
SUBJECT: Community Bus Program

PURPOSE

The Community Bus Program report is being provided to the Victoria Regional Transit Commission for **INFORMATION**.

BACKGROUND

The community bus program was introduced in the Victoria region in 2005. The main objectives of implementing community bus service were to provide lower cost service to routes with lower ridership, to improve overall access to transit, to reduce the need for handyDART and to provide better coverage to the overall region. The service was initially deployed in suburban and rural areas in the West Shore and Saanich Peninsula, as well as some urban areas in the evenings and on weekends during times of lower demand. The service has grown from four vehicles serving seven routes to 29 vehicles serving approximately 22 routes.

The community bus program aligns with the goals of the Transit Future Plan which includes a layer of service designed to connect neighborhoods to local destinations and to the rapid and frequent network. The plan identified that the establishment of the rapid and frequent network will result in the need for new local routes in addition to those already in operation in the region. Many of these new and existing routes will present opportunities to utilize smaller vehicles types that can increase efficiency, reduce capital and operating costs, as well as better match customer demand and operating conditions to local roads.

Furthermore, as part of the on-going transit service review, system performance guidelines have been established that are used to identify routes that are over or under performing. A number of routes have been identified that are falling below the performance guidelines and warrant review of whether the service is better provided through the community bus program.

DISCUSSION

Community Bus is defined in the collective agreement: Part "C" 1.02: *"Community Transit service is all service provided by vehicles designated for this service with a maximum of twenty-four (24) seats, unless otherwise mutually agreed by the parties."*

The existing community bus fleet consists predominately of small buses on a Ford van chassis. These vehicles are high floor with a rear operated wheelchair lift and have 20-24 seats. The same vehicles are also operated across the province as handyDART vehicles. There are challenges with the Ford vehicle in meeting guidelines for accessibility for public fixed use transit (i.e, scheduled service with fixed bus stops). Specifically, the Ford Polars have rear loading wheelchair lifts and customers must be

able to navigate their wheelchair to the back of the van to be loaded into the vehicle. In addition, the high floor cutaway buses are more difficult to access for people with mobility constraints.



In 2009/10, BC Transit purchased 15 ARBOC's as part of a trial for a new low floor bus with a single side passenger entrance door with wheelchair access. The ARBOC's have space for 20 seated passengers, or three wheelchairs and 12 seated passengers. Given the differences in the low floor platform layout between the Ford Polar and the ARBOC, the passenger capacity restrictions limit the use of this vehicle (i.e, no standees) where demand warrants a larger passenger carrying capacity.



BC Transit continues to investigate options to find a more suitable community bus fleet. This has involved looking into different models of small bus vehicles that provide low floor with ramp access, standee capabilities and bike storage.

The following tables highlight the community bus options that are being investigated:

Low Floor Community Shuttles



	Vicinity	Passport HD	IC Bus LC Series
Passenger Capacity	23 seats (17 w/2 wheelchairs) 16 standees	24 seats (18 w/2 wheelchairs)*	Various floor plans available
Length	27.5 feet (8.4 metres)	30 feet (9.1 metres)*	27 - 36 Feet (8.4 – 11m)
Width	98 inches (2.5 metres)	96 inches (2.4 metres)	96 inches (2.4 metres)
Accessibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Single front door with ramp • 2 wheelchair positions • Kneeling capacity to 10 inches (25.4 cm) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Single side door with ramp • 2 wheelchair positions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Single side door with ramp • Kneeling capacity to 11 inches • Various available floor plans
Vehicle Cost	\$253,000	\$250,000 - \$280,000	\$ N/A

**Various floor plans/lengths available*

High Floor Community Shuttles



	Champion Defender	EIDorado Aero Elite	Glaval Legacy	Goshen Sentinal	IC Bus AC Series
Passenger Capacity*	24 seats	22 seats	24 seats	24 seats	Various
Length*	32 Feet (9.7m)	29 Feet (8.8m)	37 Feet (11.2m)	31 Feet (9.4m)	28–31 Feet (8.5 - 9.4m)
Width	96 inches (2.4m)	96 inches (2.4m)	96 inches (2.4m)	96 inches (2.4m)	96 inches (2.4m)
Accessibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Single front door • 2 wheelchair positions • Rear wheelchair lift 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Single front door • 2 wheelchair positions • Rear wheelchair lift 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Front & mid doors • 2 wheelchair positions • Rear wheelchair lift 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Single front door • 2 wheelchair positions • Rear wheelchair lift 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Single front/side door • Rear wheelchair lift • Various available floor plans
Estimated Cost**	\$ N/A	\$185,000 - \$220,000	\$160,000	\$ N/A	\$ N/A

*Various floor plans/lengths available

**For comparison purposes only. Pricing will vary widely depending on specification.

As identified above, one of the preferred low floor community bus options is the Vicinity bus. BC Transit is purchasing 15 of these vehicles to trial around the Province.

RECOMMENDATION

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

Respectfully,



Manuel Achadinha
President and Chief Executive Officer