

MINUTES
TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Held MS Teams
Thursday, November 23, 2023, at 4:02 p.m.

Present: Councillor Teale Phelps Bondaroff (Chair), Trevor Barry, Alexandre Beaubien, Georgia Myles, Douglas Pascoe, Colin Stepney

Staff: Troy McKay, Transportation Manager, Engineering; Megan Squires, Senior Transportation Planner, Engineering; Kirsten Brazier, Senior Committee Clerk.

Regrets: Rachel Corder, Andrea Glen, Janine Konkel

CHAIRS REMARKS

Councillor Phelps Bondaroff welcomed the committee and guests.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

MOVED by C. Stepney and A. Beaubien: “That the minutes of the October 26, 2023, Transportation Advisory Committee meeting be adopted as circulated.”

CARRIED

ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION UPDATE – ENDORSEMENT MOTION

The Chair introduced a committee motion to endorse the Active Transportation Plan (ATP).

MOVED by T. Barry and A. Beaubien: “That the Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC) support the Final Draft Active Transportation Plan with minor updates to the mapping, which are currently underway.”

CARRIED

BC TRANSIT PRESENTATION

Chelsea Mossey, Senior Manager of Government Relations and Levi Megenbir, Senior Transit Planner, BC Transit provided an update on transit in the region. (Presentation on file).

- BC Transit saw 22.4 million boardings in 2022/23.
- Ridership is now back to 93% of pre-pandemic ridership levels.
- The Victoria Regional Transit System (VRTS) offers over 1 million service hours annually and has a fleet of more than 350 busses.
- The Victoria Regional Transit Commission (VTRC) is responsible for establishing transit priorities and routes, setting fares and budgets, and the local tax subsidies.
- BC Transit operates the local transit services.
- BC Transit collaborates with local government on bus stops and shelters, infrastructure, local planning initiatives, development referrals and stakeholder engagement.
- BC Transit has recently submitted an engagement workbook to the Capital Regional District (CRD) Board on transportation governance.
- Multiple infrastructure and upgrade projects are currently underway to support a project fleet of 700 electric busses for the region over the next 25 to 30 years.
- Transit facilities in Victoria and Langford are undergoing upgrades and a third transit centre is being planned for Saanich.
- A new handyDART facility is being built in View Royal.

- The transit system has some of the highest frequency, highest ridership routes operating through Saanich, including Routes 4, 6, 14, 26, 27/28, and 95.
- As of the Fall 2023 service period, Saanich is seeing an average of 29,500 weekday boardings, which accounts for approximately 35% of total system weekday boardings.
- RapidBus is a rapid transit service designed to connect and support designated urban centres of high density, mixed-use areas of the region.
- Features of RapidBus include branded services, corridor treatments, unique stations, limited stops and high frequencies.
- The RapidBus Implementation Strategy was endorsed by the Victoria Regional Transit Commission in 2021. Phase One of the West Shore RapidBus line is now completed.
- Phase Two includes a corridor study of the McKenzie RapidBus line.
- The Peninsula RapidBus line is captured in Phase Three and includes RapidBus stations and a transit hub in Sidney.
- The Transit Future Plan (2011) identifies a transit network with a hierarchy of series including Rapid Transit, Frequent Transit, Local Transit and Targeted Transit services.
- Local Area Transit Plans build upon the vision developed in the Victoria Region Transit Future Plan and the Victoria Regional Transit System 2013/14 Service Review.
- The plans support community development by building upon the direction established within a community's Official Community Plan and relevant municipal transportation and land use plans.
- The Regional Corridor Strategy (RCS) will replace the 2011 Transit Future Plan and update the Transit Future Network, with the intention to update the document biannually. The RCS will develop a regional corridor strategy with a supporting work plan to prioritize and:
 - Update the regional and local transit networks to align with the future Uptown Mobility Hub development
 - Update the network to support crosstown network development
 - Support service and infrastructure planning for future RapidBus corridors
 - Support land use and transit integration by aligning with upcoming Local Government Partner corridor planning processes
- The top three priority corridor transit plans emerging from the Regional Corridor Strategy are Quadra Street, Tillicum/McKenzie, and Hillside Avenue.
- Future service expansion includes:
 - RapidBus and Frequent Transit Network service improvements
 - Development of the crosstown network on the Hillside/Gorge and Admirals/McKenzie corridors
 - Simplifying and improving transit service on the Quadra corridor
 - Improvements to YYJ Airport and Peninsula service
- The Umo Electronic Fare Collection System was rolled out in the summer. The system has the future ability to enable onboard credit and debit card tap payments.
- There are over 14 thousand active Umo riders per day. The Umo platform offers flexibility to accept a range of payments and passes in the future. Benefit codes could be issued for transit fares.
- In the coming weeks, the project plans to progress with regional transit system deployments, starting with the Cowichan Regional and Regional District of Nanaimo transit systems. This will provide riders in the VRTS the ability to seamlessly travel to the Cowichan Valley and Central Island with one payment method and fare product.
- In the VRTS, the project's attention will focus on supporting riders who have yet to make the transition to a Umo payment method before the old fare system is turned off.

- Public engagement of a fare review has just completed and will be going to the VRTC in February.
- The NextRide Technology Refresh project is funded through the Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program. This project is being cost shared with the Government of Canada contributing 50 percent, the Province of British Columbia contributing 40 per cent and local government partners are contributing the remaining 10 percent. The cost for the entire project is \$16.8 million.
- NextRide screens will be retrofit into existing buses starting in February.

Committee Discussion

- It was suggested that mixed modal trips could be a topic to explore at future transit meetings.
- Luggage is a challenge that transit continues to look at option to establish best practices for transit users.
- At this time there is no plan to change the front bike racks to a system that could accommodate more than two bikes at a time.
- Safe bike lockers are located at the Sooke Park and Ride, the Royal Oak exchange and the McTavish Park and Ride.
 - The success of lockers is dependent on community partnerships for advocacy, use and management.
- Bike rack training stations could be a future consideration.
 - There is an educational video on the transit website on how to use the racks.
 - Having ambassadors at events to implement bike rack education would be dependant on available busses, which are currently in short supply.
- BC Transit provides local governments with guidelines that include minimum standards for accessible bus tops.
- The BC Transit Bus Shelter Program provides partnerships with municipalities to cost share the installation for accessible stops. Saanich is the biggest user of the bus shelter partnership program.
- When a stop is removed the bus shelters are relocated if they are in suitable enough condition to reuse.
- Transit integration with school routes is ongoing with Transit staff. Transit works with middle and high schools to meet bell schedules as best as possible.
- The 12 and Under Ride Free program and the use of NextRide are helpful to students.
- The Bus Ready program is aimed at educating children on how to ride the bus and safety tips. Transit ambassadors will visit schools to talk with children about using the bus.
- Concerns regarding fare governance and equity in the region are best addressed to the VRTC.
- BC Transit is applying an equity lens to long term planning.
- Frequent transit networks are aimed at attracting a broad demographic of users.
- Passenger comfort metrics for seniors are being monitored and considered by transit staff. Transit has been working to encourage seniors to use a mixed model of transit (both busses and handiDART).
- BC Transit was the first to have a 100 percent low floor accessible fleet.
- Passenger comfort metrics are established and evaluated.
- Communications are sent out through media advisories, the transit social media team, and by working with regions to leverage their social media networks to share communications.
- The new version of NextRide will allow for messages to be pushed out to transit users.

- Transit is in the process of revisiting the snow policy. Transit is aiming to make decisions earlier to enhance customer communications.

WORKING GROUPS

The Chair discussed working groups over the transition between committees. Those interested in continuing to discuss TAC items over the break were encouraged to email the Chair.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 5:51 p.m.

Councillor Phelps Bondaroff, Chair

I hereby certify these Minutes are accurate.

Kirsten Brazier, Committee Secretary