

# Victoria Regional Transit Commission

BC Transit 520 Gorge Road East  
August 23, 2022 | 9:00 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.

## DRAFT MINUTES

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

### Present:

Susan Brice, Chair, Mayor Geoff Orr, Mayor Kevin Murdoch, Mayor Rob Martin, Mayor Lisa Helps, Mayor Fred Haynes, Councillor Charlayne Thornton-Joe

### BC Transit Staff:

Chris Fudge, Director, Government Relations; Christy Ridout, Vice-President, Business Development; Kevin Schubert, General Manager, Victoria Regional Transit; Megan Hill, Director, Budgeting and Forecasting; Matt Boyd, Director, Corporate Planning and Strategy; Levi Megenbir, Senior Transit Planner; James Wadsworth, Manager, Project Development; Ryan Dennis, Electronic Fare Collection Systems Manager; Danielle Harriott, Manager, Specialized Programs; Jessie Nikkoi, Student Representative, Camosun College; Christine Lewis, Executive Assistant and Divisional Coordinator (Recorder)

### Regrets:

Mayor Maia Tait

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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 MOVED by Mayor Lisa Helps and SECONDED by Mayor Kevin Murdoch the agenda as written.**

**CARRIED**

### 2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM JUNE 14, 2022

**Motion MOVED by Mayor Kevin Murdoch and SECONDED Mayor Rob Martin to approve the minutes as written.**

**CARRIED**

### 3. CHAIR'S REMARKS

Good Morning,

*We recognize and acknowledge that we work on the unceded traditional territories of the Lekwungen peoples, and the Esquimalt and Songhees Nations.*

We are just two weeks away from the start of September, and we will be welcoming back students and working commuters who depend on the service that BC Transit provides.

Ridership continues to improve and has surpassed 75% of pre-pandemic levels, and there is a feeling of optimism as this positive trend continues. We continue to focus on making our service safe, efficient, and reliable, and we are seeing our customers respond to these efforts by making transit part of their daily life once again.

Following our last meeting in June, the Commission gave their unanimous approval to provide additional funding to our Refugee Pass program and support Ukrainian families settling in our region. I am pleased to report that through collaboration with the Inter-Cultural Association of

Greater Victoria, we were quickly able to fulfill requests for monthly passes from Ukrainian families and allow them the opportunity to utilize our transit system. As of August 9, over 150 clients have received monthly passes and it is wonderful to see so many people benefiting from this opportunity.

I would also like to acknowledge the important work that our transit operators continue to perform on a daily basis, which was recently recognized through the 2021 BC Transit Board of Directors Leadership Award. This award recognized the inspiring commitment that transit operators have shown to their communities, and the excellent customer service that was delivered through the pandemic. As well, our Victoria Maintenance Services team, who are the dedicated professionals who are constantly inspecting, servicing, maintaining and repairing the buses in our fleet, were also recognized last week as part of the Maintenance Services Appreciation Week.

Work is continuing to prepare for the initial deployment of our first 10 battery electric buses in 2023, and we are looking forward to having a demonstration bus here in Victoria this fall to see firsthand what zero emission transit service looks like. As we continue to experience unprecedented changes to our weather and see the impact that climate change is having on our planet, we can be reassured that the actions we are taking are meaningful, and we are forging a path for communities around the province as they plan for their own battery electric bus deployments.

We have much to look forward to in the months and years ahead, and many reasons to celebrate for what we have collectively achieved over a very difficult and challenging period.

#### **4. DELEGATION**

Institutionalized ableism on transit (Daniel Sands)

The Commission heard that anyone using a wheelchair on a transit bus and riding in the forward-facing position is currently strapped in by the bus driver. The strap must also be removed by the driver which caused the presenter to feel confined. They have communicated to BC Transit their concerns including requesting a policy change so that if they could unstrap themselves they would feel less confined.

Staff communicated that the policy is an industry wide safety standard. They will look into the concerns raised and bring back an update to the Commission at their next meeting as well as refer the matter to the ATAC Committee for their review and feedback.

**MOTION moved by Mayor Lisa Helps and SECONDED by Councillor Charlayne Thornton-Joe for staff to bring back a report on balancing the needs of riders who use chairs on transit and a review of safety in relation to all users on the bus with and without chairs.**

**CARRIED**

#### **NOTICE OF MOTION**

None

**5. FINANCIAL AND PERFORMANCE REPORT SUMMARY – Q1 – FOR INFORMATION**  
*MEGAN HILL*

The Commission was presented with a financial report based on first quarter results. Revenue is up due to an increase in the purchase of prepaid fares and higher passenger trips.

Although there is increased ridership, the Commission was advised that challenges with the number of operators available has impacted service levels at times. Data is continually analyzed to maximize service hours and to deliver a reliable service.

Fare products purchased are increasing and the use of cash is decreasing, something which was used more during the pandemic.

**MOTION MOVED by Mayor Fred Haynes, SECONDED by Mayor Lisa Helps to RECEIVE the Financial and Performance Summary – Q1 for INFORMATION.**

**CARRIED**

**6. DRAFT FY2024-2026 BASE BUDGET – FOR INFORMATION**  
*MEGAN HILL*

Forecasted revenue takes into account safe restart assumptions, provincial contribution, fuel tax revenue and local contribution which was split out (safe restart/levy and transit fund). A property tax decision will come forward in February to the Commission.

General labour increases shown are based on previously PSEC mandates, fuel budget with a slight lift each year, 1% in service hours in 2023-24, increase fleet maintenance parts and materials, implementation of EFCS and lease fee increases for vehicles and island highway project and a new custom facility. Risks related to labour, supply chain issues, fuel costs are being factored into the draft budget.

A final budget will be presented at the February meeting for the Commission's approval.

**MOTION MOVED by Mayor Fred Haynes, SECONDED by Mayor Geoff Orr to RECEIVE the Financial and Performance Summary – Q1 for INFORMATION.**

**CARRIED**

**7. THREE YEAR SERVICE EXPANSION – FOR APPROVAL**  
*CHRIS FUDGE*

For 23/24 no expansion recommended as a result of deferred expansion in recent years that we can implement. Capacity in facilities is starting to max out and take into account fleet modernization that is underway.

Investment in 25/26 for custom aligns with opening of new facility.

Minor service reductions have had to be made for fall to ensure we deliver reliable service based on available number of operators. We want to make sure the public can rely on our service. Continue to monitor ridership and work with operations.

**MOTION MOVED by Mayor Kevin Murdoch and SECONDED by Mayor Lisa Helps to APPROVE the Three Year Service Expansion.**

**CARRIED**

**8. 10 YEAR VISION UPDATE – FOR APPROVAL**  
*LEVI MEGENBIR*

The Commission was presented with an update from February last year – looking at expenses, ridership metrics and changes to the schedule for projects and initiatives.

The Commission heard that ridership recovery is bouncing back and is now close to high 70s low 80s.

WE are still awaiting new data for Key Performance Indicators. Data is showing population distribution changing especially in Westshore. With respect to access to transit, we are seeing a 2% increase to all transit services and an increase in population being located within a 5 minute walk to frequent transit. This is in large part due to better land use decisions and LGPs developing where transit exists. Staff continue to continue to assess how we deliver transit with land use density decisions.

Local government investment in bus shelters and sidewalks are having a positive effect on increasing ridership.

A survey of local government partners and developers is being conducted to see what BC Transit can do to influence transit being located close to land development and help local government make informed decisions. The survey results to be shared with the Commission at a later date.

**Motion MOVED by Mayor Lisa Helps and SECONDED by Mayor Kevin Murdoch to approve the 10 Year Vision Update.**

**CARRIED**

**9. FARE POLICIES-ELECTRONIC FARE COLLECTION SYSTEM – FOR APPROVAL**  
*RYAN DENNIS*

The Commission was advised that a timeline for the electronic fare collection system implementation and pilot schedule will be available soon.

This report presented the Commission with four administrative fare related items for approval:

30 day pass fare – every monthly pass needs a start and end date. Switching to a 30 day pass enables a user to buy anytime during the month and passes can be automatically repurchased.

Removal of ticket fares – support those who purchase day passes currently. Looking to convert to a stored value amount so not charged past a certain amount of taps per day. This gives the user a better experience using stored value and enables customers to not have to carry cash.

Under the current transit assistance program DayPASS, users usually receive two day passes. Under Umo, there will be a new day pass fare for those who use this program. This will enable them to continue to give all day fares to those users.

The refund policy is being standardized and will be run by a central call centre for users throughout province. This is aligned with current refund policy on unused fare products or store value amount greater than \$10.

We will continue to support UPass through Umo either through app or reuseable card issued through post-secondary institutions. Students will no longer have to go to campus providing more convenience.

For technology challenged users we will a variety of options. For those riders they will have a smart card that they can reload and we will have vendor locations where they can pay in person. Cash will also still be accepted.

**Motion MOVED by Mayor Lisa Helps and SECONDED by Mayor Fred Haynes to approve the Fare Policies – Electronic Fare Collection System.**

**10. 2023 MEETING SCHEDULE – FOR APPROVAL**  
*CHRIS FUDGE*

February 21<sup>st</sup> is day after Family Day – a request was made by the Commission for the meeting materials to be posted early for review prior to the long weekend.

**Motion MOVED by Mayor Geoff Orr and SECONDED by Mayor Kevin Murdoch to approve the 2023 Meeting Schedule.**

**CARRIED**

**11. CUSTOM SERVICE UPDATE – FOR INFORMATION**  
*DANIELLE HARRIOTT*

The Commission was advised that the online handyDART booking system is back up and running.

They also heard that labour shortages have meant use of taxi supplement budget used more than usual. Twelve new staff recently hired so hopeful will have more buses on the road soon.

In person assessors for handyDART are meeting 75% of applicants in timeline agreed to under our contract with the operator.

Staff are aware of an availability issue and continue to look at making more efficient and way to accommodate users. Work continues to be done on educating users on cancelling so we can use that trip again. A review of the name of the program is planned as part of the strategic plan being developed.

**Motion MOVED by Mayor Kevin Murdoch and SECONDED by Mayor Fred Haynes to RECEIVE the Custom Service Update for INFORMATION.**

**CARRIED**

**12. RAPIDBUS, PLANNING & INFRASTRUCTURE UPDATE – FOR INFORMATION**  
*LEVI MEGENBIR, JAMES WADSWORTH*

The Planning department presented the Commission with information on the upcoming Fall 2022 service change with service being increased to align with the return of school.

The Commission heard from the infrastructure staff on a number of projects currently underway. RapidBus station at Mt Newton X Road looking to be completed. Some changes with the legislative exchange and one bay being relocated to Belleville. The Uptown local area plan will begin to support the Uptown mobility hub.

RapidBus downtown to Westshore line is deferred to early 2023 and is a top priority for next year. Staff are currently working with local government on the location of RapidBus stations. Meetings are underway with the City of Victoria on what needs to be done for transit in the downtown core and will come back to the Commission.

The Commission heard that BC Transit is working on three ministry projects on Highway 1, Uptown Transit Priority and Six Mile Mobility Hub projects as well as the future Peninsula RapidBus line and Highway 17 upgrades.

**MOTION MOVED by Mayor Kevin Murdoch and SECONDED by Councillor Charlayne Thornton-Joe to RECEIVE the RapidBus, Planning & Infrastructure Update for information.**

**CARRIED**

**13. OPERATIONS UPDATE – FOR INFORMATION**  
*KEVIN SCHUBERT*

A report was received for information by Commission showing that this spring we saw similar labour challenges and a new wave of COVID-19 that affected the number of operators available. An active recruitment and hiring process continues to address staff required in all areas including transit operators, maintenance and customer service.

Staff advised we are seeing some activities such as Canada Day return to normal. The partnership with local police authorities was a success in ensuring safe transit available to and from the event.

**MOTION MOVED by Mayor Fred Haynes and SECONDED by Mayor Lisa Helps to RECEIVE the Operations Update for information.**

**CARRIED**

**14. STUDENT UPDATE – FOR INFORMATION**  
*JESSIE NIKKOI*

The Commission heard that we expect 400 new students at Camosun this fall and more students will be taking transit as an affordable way to travel around the city.

**MOTION APPROVED by Councillor Charlayne Thornton-Joe and SECONDED by Mayor Geoff Orr to receive the Student Update for INFORMATION.**

**MOTION BY Mayor Lisa Helps and SECONDED by Councillor Charlayne Thornton-Joe to adjourn meeting at 11:25 a.m.**

**CARRIED**

**NEXT SCHEDULED MEETING**  
February, 2022 – date to be confirmed