

Victoria Regional Transit Commission

Chair and Members

June 13, 2023

#7

PREPARED FOR: Victoria Regional Transit Commission

PURPOSE

To provide the Victoria Regional Transit Commission (“the Commission”) with an update on transit service planning, infrastructure planning and construction activities in the Victoria Region. This report is presented to the Commission for INFORMATION.

1. TRANSIT SERVICE CHANGES

Summer 2023 Seasonal Service Change

Effective July 3, 2023, the summer service change includes the following:

- Changes to departure bays at Swartz Bay. Route 72 will now depart from a separate bay from routes 70 and 71.
- Additional route 70 trips on all days of the week including southbound express trips that will bypass Sidney.
- Improved midday service on route 75 on weekdays and Sundays as well as additional Saturday trips to Butchart Gardens for the summer.
- Minor seasonal service level adjustments for the summer on routes 4, 7, 11, 14, and 21 to align with demand.
- Trips across various routes meeting K-12 school times seasonally removed for the summer.
- Route 17 seasonally discontinued for the summer.

Fall 2023 Seasonal Service Change

Effective September 4, 2023, the fall service change includes the following:

- Reintroduction of seasonal routes and service levels to align with the start of school.
- Reintroduction of Friday and Saturday extended late-night service that was discontinued through the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Reintroduction of service on Gorge Road between Admirals and Tillicum via Route 25 with the completion of District of Saanich infrastructure road works.
- Service level improvements on route 12 in weekday midday periods to address passenger crowding and service reliability. Service reductions on Saturdays to improve service reliability.
- Schedule changes to route 6 to improve service reliability

2. TRANSIT SERVICE PLANNING INITIATIVES

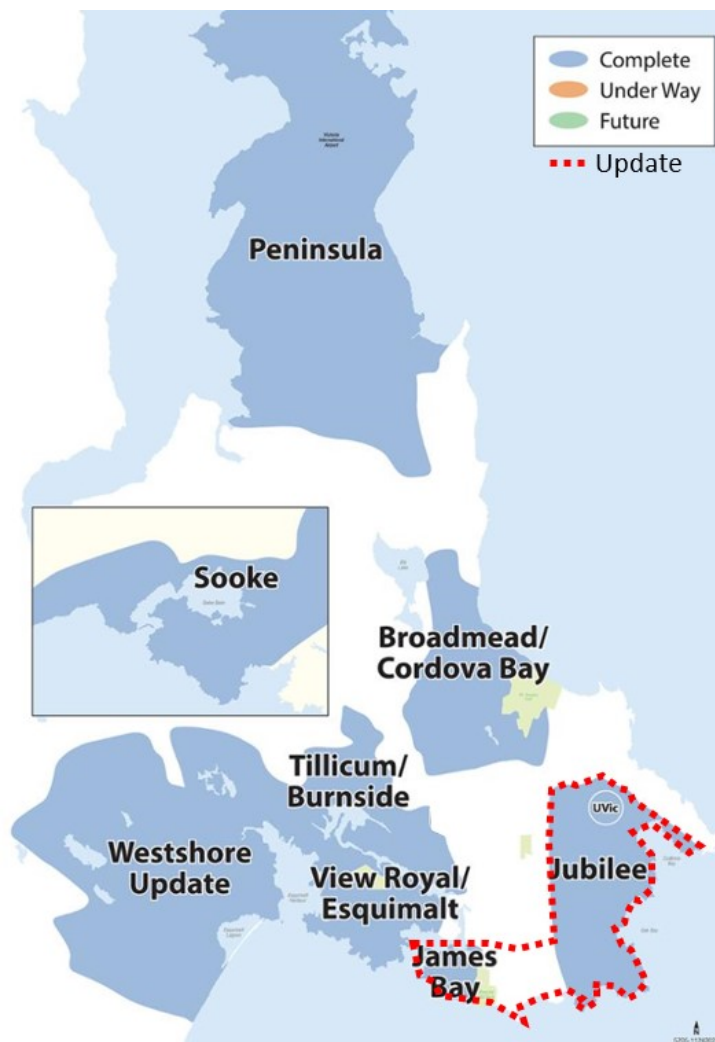
Local Area Transit Plans (LATP)

James Bay and Jubilee LATP Update

An update for both the James Bay and Jubilee Local Area Transit Plans is planned to start at the end of 2023.

The original James Bay LATP was completed six years ago in 2017 and is due to be revisited. Despite being completed in 2020, there are no remaining proposals in the Jubilee LATP that can be implemented before further public engagement is conducted. Finally, the Fairfield and Gonzales Neighbourhood Association has requested to have input on the transit service within their area.

Consequently, this LATP Update process would look to revisit the transit network and service and infrastructure priorities over the next 5-7 years in this larger area as a cohesive process with consultant support.



Regional Corridor Strategy

Project Timeline

The Regional Corridor Strategy began in January 2023, with the goal of completion before the end of 2023.

Project Goals

The intention for this biennially updated strategy is to:

- Provide an updated Transit Future Network, which was originally developed through the 2011 Transit Future Plan.
- Support the 10 Year Vision, with a more technical focus on network planning and development.
- Develop and prioritize a strategic transit planning work plan over the next 5-10 years, intended to:
 - Support broader network developments, including the Uptown Mobility Hub development and implementation, crosstown network development, and RapidBus planning and implementation.
 - Increase collaboration with Local Government Partners and alignment between land use and transit planning processes to better achieve collective sustainability goals.
 - The strategy's resulting work plan will include a phased list of Corridor Plans and Local Area Transit Plans needed to support the goals of the Regional Corridor Strategy and 10 Year Vision.

The draft corridors for assessment have now been developed and feedback is currently being requested from Local Government Partners within the project working group. Once the corridors have been finalized, next steps include submitting them for analysis and conducting a Multiple Accounts Evaluation (MAE) assessment.

Referrals – Referral-related work undertaken or proposed since the last Commission meeting includes:

- **Bus Stop Improvements** – BC Transit continues to work closely with local government partners within the Victoria Region to coordinate improvements to stop configurations and layout to improve accessibility and customer experience. New bus stops are planned for Admirals Road at Craigflower to support the recent extension of Routes 24 and 25 to Tillicum Mall, and to support the future implementation of Route 40.
- **Development Referral Process** – BC Transit receives and responds to development referrals from local governments considering rezoning and large-scale development proposals. BC Transit provides comment on opportunities for transit supportive development, improvements to transit supportive infrastructure such as bus stops and sidewalks and provides comments on the feasibility of future transit service to the proposed development.

Planning staff have received approximately 15 development referrals since the last Commission meeting between March 2023 and May 2023, and provided feedback to five local governments.

Service Monitoring

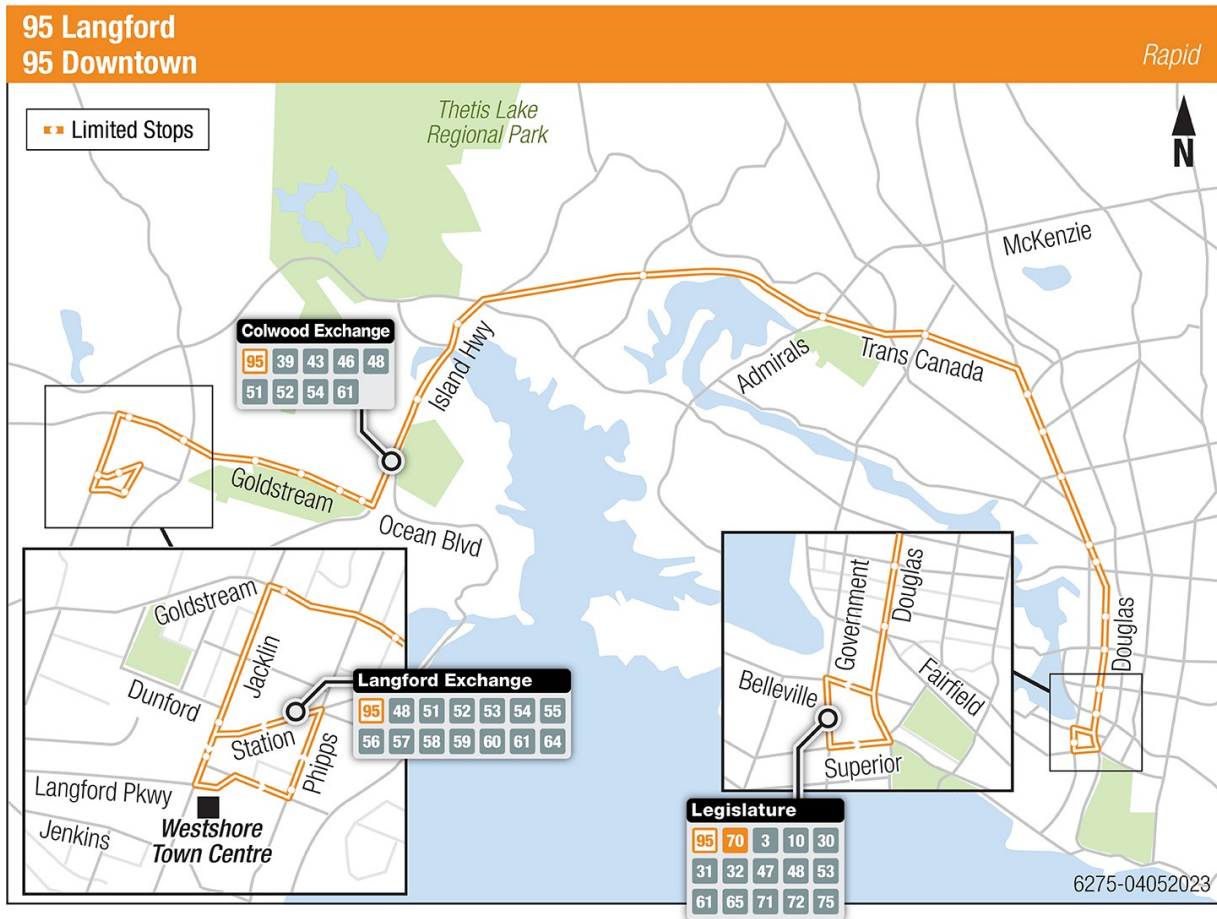
- **Ridership Performance Report** – Planning regularly monitors service performance against the service standards and performance guidelines identified in the 2013/14 Service Review document. Regular performance monitoring allows for a better alignment between service levels and ongoing changes in demand patterns.

The attached Ridership Performance Report (#7a) provides information on ridership performance over the Winter 2023 service period from January 2 to April 9, 2023, and provides information on ridership trends through the period impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic up to April 9, 2023.

RapidBus

The Victoria Regional RapidBus Implementation Strategy was completed in summer 2021. RapidBus is transit service that outperforms the personal automobile in speed, comfort and reliability. Over time, the RapidBus system will be implemented across several corridors to create a high-capacity transit system. There are a number of transit service planning and infrastructure activities that support advancing the RapidBus strategy. This includes:

- **West Shore-Downtown RapidBus Line** – The West Shore-Downtown RapidBus Line was launched on April 10, 2023, with unique branding, improved service levels, and fewer bus stops along the route.
 - Average weekday ridership on the new Route 95 is 22% higher than Route 50 from the previous spring service period.



- The launch also included changes to Route 61, including the addition of 38% more service and a decoupling of the previous interlining between Routes 50 and 61 in off-peak periods.
 - Average weekday ridership on route Route 61 increased by 23% in comparison to the previous service period.

3. ON-STREET TRANSIT INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS

Active Infrastructure Projects

- **Island Highway Transit Priority Upgrades:** The Island Highway Transit Priority Project is being advanced to support the Westshore Rapid Bus Strategy on the Island Highway between Highway 1 in the Town of View Royal, and Wale Road, City of Colwood. The scope of the project includes transit queue jump lanes, bike lanes, sidewalk widening, accessible wheelchair ramps, intersection improvements, crosswalk signage and road painting, street lighting and traffic signals upgrades. A full tender ready design has been completed for the Island Hwy Transit Priority Project to construct transit priority improvements along the Island Hwy between the interchange with Hwy 1 in the Town of View Royal, and at the Wale Rd. intersection in the City of Colwood. BC Hydro has completed their detailed design for construction documents related to the transit priority improvements. Documentation and negotiations are continuing for statutory right of ways or

road dedications with private landowners where the design elements affect their properties. A new funding application to Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program (ICIP) was submitted in February 2023 to obtain funding approvals to move forward with the project construction execution. A First Nations engagement consultant has been retained and is assisting BC Transit to manage the required additional communications to satisfy the requirements of ICIP funding agreement. Asset Benefit Agreements are being reviewed currently between BC Transit and the two municipalities to meet the Eligible Capital Funding requirements. The project will move forward with a public tendering process in the summer of 2023 and into the construction phase in the fall of 2023, subject to a successful ICIP application, the completion of the statutory right of way and engagement tasks.

Infrastructure Studies

- **RapidBus Stations:** The station locations and conceptual designs have been confirmed with the multiple municipalities on the West Shore Line. Project delivery options are currently being brought forward to the VRTC for approval as agenda item #8.
- **Downtown Douglas:** The visioning process for Douglas St. in the Downtown Core is underway in collaboration with City of Victoria staff. Opportunities to improve the transit experience downtown will be presented to the City of Victoria Council in August 2023 that may include concepts for transit priority and larger RapidBus Stations. Plans will be presented to the VRTC once support is secured from City of Victoria Council.
- **McKenzie Corridor Study:** In partnership with the District of Saanich, a multi-modal vision has been established which combines Transit Priority, RapidBus Stations and active transportation improvements. The preferred long-term option is currently being finalized. Short-term improvements will also be developed, and the study is expected to conclude in the fall of 2023.
- **Peninsula RapidBus:** A RapidBus Station study (McKenzie Ave to Sidney) is planned for the fall 2023 to spring 2024. In collaboration with MoTI, quick-wins and longer-term priorities are being identified on Highway 17 to facilitate Peninsula RapidBus. A study is also planned with the Town of Sidney to provide options for a RapidBus station and exchange as identified in the Peninsula Local Area Transit Plan.

Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure (MoTI) Studies

- **Highway 1 –** MoTI is advancing planning work on Highway 1 to support existing BC Transit initiatives. This includes transit priority treatments that align with the BC Transit priorities identified by the Victoria Transit Future Plan and the South Island Transportation Strategy. MoTI is currently completing the designs for bus-on-shoulder lanes between the McKenzie Interchange and Six Mile Rd. Subject to project approval and funding, the construction is forecasted to start construction in 2025/26.
- **Highway 14 Corridor Management Plan Highway 1 to West Shore Parkway –** MoTI is undertaking a planning study that will create a single source document to assist in development approvals and generate ideas for projects that can be advanced outside of development areas. The plan considers transit, active mode, and vehicular needs over the

next ten to twenty years.

- **Uptown Transit Priority** – MoTI is advancing planning work to develop transit and active transportation priorities and improvements to serve near-term goals that align with the future development of the Uptown site and do not preclude the long-term plan. The plan includes a proposal for bus only lanes on Ravine Rd. & Vernon Ave., a RapidBus station on Hwy 1 and expanded bus zone capacity on Carey Rd. MoTI is in the process of completing additional design work for budget development purposes in 2023, and subject to project approval and funding is forecasting to start construction in 2024. This plan will support BC Transit advancing long-term plans for the Uptown Transit Hub and Transit Oriented Development (TOD) opportunities.
- **Uptown Mobility Hub Transit Oriented Development (TOD) Plan** – BC Transit/MoTI/BCTFA have completed a Conceptual Development Design Technical Feasibility Report and Financial Feasibility Report. The concepts and findings of the reports were shared with Saanich staff in July 2022 as well as a discussion on next steps. A Memorandum of Understanding is being developed between BC Transit and MoTI to clarify each agency's roles and responsibilities to advance phase 2 planning for the project. Next steps will include further site investigations, a traffic impact assessment, further engagement on the designs with local governments and a selection of a preferred concept for advancement to a final proof of concept, to prepare a business case for associated funding applications and approvals.

MoTI Active Infrastructure Projects

- **Highway 14 Connie Rd to Glinz Lake Rd Realignment and Park & Ride:** The Hwy 14 realignment includes a new Park & Ride near the new Gillespie Rd Interchange, and new transit stops with bus pullouts and shelters to improve safety and additional passenger amenities that are currently under construction, which are anticipated to be coming into service later this summer.

4. TRANSIT FACILITY PROJECTS

Active Projects

- **handyDART Centre at 2401 Burnside Road** – The “Early Works” phase of the Project is mainly complete with only the valve chamber work near the entrance to the site still to be completed.

The final phase of building construction is now underway. Bird Construction was the successful proponent of the Construction Manager RFP and mobilized to site in February 2023. Completed activities include driving the foundation piles. The contractor is presently working to cap the piles. Upcoming activities include laying underground plumbing and electrical conduit within the building footprints, followed by forming, rebar placement and pouring the foundation.

First Nations continue to be updated on project progress. Esquimalt Nation has proposed a name for the new stream tributary. The project team is working with the Nation to plan the naming ceremony. Indigenous economic opportunities related to current and future tender packages are incorporated and specific opportunities are under discussion with the Nations. The project team continues to advance discussions with the Esquimalt Nation to inform cultural recognition opportunities and are in the process of developing a 'Call for Artists' for all the Nations being consulted on the Project.

- **Saanich Transit Centre** – The business case for the Phase 1A phase project that prepares the properties presently owned by BC Transit for construction and also prepares the funding requests for Phase 1B was approved by the BC Transit Board in February. The Phase 1B phase of the project will construct the facility on the prepared site. The project team is developing the procurement plan to initiate detailed design for Phase 1A following ICIP funding approval if received. Approval of ICIP funding for the Phase 1A project is expected in July 2023. The Treasury Board business plan for the Phase 1B is being prepared in collaboration with Infrastructure BC. The design team and quantity surveyor are progressing an indicative design that establishes the budget for the Phase 1B funding request. Supported by consultants, early outreach efforts have been completed with Indigenous and First Nations groups with a focus on engaging First Nations in upcoming activities. This includes establishing effective communication channels and support for the archaeological overview assessment and bird nesting surveys.
- **Victoria and Langford Transit Centre Upgrades** – Two business cases were approved in February 2022 that construct a maintenance training centre and upgrades aimed at optimizing operations to increase maintenance capacity. An application for ICIP funding was submitted in March. Approval of ICIP funding for the Phase 1A project is anticipated in July 2023. In preparation for approval the project teams are planning for the initial consultant service procurements of the projects and engaging with internal stakeholders. Notification of the projects to local First Nations was issued in a combined letter that included other Victoria region projects where ICIP funding was pursued.

RECOMMENDATION

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

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