

DATE: March 25, 2020**FILE:** 8500-20**TO:** Chair and Directors
Regional District Board**FROM:** Russell Dyson
Chief Administrative OfficerSupported by Russell Dyson
Chief Administrative Officer***R. Dyson*****RE: COVID-19 Transit Service Levels****Purpose**

The purpose of this report is to seek direction from the Board in regards to transit service levels during the COVID-19 pandemic and to delegate implementation of additional temporary service reductions to staff in consultation with BC Transit based on stated principles.

Recommendations from the Chief Administrative Officer:

THAT the Comox Valley Regional Transit service move to its summer service schedule effective April 6, 2020;

AND FURTHER THAT staff be directed to implement further service level adjustments on a temporary basis in consultation with BC Transit and in consideration of health guidelines, bus driver availability and ridership levels.

Executive Summary

Since the COVID-19 pandemic, ridership on BC Transit systems across the province has decreased by approximately 30-60 per cent as people limit their transit use to only essential travel. Specifically in the Comox Valley Regional Transit system, ridership has decreased by approximately 38 per cent.

BC Transit has implemented enhanced cleaning of buses and mandated rear door loading and free fares. BC Transit is taking direction from Health Canada and the provincial health agencies and at this time there is no mandate or recommendations to reduce service levels. As such any decisions to reduce local service levels are the responsibility of the Comox Valley Regional District (CVRD).

At this time CVRD staff are recommending to implement a very minor service level reduction (3 per cent) by moving to a summer schedule which involves eliminating several daily school trips. This change will continue supporting those that rely on transit to get to work, including health care facilities, and other essential activities such as grocery shopping and getting prescriptions. Given that the ridership decreases in the Comox Valley are on the low end, maintaining close to full service levels and frequencies will also support appropriate physical distancing while on the bus.

It is also recommended that staff be authorized to reduce service levels further in the future based on advice from BC Transit or senior government health agencies, in response to further reductions in ridership or as a necessary measure due to the availability of bus drivers.

Should further service reductions be warranted, the most likely steps would be to move to a Saturday schedule (26 per cent reduction) or a Sunday schedule (74 per cent reduction).

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