



**REPORT TO PLANNING, TRANSPORTATION AND PROTECTIVE SERVICES COMMITTEE
MEETING OF WEDNESDAY, JUNE 26, 2013**

SUBJECT **TRANSMITTAL OF THE VICTORIA REGIONAL TRANSIT COMMISSION'S THREE YEAR SERVICE PLAN**

ISSUE

Request for Capital Regional District (CRD) endorsement of a service expansion option in the Three Year Service Plan for the Victoria Regional Transit System (VRTS).

BACKGROUND

Attachment 1 contains correspondence from BC Transit requesting CRD Board consideration of the Three Year Service Plan for VRTS. Attachment 2 contains a presentation prepared by BC Transit staff regarding the service plan. A brief executive version of this presentation will be provided to Committee at the meeting.

The Independent Review of BC Transit was initiated by the Provincial Government in 2012 to strengthen the partnership between BC Transit and local governments. The Final Report makes recommendations on transit governance, decision making and accountability which would increase the role of local governments in the provision of transit services to BC communities. One recommendation is that BC Transit decision making should ideally include a mechanism for local government sign off. Direction by the Victoria Regional Transit Commission (VRTC) for BC Transit staff to present the Three Year Service Plan for the VRTS for CRD endorsement aligns with this Independent Review Panel recommendation.

In June 2012 VRTC approved a Victoria Conventional Service Review to recommend performance standards and transit service changes for the next three years that would align with the Transit Future Plan network, and improve customer service and transit system effectiveness. A subsequent September 2012 VRTC report presented a Three Year Service and Financial Strategy for 2013/14 - 2015/16 which assessed the costs and implications for transit fares and property taxes of three Service Review expansion options:

- Option 1: an average of 1% increase in transit service hours per year to maintain minimal service levels required to match the forecast population growth in the region.
- Option 2: an average of 2% increase in transit hours per year to meet population growth with some hours to allocate to Transit Future implementation.
- Option 3: an average of 2.7% increase in transit service hours per year to fully advance Transit Future and meet regional mode share and ridership targets.

An Expansion Options report prepared by BC Transit staff was presented to the VRTC meeting in December 4, 2012 with a request for approval of one of the three transit service expansion options (report summary in Attachment 2). VRTC passed a motion to endorse Option 3 with an additional request that BC Transit bring this option forward to the CRD for Board endorsement.

ALTERNATIVES

1. Endorse BC Transit's Three Year Service Plan expansion Option 3, which is an average 2.7% increase of service each year for the years 2013/14 to 2015/16.
2. Endorse BC Transit's Three Year Service Plan expansion Option 2, which is an average 2% increase of service each year for the years 2013/14 to 2015/16.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Service expansion Option 3 will be funded by Provincial operating contribution as well as local funding sources already available to the Victoria Regional Transit System, fares and property tax levies. BC Transit has implemented an updated VRTS fare structure earlier this year to cover operational costs and expansion for the three years. A report presented to the September 11, 2012 VRTC meeting stated that approval for a request to the Provincial Government to increase the VRTS transit fuel tax in 2013/14 would not be forthcoming. Attachment 2 summarizes the property tax levy increases over the three years for each service expansion option. Endorsement of service expansion Option 3 does not entail any financial obligation by the Board.

REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION PLANNING IMPLICATIONS

The three year service expansion option approved by the VRTC will address more immediate customer service and operational issues such as bus pass-ups, schedule reliability and new service to developing communities. The approved option will also advance the longer range ridership and mode share goals of Transit Future with development of the rapid and frequent transit networks. BC Transit initiated the Victoria Transit Priority Corridor Plan in 2012 to enhance the convenience and reliability of transit service on key regional transportation corridors which had been identified as parts of the rapid transit network, and the approved expansion option will ensure this work can continue.

The approved service expansion option aligns with the draft CRD Regional Transportation Plan (RTP). The purpose of the RTP is to address future regional transportation needs, and identify actions and implementation strategies including governance, funding and partnership arrangements. The RTP has integrated the goals and objectives of Transit Future, including the development of the rapid and frequent transit networks, to align these with other significant regional transportation and development strategies. These include the CRD Pedestrian and Cycling Master Plan, the Regional Sustainability Strategy (RSS), Provincial Highway plans and municipal planning for arterial corridors.

A key RTP Strategy is to invest in higher-order transit services and customer amenities that attract new riders, enhance the customer experience, and provide a viable alternative to driving. The service expansion option (3) endorsed by the VRTC aligns with Priority Actions identified in the RTP which follow from this Strategy, and which includes the implementation of the rapid and frequent transit networks with supporting facilities and services. Therefore, staff recommends Alternative 1; Alternative 2 (expansion option 2) while similar in intent, delays implementation of Transit Future and will not address service needs as effectively.

CONCLUSION

The VRTC has endorsed a transit service expansion plan and budget for the next three years to address short term service and operational issues and to advance the longer term goals of Transit Future to increase transit ridership and mode share. The endorsed service expansion option aligns with and supports the advancement of other regional transportation and development initiatives namely the CRD RTP and draft RSS. BC Transit seeks a motion of support for Service Expansion Option 3 as outlined in the attached presentation. In consideration of the alignment of this service expansion option with regional transportation priorities, staff recommends Alternative 1.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Planning, Transportation and Protective Services Committee recommend that the Capital Regional District Board:

1. Endorse BC Transit's Three Year Service Plan expansion Option 3, which is an average 2.7% increase of service each year for the years 2013/14 to 2015/16.

****ORIGINAL SIGNED***

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Attachment 1: BC Transit letter requesting presentation of Victoria Regional Transit's Three Year Service Strategy

Attachment 2: Victoria Regional Transit System – Three Year Service Plan.