



Travaux publics et  
Services gouvernementaux  
Canada

Public Works and  
Government Services  
Canada

Ms. Susan Brice  
Chair  
Victoria Regional Transit Commission  
520 Gorge Road East  
Victoria, British Columbia V8W 2P3

MAY 01 2012

Dear Ms. Brice:

I would like to acknowledge receipt of your letter of March 29, 2012, to the Honourable Rona Ambrose, Minister of Public Works and Government Services, concerning the cancellation of the Blue Boat Commuter Service.

Since this matter comes under the purview of the Department of National Defence and you have also written to the Honourable Peter MacKay, I am confident that your letter will be given every consideration.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Joanne J. Bouvier".

Joanne J. Bouvier  
Director  
Ministerial Correspondence

c.c. Ms. Fernande Whitfield  
A/Manager, Minister's Correspondence Unit

Canada

**Victoria Regional  
Transit Commission**

Councillor Susan  
Brice - Chair  
District of Saanich

Mayor Frank Leonard  
District of Saanich

Mayor Dean Fortin  
District of Saanich

Mayor Larry Cross  
Town of Sidney

Mayor Barb Desjardins  
Township of Esquimalt

Mayor Carol Hamilton  
City of Colwood

Councillor Marianne Alto  
City of Victoria

# COPY

**RECEIVED**  
APR 18 2012

March 29, 2012

MINISTER'S REGISTRY	
TO	_____
APR 19 2012	
Docket No	_____
File No	131905

Hon. Peter MacKay  
Minister of National Defence

Hon Rona Ambrose,  
Minister of Public Works and Government Services

Dear Ministers:

**Re: Canadian Forces Base (CFB) Esquimalt – Blue Boat Commuter Service**

On March 9, 2012, CFB Esquimalt announced that the Blue Boat Commuter Service which provides vital passenger transportation to force members and base employees between CFB Esquimalt and the West Shore will be cancelled on April 30, 2012. This cancellation of operations will increase traffic congestion on local roads, adding pressure to financially constrained municipal services such as public transit. Accordingly, I am writing on behalf of the Victoria Regional Transit Commission (VRTC) to seek your assistance in this urgent matter.

The speed with which this service change has been announced and is being implemented leaves no time for planning or development of alternative services. Transit budgets and fleet complements have been approved and are fixed for the year. At previous meetings with CFB Esquimalt, BC Transit was regularly advised that a year's notice would be provided prior to the cancellation of the "Blue Boat" service.

The Blue Boats have been in service at the base since they were built in 1955. They make 13 runs each day of the work week, from 6 a.m. to 5:45 p.m., attracting a total daily ridership of about 800 passengers. Each boat can shuttle up to 67 passengers, plus three crew members, at a time. Without an attractive alternative, the elimination of the this service is expected to add 400-600 additional vehicles on the local road ways.

The VRTC strongly feels that transit could be part of the solution and would like to work with CFB Esquimalt to make this happen. While CFB staff have been cooperative in providing transit information to force members and base employees, a more comprehensive solution is required. This solution should be based on a Transportation Demand Management (TDM) plan and program for CFB Esquimalt.

It is typical of large employers in our region to provide a TDM plan and program to reduce the impact of employee travel on the environment. Programs undertaken by other employers in the region include physical infrastructure such as transit park and ride lots, dedicated carpool spaces, bike lockers and other facilities, marketing and education programs, financial contributions to service enhancement and financial incentives to employees to encourage more sustainable travel.

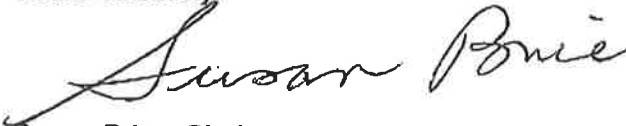
Within the Victoria Region, the VRTC has developed fare incentive programs (known as ProPass) for other large employers to encourage employee use of transit to commute to work. The ProPass program is a payroll deduction discounted bus pass and is eligible for the Federal Government tax credit. Some larger employers not only provide the payroll deduction service but provide a further discounted price of the pass to their employees to encourage sustainable travel. However, we note that the CFB Esquimalt will not offer payroll deduction to its employees. We believe this is a situation that could easily be addressed so that a ProPass program could be offered to force members and base employees.

I strongly encourage you to address this change in service through proper planning and funding for transitional initiatives. Ideally, the Blue Boat Commuter Service would continue until a TDM plan for the base is put in place. Without such a plan, the "Blue Boat" cancellation will generate significant negative impact on local municipal services.

I would hope that the Departments of National Defence and Public Works and Government Services would be willing to minimize and assist in addressing these impacts. To that end, I have asked BC Transit to make themselves available to assist in the transit related components of your TDM plan.

I appreciate your attention to this urgent matter and look forward to a positive resolution.

Yours Sincerely



Susan Brice, Chair  
Victoria Regional Transit Commission

Cc: Hon. Elizabeth May, MLA Saanich - Gulf Islands  
Hon. Randall Garrison, MLA Esquimalt - Juan de Fuca  
Hon Denise Savoie, MLA Victoria

Manuel Achadlnha, President and CEO, BC Transit

Capt. (N) Craig Baines, CFB Esquimalt Base Commander