

DATE: August 2, 2018**FILE:** 8500-20/CV**TO:** Chair and Directors
Committee of the Whole**FROM:** Russell Dyson
Chief Administrative OfficerSupported by Russell Dyson
Chief Administrative Officer**R. Dyson****RE: Comox Valley Transit Expansions****Purpose**

To seek board direction on service changes to the Comox Valley transit system.

Recommendations from the Chief Administrative Officer:

THAT the handyDART system be expanded in September 2019 by 1,500 hours at an estimated cost to Comox Valley Regional District (CVRD) of \$37,288 annually.

Executive Summary

As transit service expansions are cost shared between the Comox Valley Regional District (CVRD) and the Province, BC Transit has requested confirmation through an expansion memorandum of understanding (MOU - appendix A) from CVRD on our intentions with respect to expansion. BC Transit has proposed expansions for conventional (fixed route) and paratransit (handyDART, community bus).

- At this time staff feel that decisions on further expansion of the conventional transit system is premature.
- Staff do recommend pursuing expansion of the handyDART service as this service has not been expanded since 2008 and the demand for service is increasing.
- A handyDART expansion would provide service at times that currently do not have any (e.g. weekend, evenings) or additional peak period service during weekdays.
- The 1,500 hour handyDART expansion would cost approximately \$113,481 annually in total with CVRD's share coming in at approximately \$37,288.

Prepared by:

M. ZbarskyMichael Zbarsky B.Sc, AScT
Manager of Transit and Sustainability

Concurrence:

T. Ian SmithT. Ian Smith, MCE
General Manager of Community Services**Stakeholder Distribution (Upon Agenda Publication)**

TMAC	✓
CVAC	✓

Background/Current Situation

As transit service expansions are cost shared between the CVRD and the Province, BC Transit has requested confirmation through an expansion memorandum of understanding (MOU - appendix A) from CVRD on our intentions with respect to expansion. BC Transit has proposed expansions for conventional (fixed route) and paratransit (handyDART, community bus) as follows:

Transit Type	Service Hours	Implementation	Notes	CVRD Cost*
Paratransit	1,500	September 2019	Expand handyDART	\$37,288
Conventional	2,000	September 2020	Implement remaining short term priorities from Comox Valley Transit Future Plan	\$111,191
Conventional	1,000	April 2021	Implement improvements to #3 Comox Local	\$49,006

* Costs based on 12 months and would be less for the first year based on the implementation dates.

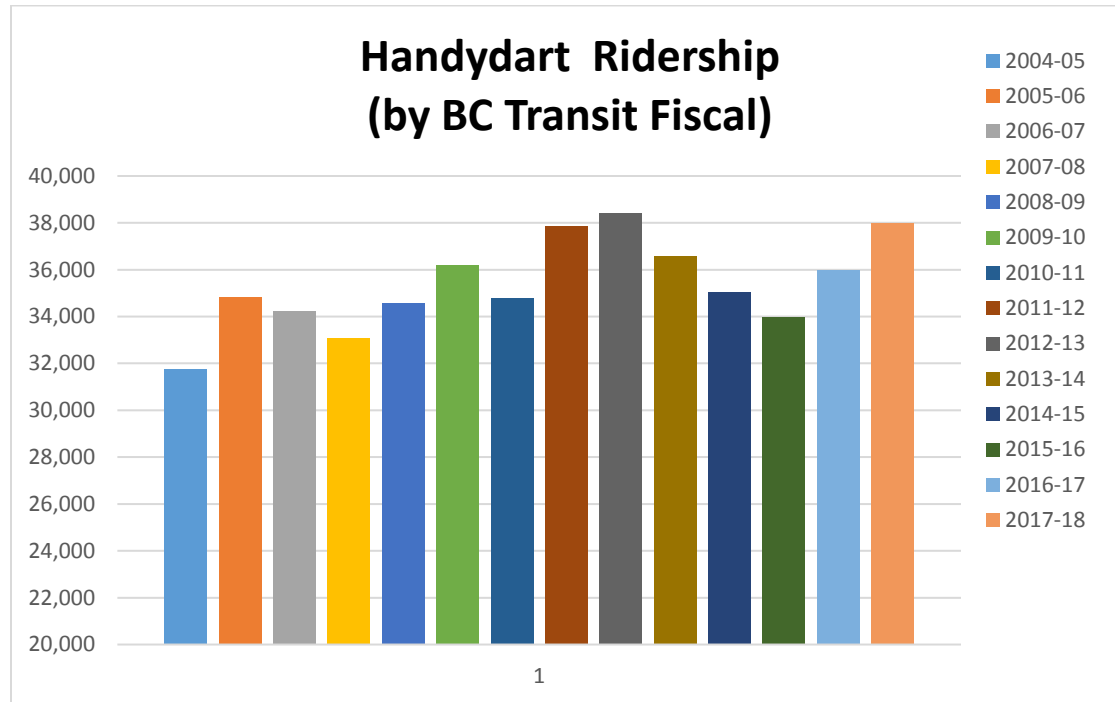
At this time staff feel that decisions on further expansion of the conventional transit system is premature. A significant service change is being implemented on the conventional system starting August 31, 2018 which includes an expansion of 4,000 hours and improvement to routing and schedules. It is recommended to see how these changes are performing prior to decisions on further expansion.

Staff do recommend pursuing the paratransit expansion for the handyDART service as this service has not been expanded since 2008 and the demand for service is increasing. Due to pressure on the handyDART system BC Transit conducted a service review in 2012/13 and recommended various opportunities for increased efficiency and service improvements within the existing service hours. This included an improved registration process, modified scheduling/dispatch procedures and implementation of a policy to address late cancellations and “no-shows”. These opportunities have been implemented and did result in a slight decrease in pressure on the service as seen in table 2 below. However, the pressure on the service has started to increase again and the current population growth and demographic profile in the Comox Valley will only make things more challenging. The number of unmet trips (requests that can’t be accommodated) is currently at 522 per year and taxi supplement rides (rides that can’t be accommodated on handyDART and use taxi instead) are at 480 per year. As such consideration of a 1,500 hour expansion is warranted. Staff have worked with BC Transit, the handyDART operator, and municipal staff through the Transit Management Advisory Committee (TMAC) to identify three options for expansion. This includes:

1. Provide weekend and holiday service
 - Currently there is no handyDART on weekends or stat holidays.
2. Provide later evening service during the week
 - Currently the service ends at approximately 4:30pm weekdays.
3. Provide additional peak period service on Monday/Wednesday/Friday
 - Expanding the number of trips that can accommodated during busy times

All of these options are identified in the short term priorities of the Comox Valley Transit Future Plan. Should the board support the expansion of the handyDART service staff would work with BC Transit, the operator and TMAC to provide further analysis and recommendations on the preferred option.

Table 2. HandyDART Ridership



Policy Analysis

At the November 13, 2014 meeting of the Comox Valley Regional District (CVRD) board the following motion was carried:

THAT the Comox Valley 25-year transit future plan, 2014 as attached to the staff report dated October 29, 2014 be approved.

Options

The board has the following options:

1. Approve the request for the 1,500 hour handyDART expansion in 2019 and defer decisions on future conventional service until next year.
2. Approve the request for all expansions as described in the BC Transit expansion MOU.
3. Direct staff to work with BC Transit to identify alternative options not currently included in the expansion MOU.

Staff are recommending option 1 as there is significant demand for handyDART service and further that decisions on conventional transit expansions should wait until the upcoming August 2018 service changes are implemented.

Financial Factors

The CVRD has been requested to provide a commitment to expansion in order for BC Transit to secure the provincial share of funding and to secure new buses in time for service implementation. Should the board support the expansion, the CVRD share of funding will be included in the 2019 - 2023 budget as part of the upcoming financial planning process.

The 1,500 hour handyDART expansion would cost approximately \$113,481 in total with CVRD's share coming in at approximately \$42,340. CVRD would receive 100% of the revenue from this expansion, estimated at \$5,052, to help cover the increased operating costs with the remainder (\$37,288) required to be covered by an increase to requisition. The target date for implementation of

the 1,500 hour expansion is currently September 2019. Due to the fact that implementation would occur later in the year, CVRD's share for 2019 would be only \$12,429.

The current financial plan includes a budget of \$2,979,208 for 2019 with the requisition at \$1,947,682 and an estimated tax rate at \$0.1254 per \$1,000 of assessed value (\$50.16 for a \$400,000 home). If the board were to approve this expansion, the 2019 requisition would increase by \$37,288 to \$1,984,970 and result in an adjusted estimated tax rate, based on the 2018 revised assessment roll, of \$0.1278 per \$1,000 of assessed value or \$51.12 for a house assessed at \$400K. This represents a potential increase of \$0.96 for such a homeowner.

Legal Factors

The annual operating agreement between BC Transit and the CVRD stipulates responsibilities of each partner. The CVRD is solely responsible for decisions on service levels and fares.

Regional Growth Strategy Implications

The provision of effective public transit within the Comox Valley has been identified in the regional growth strategy (RGS) as key to reducing the environmental impact of new and existing development, providing a reliable alternative to the use of private automobiles, and providing measurable reductions in greenhouse gas emissions.

The RGS includes policies and targets aimed at densifying growth, jobs and schools in core settlement areas around transit corridors, increasing transit mode share and increasing transit service frequency.

Intergovernmental Factors

Transit Management Advisory Committee members are supportive of the proposed handyDART expansion.

Interdepartmental Involvement

The service improvements will be led by staff from the community services branch with assistance from other departments including financial services and corporate services.

Citizen/Public Relations

Public transit is important to the community and forms the primary transportation mode for many residents with the majority of riders being adults followed by students, persons with disabilities and then seniors.

The public were heavily involved in the creation of the transit future plan including over 2,000 attendees to the transit future bus events throughout the community. The priorities included in the expansion MOU reflect the desires of the public and will provide a transit system that will benefit all members of the community.

The Comox Valley accessibility committee consistently requests an increase to handyDART service and would be involved in developing the preferred option for expansion.

Attachments: Appendix A – “Expansion Memorandum of Understanding”



July 13, 2018

Michael Zbarsky
Manager of Transit and Sustainability
Comox Valley Regional District
600 Comox Road
Courtenay, B.C. V9N 3P6

Re: 3 Year Expansion Initiatives

Dear Mike,

As your transit system has service initiatives requiring expansion funding, we have attached a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to formalize the process of securing provincial funding on your behalf. This MOU summarizes specific initiatives for the subsequent three operating years of 2019-2020 through to 2021-2022. These initiatives are derived from recommendations outlined in the most recent service plan(s) received by your council/board and validated in collaboration with local government staff.

Expansion initiatives are an important component to sustaining and growing a successful transit system. This investment in your transit system comes with several considerations. To support council/board decision making, we have provided order-of-magnitude costing for each initiative based on the estimated annual expansion hours required. Where proposed expansion is dependent on other infrastructure investment, this dependency will be noted in the proposed expansion initiatives table. If your expansion requires additional vehicles, this is identified and is factored into your estimated total costs. Please keep in mind that should funding be secured to support your expansion initiative and you determine that expansion is no longer desired, the lease fees related to the new buses will still be added to your operating budget for a minimum of a one year period.

By communicating proposed expansion initiatives as far in advance as possible we are trying to achieve three important goals:

1. Ensure 3 year expansion initiatives are aligned with the expectations of local governments
2. Attain a commitment from local governments that allow BC Transit to proceed with the procurement and management of resources necessary to implement transit service expansions
3. Provide local government partners with enhanced 3 year forecasts that identify longer term funding requirements.

Upon confirmation of your Board's commitment to the expansion initiatives, we will include your request in BC Transit's draft Service Plan to the Province to seek the matching funding required for operating and capital costs. It is important to note that in the event expansion requests exceed the available funding, a prioritization process is used known as the Transit Enhancement Process.

Following confirmation of the provincial budget, I will confirm with you if sufficient funding is available and initiate an implementation plan, including the development of more detailed costing based on routing and schedules. I look forward to working with you on the continued improvement of your transit service and encourage you to contact me if you have any questions regarding these proposed expansion initiatives.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "M. Moore". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Myrna" and last name "Moore" clearly distinguishable.

Myrna Moore
Senior Manager, Government Relations
BC Transit

Expansion Memorandum of Understanding

Date	July 13, 2018
Expiry	August 25, 2018
System	Comox Valley Conventional and Paratransit

Expansion Initiatives Agreement

The following outlines expansion initiatives identified for your transit system along with a high level annual costing based on the hourly rates of your system. Please confirm these initiatives are aligned with the expectations of your local government. Upon confirmation of your local government's intent to commit to the expansion and budget, we will proceed with the request to secure funding from the Province on your behalf.

PROPOSED CONVENTIONAL TRANSIT EXPANSION INITIATIVES						
AOA Period	In Service Date	Annual Hours	Vehicle Requirements	Estimated Annual Revenue	Estimated Annual Total Costs	Estimated Annual Net Municipal Share
		Description				
2020/21	Sep-20	2,000	1	\$39,158	\$251,490	\$111,191
		Description	Final TFP Short-term recommendations, improved frequency to Route 12 North Valley, improved structure and frequency to Route 7 Arden, expansion of services to Route 6 Uplands			
2021/22	Apr-21	1,000	0	\$11,622	\$113,727	\$49,006
		Description	Improved Sunday Service, Improved service frequency and span for 3 Comox Local.			

PROPOSED PARATRANSIT EXPANSION INITIATIVES						
AOA Period	In Service Date	Annual Hours	Vehicle Requirements	Estimated Annual Revenue	Estimated Annual Total Costs	Estimated Annual Net Municipal Share
2019/20	Sep-19	1,500	0	\$5,052	\$113,481	\$37,288
		Description	Could provide one of the following: 1. weekend and holiday service 2. later evening service on weekdays 3. additional peak service on mondays, wednesdays, and fridays			
2020/21		0				
		Description				
2021/22		0				
		Description				

Approval

On behalf of the Comox Valley Regional District, I am confirming to BC Transit to proceed with the request for funding to the province on our behalf and that we are committed to budget accordingly as per the advice provided and with the knowledge a more detailed budget will follow as service details are confirmed.

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Name: _____

Position: _____

On behalf of BC Transit, prepared by

Signature: 

Date: July 13, 2018

Name: Myrna Moore

Position: Senior Manager, Government Relations