts section of the BC Transit website at <http://www.bctransit.com/regions/vic/>.

### **Fall Service 2014 (September 2, 2014 – December 28, 2014)**

The fall 2014 service changes focus on implementing the new UVic exchange, reinstating post-secondary and secondary school services and discontinuing summer season improvements. A substantial number of the fall 2014 changes also aim to shift service between higher and lower ridership portions of routes to more effectively use existing resources to better match service to demand.

The attached Fall 2014 Service Summary presents a detailed description of the changes. In addition to positive feedback heard from the public on these changes during the fall 2013 Service Review consultation, BC Transit staff have been engaging with staff and representatives of key stakeholders on the changes, including the Township of Esquimalt, University of Victoria and Camosun College administrations and Student Societies, Dockyard and Island Health.

Highlights of the proposed fall 2014 changes include:

- A major reconfiguration of the **6 Royal Oak/Dockyard**, **14 Vic General/UVic** and **15x UVic/Downtown Express** routes to address reliability issues, implement the Service Review recommendations and extend one of the future Rapid Transit lines to Esquimalt as outlined in the Transit Future Plan.
- Additional service and improved scheduling on routes **8 Interurban/Oak Bay** and the **39 Royal Roads/UVic** to reduce pass ups and better meet class times to Camosun College's Interurban Campus.
- Additional morning peak trips on the **4 Hillside/UVic** operating between Douglas and Hillside and UVic to reduce pass ups.
- Additional evening trips on the **59 Triangle Mountain** and **70x Swartz Bay/Downtown Express**, as well as introduction of Friday/Saturday late night service on the **27 Gordon Head/28 Majestic** and the **50 Langford/Downtown**.

#### **Winter Service 2015 (December 29, 2014 – April 6, 2015)**

Work continues in preparation for the winter 2015 service change which includes the arrival of two additional peak vehicles, a reallocation and restructuring of community bus services in the core, Westshore and Saanich Peninsula areas to better match service to demand, and improved service coverage and evening service availability. Service change highlights also include a new community bus service to Bear Mountain and improvements to the Frequent Transit Network. Service plan development has and will include outreach to area local governments and stakeholders. A more detailed list of system changes will be provided to the Commission in September.

## **2.0 PLANNING INITIATIVES**

**Tsawout First Nation**– In 2013, the Transit Commission received a petition for more transit service and an expanded service area within the Tsawout First Nation community. BC Transit staff met with the Tsawout First Nation group and District of Central Saanich staff on March 17, 2014 to discuss opportunities to improve transit service. A significant amount of the Tsawout residential area is beyond the VRTC Service Design Standards for walking distance to transit (400 metres). The Tsawout First Nation communicated that they and the Tsartlip First Nation have shared services agreements with Central Saanich and contribute funding towards services such as transit. There is a keen interest in expanding transit in their area, particularly in respect to the proposed development of a significant commercial area on the Tsawout First Nation land.

BC Transit staff have requested that the Tsawout First Nation update staff on their proposed commercial development plans as it could generate more demand for transit service. It was communicated that any service improvements to this area will be subject to the availability of resources and prioritization with other requests for service in the region.

**Downtown Circulator Proposal** – BC Transit staff met with City of Victoria staff and elected officials on April 11, 2014 to discuss their request to the VRTC for BC Transit staff to develop a plan and associated costs for a downtown Victoria transit circulator route.

The City of Victoria is interested in pursuing a downtown circulator transit service that would act as transportation for residents, employees and tourists travelling within the downtown core. Under their request, the service would operate annually, seven days a week (from morning until early evening) and would connect key travel destinations. Ideally the service would also have

unique branding to 'stand out' from regular transit services. The City has also requested that a fare free option be developed for consideration.

BC Transit will investigate in more detail the costs and specifications associated with introducing a Downtown Victoria circulator transit service and the associated impacts/opportunities of making it a 'free' service. A report will be presented to the Commission for consideration at its September 2014 meeting.

**Westshore Transit Plan** – The VRTS Service Review identified the need to develop a number of Local Area Transit Plans to identify in detail the transit needs and priorities of specific areas within the CRD. The first local area plan in the process of being developed is a Westshore Transit Plan. The plan is intended to address existing service area coverage issues and outline services to the new secondary schools scheduled to open in September 2015. It will also propose a series of service improvements (which include both expansion and cost neutral changes) to align with community development and strengthen connections to other areas of the region, such as the Camosun-Interurban Campus and Dockyard. The plan will also identify infrastructure needs, such as additional Park & Ride capacity and transit priority on the Island Highway and the Trans-Canada Highway.

As part of initial work on the Westshore plan, BC Transit staff met with municipal staff in Langford and Colwood to ensure the plan is in alignment with local transportation goals and community development. The next steps will be to finalize the plan and provide it to the Commission for information. The Westshore Transit Plan will provide further guidance to the development of future Annual Service Plans to the Commission. It will also assist local governments in identifying transit infrastructure requirements to support transit service, such as transit stops, bus pullouts and sidewalks. Future implementation of initiatives in this plan may require further public consultation prior to implementation.

**Development Referrals** – This process enables local governments to send larger-scale development or rezoning proposals to BC Transit for comment. From February through May 2014, BC Transit received and commented on 28 development referrals from seven of the 13 municipal partners. The following development referrals were received by BC Transit; Colwood (4), Langford (18), North Saanich (1), Saanich (1), Sidney (1), Sooke (2), and View Royal (1).

BC Transit staff received a significant referral from Colwood for the 190-hectare Royal Bay development. The referrals include the Master Plan and Phases 1 and 1a, as well as an OCP Amendment application. The Royal Bay Land Use Plan includes detached and attached residential, mixed-use development, a school, greenway and community park & plaza.

The proposed development is located on the Frequent Transit Network identified in the Transit Future Plan. BC Transit staff support this development in principle, but have requested the provision of an on-street transit terminal adjacent to the proposed commercial zone. BC Transit staff have also requested that the developer's design accommodate future transit stops along the proposed transit network through the development. BC Transit staff will continue to work closely with the City of Colwood staff and the developer to ensure these transit needs are accommodated in the design to support future transit service.

**CRD Regional Sustainability Strategy (RSS)** – In March, BC Transit staff participated in workshops to review and provide input into the draft policies of the CRD Regional Sustainability Strategy. BC Transit staff also provided CRD staff with written feedback on the draft RSS policies for their consideration. The workshop and written feedback will inform the next iteration

of RSS draft that will be submitted to the CRD Planning, Transportation & Protective Services Committee in the next month.

**Related Municipal Plans & Initiatives** - BC Transit staff are continuing to participate in the City of Colwood and Town of View Royal Master Transportation Plan Updates to ensure alignment with local municipal planning and the Transit Future Plan.

The City of Victoria Council has recently proposed reducing posted speed limits to 40 km/h along several corridors and will hold special hearings in upcoming months to allow residents to provide input on the idea. The roads for consideration as 40 km/h zones include Richmond Road (south of Fort Street), Southgate Street, segments of Quadra Street not already 40 km/h, Bay Street between Blanshard Street and Richmond, Gorge Road, Richardson Street, Douglas Street south of Belleville Street, and those streets in the area described as the downtown core in the Official Community Plan.

BC Transit is supportive of initiatives that improve or encourage active modes of transportation such as cycling and walking. Many of the roads identified above are corridors where transit service is operated. BC Transit staff are in the process of analyzing potential impacts of speed changes on these corridors. In cases such as Richardson Street where transit service is not frequent, impacts would likely be negligible. However, on corridors such as Douglas Street — where a very high frequency of transit operates and where transit priority lanes are in the process of being installed— it may negate some of the benefit of the transit priority improvements.

A number of other area municipalities have also lowered speed limits in recent years, such as the Town of Oak Bay (Henderson Road) and Township of Esquimalt (Craigflower Road). Just as with the development referral process, BC Transit staff would welcome the opportunity to analyze and provide comment on potential road network changes before they are implemented. It is always helpful to understand how changes at the municipal level coordinate across the region and may impact transit travel times and costs. BC Transit staff continue to work with CRD and municipal staff to look at how we can further integrate planning and implementation processes.

### 3.0 INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS

**Transit Priority Update** - The first phase of the Douglas Street corridor is now complete, with the provision of a one kilometre segment of peak period bus-only lanes between Herald Street and Hillside Avenue.

The City and BC Transit are now ready to advance the next phase of the project which includes an extension of the northbound bus-only lane through to Tolmie Avenue (“Phase 2”). The northbound bus-only lane would include using the existing curb lane for buses during the afternoon peak (3-6pm). Some minor changes to the southbound lanes will be required, including some modifications to bus stops. Once complete, the Douglas Street corridor would continue to support two northbound and southbound lanes for general purpose traffic as well as a dedicated northbound bus lane during the afternoon peak period. The City of Victoria and BC Transit are planning to begin design of Phase 2 in the near future. Planning and discussions are ongoing with Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure to ensure alignment and to prioritize further enhancements on their segment of the corridor from Tolmie to Uptown and beyond.

**BC Transit Shelter Program** - All bus shelters that were planned under the 2013/14 Bus Stop Improvement Program have now been installed, with the exception of one unit that has been stored off-site due to a delay in preparing the installation site by the municipality. The program saw the delivery of a total of 30 shelters in the Victoria Region in 2013/14, bringing the total number of shelters installed in Victoria since the inception of the program to 147. For 2014/15, applications for new shelters have been received from Oak Bay and Saanich, and expectations are that Esquimalt, Victoria, and Langford and Sooke will continue to participate as in previous years.

**UVic Exchange Expansion** - After successfully obtaining the required Development Permit Variance from the District of Saanich, the expansion of the UVic Transit exchange is forging ahead in partnership with the University of Victoria. The public tender is now complete and a letter of intent has been forwarded to the winning proponent. Construction started on June 2, 2014 with construction completion and opening aligned to the fall service changes on September 1, 2014.

**Victoria Facilities Master Plan** – Business case development for the first phase of the Master Plan is underway, with completion expected by the end of summer 2014. This phase is expected to recommend demolition of a portion of the east shop at the Victoria Transit Centre (VTC), which has met the end of its useful life and requires seismic upgrades. Removal of parts of the building will require reconstruction of body bays, a paint booth, stores and inventory space. The business case will examine the feasibility of reconstructing these functions at the Langford Transit Centre in order to maximize parking capacity at VTC, or if any of these functions should be outsourced to a third party provider.

**Victoria Third Conventional Operations and Maintenance Facility** – An initial search for suitable properties to accommodate a third conventional operations and maintenance facility has now been completed. The search included properties presently on the market, those owned by provincial entities, and land assembly opportunities. To date, the search has yielded poor results. BC Transit continues to work with the property consultant to assess new opportunities as they arise, including partnerships with other public agencies.

#### **4.0 TRANSIT FUTURE NETWORK MONTHLY TRACKING SURVEY**

In October 2013, to support the consultation in the Transit Service Review, a set of monthly survey questions were developed to measure public opinion on the Transit Future Network. The complete results of this research are presented in the attached appendix report: Victoria Region Transit Future Network – 2014 Q1 Public Awareness & Attitude Monthly Tracking. Results are summarized below:

- 49% of survey respondents were more likely to take public transit if service frequency was 15 minutes or better
- 44% per cent survey respondents are more likely to take transit if it reduced their travel time
- 70% of survey respondents support the implementation of transit priority measures (i.e. signal priority, queue jumpers and dedicated bus lanes)
- When asked what their preference was between converting an existing lane at peak times or adding a new lane, it was split 47% and 49% respectively.

**RECOMMENDATION**

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

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Manuel Achadinha', written in a cursive style.

Manuel Achadinha  
President and Chief Executive Officer

Attachments:

- Summer Service Summary
- Fall Service Summary
- Victoria Region Transit Future Network – 2014 Q1 Public Awareness & Attitude Monthly Tracking Results