



# Transit Future Plan

COWICHAN VALLEY REGION | March 2012

Executive Summary



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Transit has tremendous potential to contribute to more economically vibrant, livable, and sustainable communities. The need to realize this potential in the Cowichan Valley is increasingly important because of factors such as climate change, population growth, an aging demographic and mobility for individuals who do not have access to a private automobile. Projected future population growth in the Cowichan Valley will place increasing pressure on the existing transportation system.

The Transit Future Plan envisions the Cowichan Valley Region's transit network 25 years from now and describes what services, infrastructure and investments are needed to get there. The Plan includes a review of the existing transit services, regional and local land use plans, transportation data, and demographic projections. Consultation efforts included discussions with municipal partners, stakeholder meetings and Transit Future bus public events at various locations throughout the community. In 2011, BC Transit engaged with more than 1,300 people in the region. The background research and community engagement resulted in the creation of a unified vision for transit and the development of a transit network designed to meet the needs of the Cowichan Valley Region.



## Vision and Goals

### Vision

*“The Cowichan Valley Regional Transit System connects people and communities through cost-effective, convenient, safe and accessible transit services”*

### Goals

1. Make transit an attractive transportation alternative to the private vehicle
2. Reduce the community's impact on the environment
3. Make the transit system more efficient

### Target

The Transit Future Plan sets a ridership target of 1,200,000 annual rides for 2036. The target was set with input from stakeholders and a review of comparable communities. It is a relatively ambitious target; however it is achievable with investment and transit supportive land use development. Existing ridership will need to triple from 435,000 annual rides to reach this target over the next 25 years. The target will contribute to meeting the Provincial Transit Plan goals of reducing green house gas emissions and doubling transit ridership across the province.

## The Transit Future Plan Network

The transit services outlined below combine to create a comprehensive transit network to best meet the existing and future needs of the Cowichan Valley. The service layers are designed to connect and move people between and within community centres.

### Local Transit Network (LTN)

The LTN is designed to connect people to local destinations within their own community and regionally to other communities within the Cowichan Valley. Frequency and vehicle type are selected based on demand and operating conditions



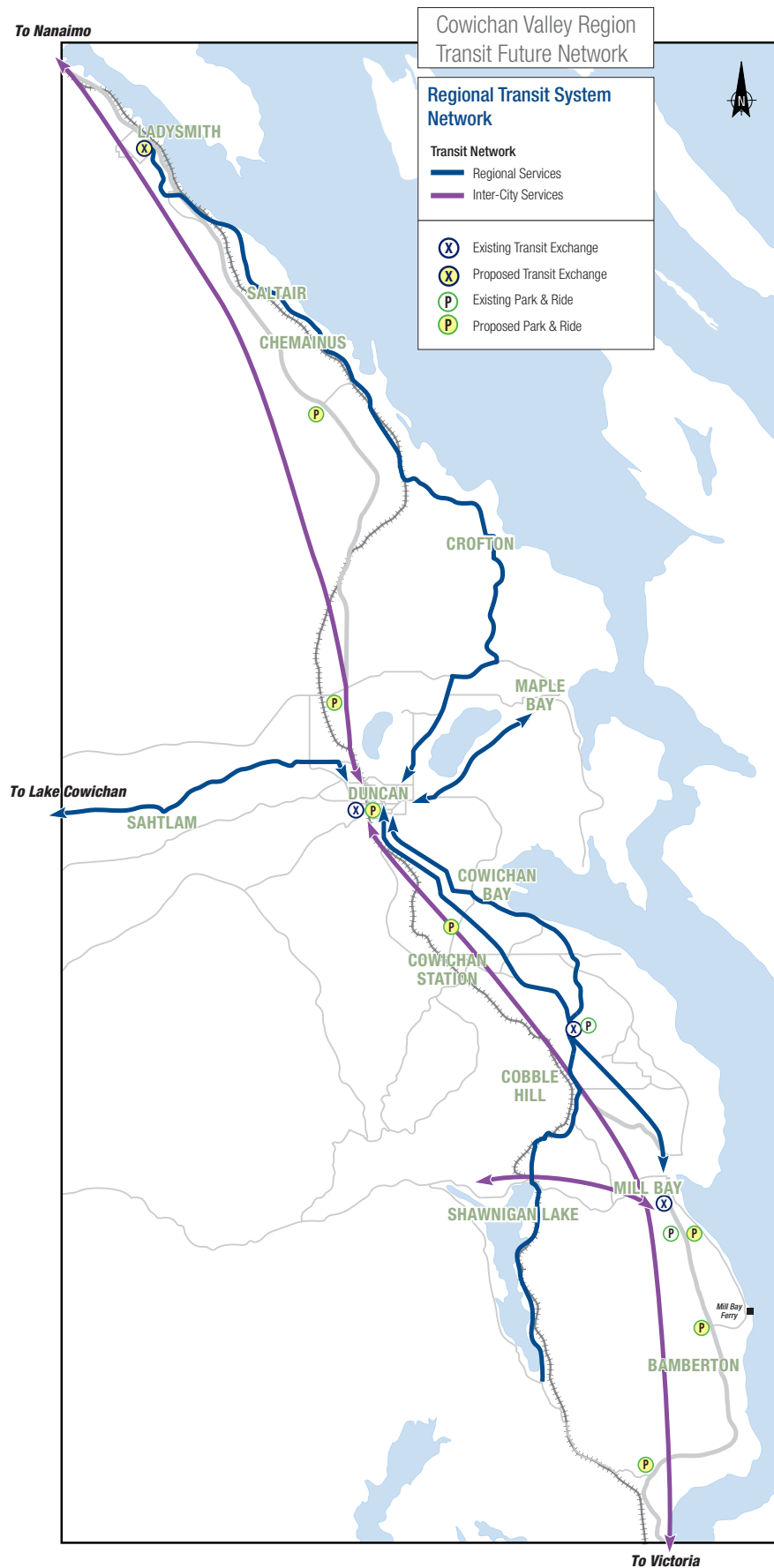
### Targeted Services

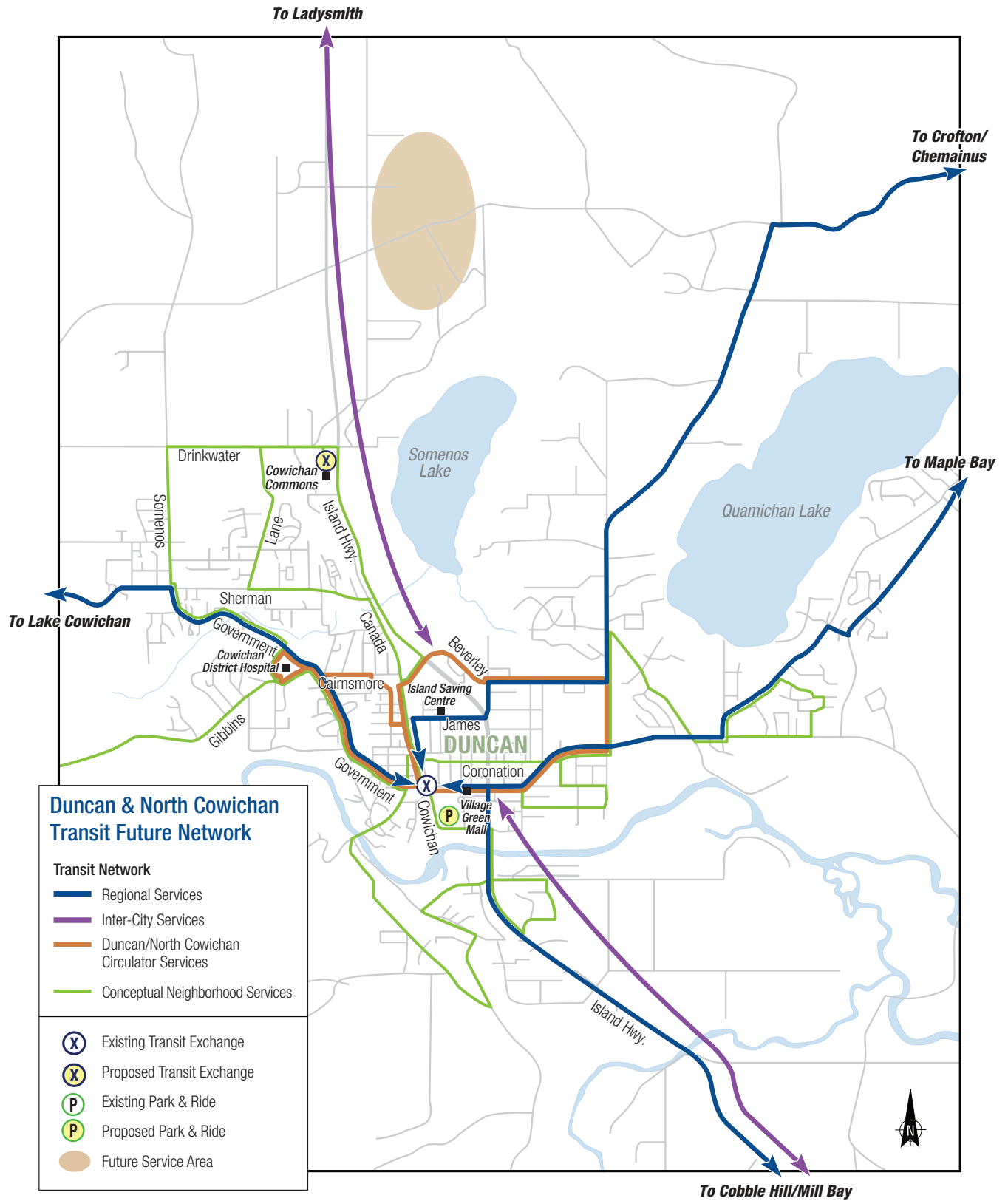
Targeted services are a collection of transit services that do not fit into the local transit network definition and are more focused on the specific needs of customers. These services include:

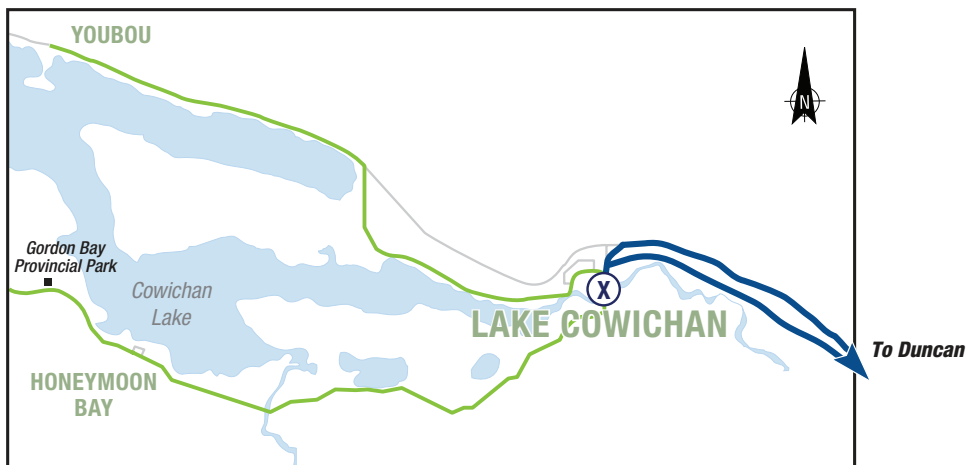
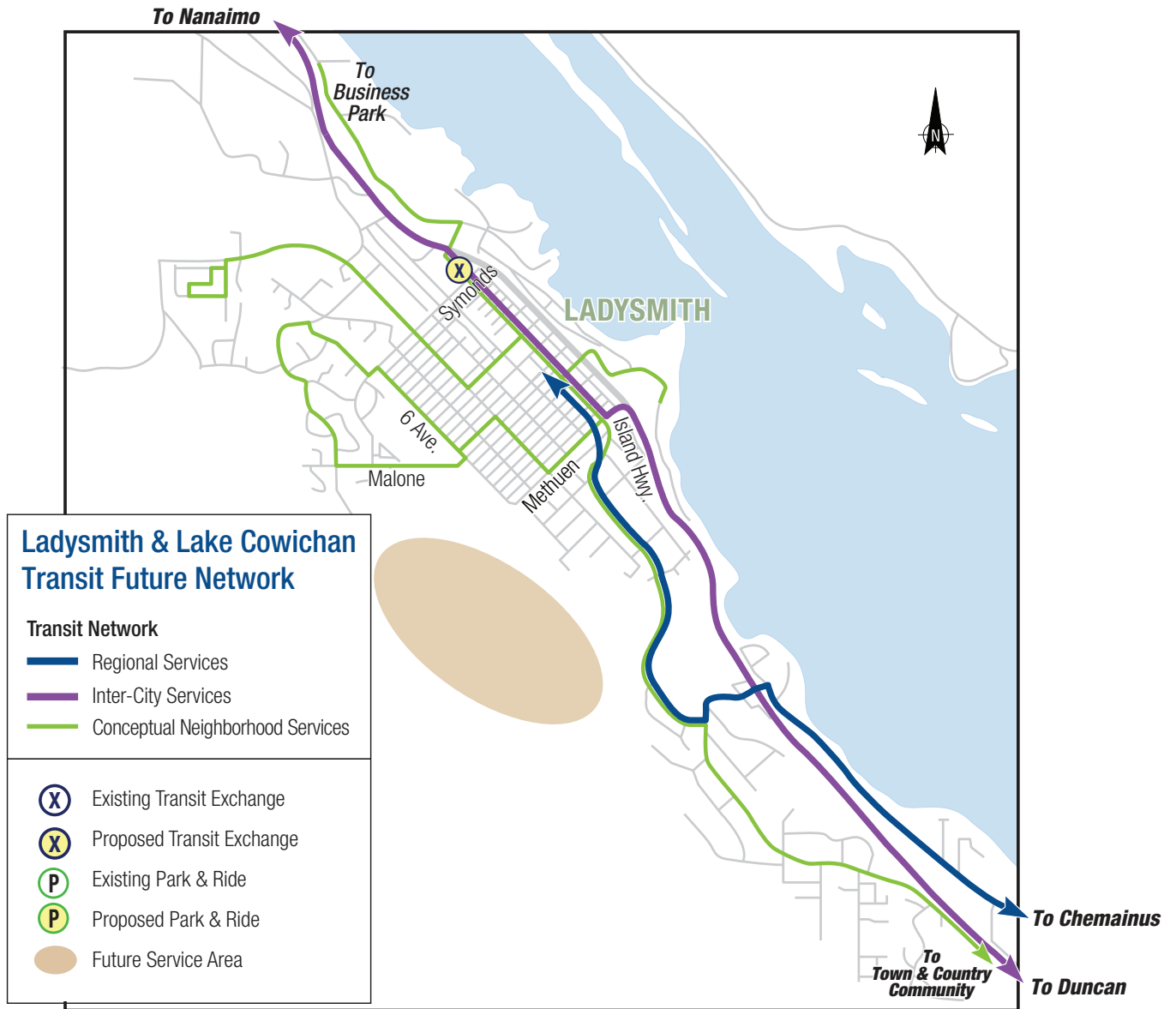
- Inter-regional: provides connections outside of the local transit service area (e.g. Victoria, Nanaimo)
- Custom/handyDART: door-to-door services for customers unable to use the conventional service
- Express: a direct, limited-stop, route between destinations
- Paratransit: A range of services designed to effectively serve rural and low-density areas (e.g. flex-routes, demand-responsive service, dial-a-bus)

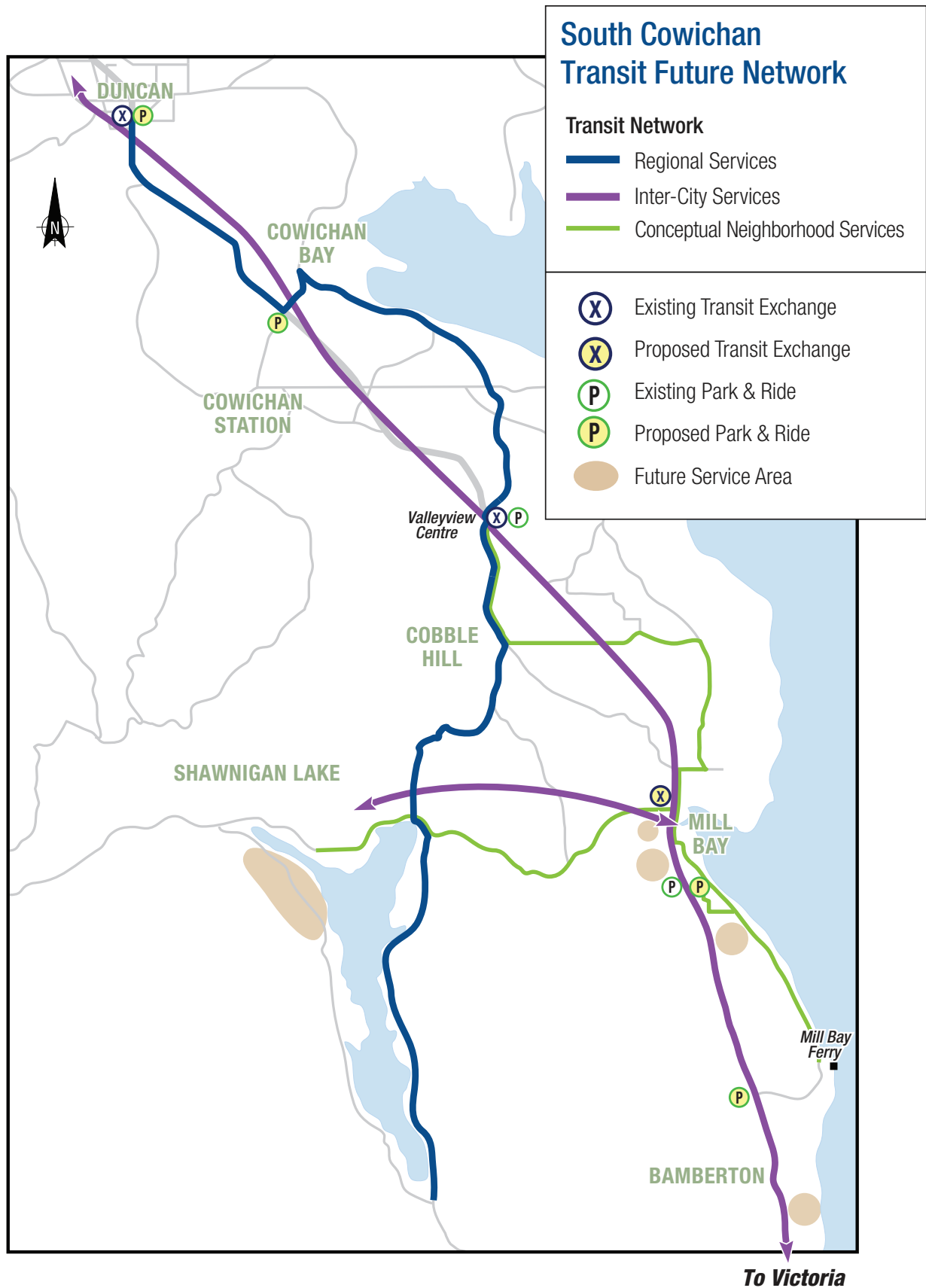












## Implementation Strategy

Establishing the Transit Future Plan network requires prioritizing transit investments and developing an implementation strategy to transform today's network into the future network.

### Network Priorities (Conventional Service)

Short-term Implementation (0-5 years)	
Service	Infrastructure
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve the frequency of weekday service</li> <li>• Implement the short-term recommendations of the June 2011 Cowichan Valley Commuter service review               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Adjust schedule to better match demand and travel time</li> <li>» Continue to develop plans to accommodate additional passenger demand</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Introduce transit service within Ladysmith and Electoral Area G</li> <li>• Improve evening service:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Extend hours of operation on Thursday, Friday and Saturday</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Improve weekend service               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Increase frequency and extend hours of operation</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Improve inter-regional service to Victoria               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Increase frequency</li> <li>» Improve connections to transit services in the Victoria Region</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish a Ladysmith transit terminal and transit stops</li> <li>• Work with the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure to expand Park &amp; Ride capacity at Frayne Rd. and Valleyview</li> </ul>





## Medium-term Implementation (6-15 years)

Service	Infrastructure
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reconfigure Duncan and North Cowichan transit services:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Introduce an urban circulator service</li> <li>» Create more direct neighborhood routes:</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Reconfigure South Cowichan transit services               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Create more direct routes</li> <li>» Introduce paratransit services</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Improve Lake Cowichan transit services:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Improve local transit connections</li> <li>» Introduce paratransit services</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Improve Ladysmith transit services:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Enhance neighborhood services within Ladysmith</li> <li>» Introduce direct service between Duncan and Ladysmith</li> <li>» Study the feasibility of paratransit services in North Oyster</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Introduce inter-regional service to Nanaimo</li> <li>• Continue to enhance inter-regional service to Victoria:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Increase frequency</li> <li>» Weekend service</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Extend the hours of operation on the Local Transit Network:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Early morning service</li> <li>» Extend evening service</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expand the operations and maintenance facility</li> <li>• Expand or establish new transit exchanges and terminals:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Downtown Duncan</li> <li>» Cowichan Commons</li> <li>» Ladysmith</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Expand Park &amp; Ride capacity along the Trans Canada to support inter-regional service to Nanaimo and improve access to transit for future development areas:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Duncan</li> <li>» Highway 18</li> <li>» Chemainus</li> <li>» Ladysmith</li> <li>» Cedar</li> </ul> </li> </ul>



Long-term Implementation (15+ years)	
Service	Infrastructure
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expand service to new service areas to support future development:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» South Cowichan      » Ladysmith</li> <li>» North Cowichan      » Lake Cowichan</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Increase regional and neighbourhood service frequency and span of service over time to support increased population densities in town and village centres</li> <li>• Continue to enhance inter-regional service to Nanaimo and Victoria:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Increase frequency</li> <li>» Weekend service</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expand or establish new transit exchanges and terminals:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Mill Bay</li> <li>» Town of Lake Cowichan</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Expand Park &amp; Ride capacity to support inter-regional service and improve access to transit for future development areas:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Existing locations</li> <li>» Bamberton</li> <li>» Malahat</li> <li>» Cowichan Station (Bench Rd.)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

## Ongoing Initiatives

The ridership targets cannot be reached by simply changing the transit network and increasing transit service levels. The following initiatives in the Transit Future Plan are non-network related and some will require continuous effort throughout the life of the plan.

- **Enhance Custom Transit service and transit accessibility**
  - » Expand handyDART services to align the hours of service and service area with the conventional transit system
  - » Expand handyDART services and develop new partnerships to deliver accessible door-to-door services to meet the challenge of an aging population
  - » Develop a travel training program to assist individuals who meet the handyDART eligibility criteria in learning to use conventional and handyDART transit
  - » Implement a seniors oriented shopper's service for individuals who do not require handyDART service
  - » Make transit more accessible
- **Encourage students to establish a U-Pass program at Vancouver Island University**
- **Address existing service needs**
  - » Passenger demand
  - » Operating time
- **Match vehicle type to local service demand**
- **Incorporate new service areas**
- **Improve customer information/marketing**
- **Improve transit customer amenities at transit stops**
- **Improve fare product availability**

## Moving Forward

### Funding the Plan

To meet the ridership targets of this plan will require significant capital and operating investments in the transit system over the next 25 years. Annual conventional transit and handyDART operating costs are based on service hours that are projected to increase from the existing 32,292 conventional hours and 6,148 handyDART hours to approximately 85,000 conventional transit hours and 25,000 handyDART hours in 2036. The plan also calls for significant investments that include:

- Expanding the transit fleet from the existing 25 vehicles to 69 vehicles
- New and expanded transit exchanges and Park & Rides
- Improvements to customer amenities at transit stops
- An expanded operations and maintenance facility

Given the level of transit investment anticipated over the coming decades, the way in which transit is and will be funded needs to be reviewed. BC Transit and its funding partners will need to work together to achieve stable and predictable funding sources beyond the existing funding mechanisms.

### Keys to Success

Moving forward, the Transit Future Plan will be used to communicate the vision and direction for transit in the region. To guide the plan from vision to reality will require an ongoing dialogue between the Province, BC Transit, the Cowichan Valley Regional District and other local partners on transportation policy, funding and the linkage between land use and transit planning. Municipal, regional and provincial planning agencies are pivotal to the plan's success by creating demand for transit through strategic transit oriented development, transit friendly land use practices and travel demand management practices.

BC Transit and the CVRD would like to thank all those who were involved in the creation of this plan





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