

**DATE:** May 6, 2019

**FILE:** 8500-20/CV

**TO:** Chair and Directors  
Committee of the Committee

**FROM:** Russell Dyson  
Chief Administrative Officer

Supported by Russell Dyson  
Chief Administrative Officer

*R. Dyson*

**RE: Dantec Associates Transit Service Analysis**

### **Purpose**

The purpose of this report is to provide a summary of the Dantec Associates (Dantec) transit service analysis report.

### **Recommendation from the Chief Administrative Officer:**

THAT the recommendations of the Dantec Associates transit service analysis as outlined in the May 6, 2019 staff report be received and recommendations endorsed as outlined.

### **Executive Summary**

Based on direction from the Comox Valley Regional District (CVRD) Board following the approval of the Comox Valley Transit Future Plan, Dantec was retained to provide analysis and recommendations pertaining to various aspect of the transit system that required further discussion and consideration. This included governance, transit infrastructure, funding sources, performance measurement and service efficiency.

Dantec completed their work over the course of 2015 including extensive consultation with staff and elected officials from each jurisdiction and BC Transit. Their final report included numerous recommendations and in order to assist the CVRD Board in prioritizing these a facilitated session was held for the Committee of the Whole in April 2016. The Dantec Associates transit service analysis staff report dated March 22, 2016 is linked here:

[20160322 Oakman SR Dantec Associates transit service analysis.pdf](#).

A memo from the facilitator, Mike Davis Consulting, summarizing the Dantec recommendations and the committee's feedback on priorities is attached as Appendix A of this report. This memo was received by the Board at their May 31, 2016 meeting where the following motion was carried:

THAT transit service follow-up analysis be conducted on the Dantec Associates recommendations, regarding the transit services analysis, in the order of funding, governance, infrastructure and services.

Follow up analysis has been, and continues to be, conducted by CVRD and BC Transit staff where and when applicable as part of the regular management of the Comox Valley transit service. Below is an update from staff on status of each of the Dantec recommendations. These were reviewed by the Transit Management Advisory Committee and were supported:

### Governance

1. Consideration of a standing committee of the board to function as a transit commission. Issues and reports pertaining to transit would come to the commission and subsequent recommendations would then go directly from the commission to the CVRD Board.

- To date there has been no direction to pursue any changes specific to the governance of the transit service. Transit governance considerations may be included in the work currently being undertaken by the Integrated Regional Transportation Select Committee (IRTSC).

**CVRD Recommendation:** No Further Action

### Funding

1. Request the Provincial government to enact a 2.5 cent per litre fuel tax within the CVRD.
  - Currently only Metro Vancouver and Greater Victoria have fuel taxes to support public transit. Past requests from other communities have not been supported by the Province and so it is unlikely that CVRD's request would be approved. It is not clear if there is local public or political support to pursue additional fuel taxes.

**CVRD Recommendation:** Staff to investigate potential with the Province and report back to the Board.

2. Develop a charter service tariff and make buses available to private events at cost plus a markup.
  - BC Transit policy does not allow use of their buses for charter service involving a markup. Their policy does allow limited charter service but only on a cost recovery basis (i.e. no revenue opportunity). The CVRD currently has a policy that allows transit to be used for special events based on a cost recovery basis. As there has not been much interest in this to date (i.e. requests for service), it is unlikely that further charter service would be viable or generate additional revenue.

**CVRD Recommendation:** No Further Action

3. Investigate withdrawal from the provincial transit advertising contract and pursue a standalone contract.
  - Staff have investigated this and BC Transit has confirmed that there is no opportunity for withdrawal in the current contract. CVRD staff will work with BC Transit to investigate this at the time of contract renewal and report back to the board if any future opportunity becomes available.

**CVRD Recommendation:** That BC Transit be requested to consider excluding Comox Valley transit as part of its next provincial advertising contract renewal

4. Investigate community partnerships for major infrastructure projects and service expansions.
  - CVRD staff will recommend to pursue partnerships on a case by case basis, in particular for capital projects such as new exchanges or substantial service requests. On the near horizon, this could include a partnership with North Island College on a new exchange and possibly increased levels of service to their campus.

**CVRD Recommendation:** Staff to report back in fall 2019 to identify a strategy including partners and opportunities to be pursued in 2020.

5. Continue development of a marketing plan to promote awareness and availability of transit in the region.

- The CVRD has been delivering marketing programs over the past several years, including the in2transit, and most recently, Love the Bus campaigns. Expanding the marketing program would require increased budget availability in subsequent financial plans.

**CVRD Recommendation:** Continue implementation of the 2019 communications plan as attached as appendix B.

6. That the 900 hour handydart expansion identified as a high priority in the transit future plan be focused in the electoral areas to address the tax and service imbalance between rural and municipal areas.
  - This expansion was implemented in 2017 as the new #13 Seal Bay/Merville and #14 Union Bay/Downtown bus routes.

**CVRD Recommendation:** No Further Action

### Infrastructure

1. Each jurisdiction should continue to be responsible for bus stops and shelters and a common design standard should be applied.
  - This practice continues to be in place.

**CVRD Recommendation:** No Further Action

2. Major transit infrastructure such as exchanges and transit priority features should be the responsibility of the CVRD.
  - CVRD staff are planning to investigate the impacts of including this responsibility within the transit function and budget in fall 2019.

**CVRD Recommendation:** Staff to investigate and report back as part of 2020 financial planning process.

3. CVRD should explore the potential of constructing a new CVRD owned bus depot for storage and maintenance of the buses.
  - CVRD staff have requested BC Transit assistance to investigate the business case and options for a facility owned or leased by BC Transit and/or CVRD.

**CVRD Recommendation:** Staff to investigate and report back as part of 2020 financial planning process.

4. Design works should commence for new and/or improved exchanges in downtown Courtenay, the southern commercial area (Anfield/Driftwood) and at North Island College.
  - Preliminary design completed through the frequent transit network (FTN) corridor study. An expansion of the downtown Courtenay exchange and the first phase of a new exchange in Comox was implemented in 2018. Further planning and design work ongoing in 2019.

**CVRD Recommendation:** BC Transit to report back when this work is completed.

5. That fixed route conventional buses not be routed on and through the new hospital property but that new bus stops be installed on Lerwick Road in front of the hospital and the North Island College exchange be improved to service the aquatic centre and hospital as well.

- The bus routes servicing the hospital are using stops on Lerwick and in front of the Aquatic Centre. An improved exchange at the latter is part of the ongoing planning and design work being completed for new exchanges.

**CVRD Recommendation:** No Further Action

### Service

1. That a comprehensive operational analysis be undertaken on how best to make the system easier and more convenient to use. Specifically this should include clock face headways and minimizing or eliminating large one way loops such that return trips are simpler and more convenient.
  - The analysis was completed through the service planning work that BC Transit conducted for the service changes implemented in August 2018. Further efforts toward clock face headways is still required and will be considered as part of future improvements as additional service hours are required to successfully implement this scheduling strategy.

**CVRD Recommendation:** That BC Transit be requested to consider opportunities for further clock face scheduling as part of upcoming expansions.

2. That additional service indicators be included in BC Transit’s performance monitoring framework.
  - BC Transit are considering how to address this through their annual performance reporting program. The ‘Smart Bus’ program which was implemented in 2018 will also address this recommendation through improved performance monitoring capabilities (e.g. all vehicles to have GPS/passenger counters etc.).

**CVRD Recommendation:** That BC transit be requested to provide an update on this as part of their next annual performance reporting.

3. That vehicle size be reviewed as routes and schedules are examined and that smaller vehicles be brought into the system only if services can be designed to separate routes that need larger or smaller buses.
  - Currently two light duty buses are used in the conventional fixed route service. An increased level of light duty bus usage was piloted in the conventional transit service in 2017. Through performance monitoring and feedback from riders, it was determined that there was limited opportunity for increased usage in the Comox Valley.

**CVRD Recommendation:** No Further Action

Prepared by:

*M. Zbarsky*

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Michael Zbarsky  
Manager of Transit and  
Sustainability

Concurrence:

*D. DeMarzo*

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Doug DeMarzo  
Acting General Manager of  
Community Services

Attachments: Appendix A – “Memo, Mike Davis Consulting dated May 4, 2016”  
Appendix B – “2019 Communications Plan”

May 4, 2016

To: Mike Zbarsky, Comox Valley Regional District

From: Mike Davis

**Subject: Committee of the Whole session to consider recommendations from Dantec report**

On April 12, the Committee of the Whole met to consider the infrastructure, funding and governance recommendations of the Dantec Transit Service Analysis. I was in attendance to facilitate the Committee's understanding of the report and to assist in identifying any priorities the Board might have within the set of recommendations.

The discussion was approached by presenting the recommendations of the Dantec report to the Committee and querying for questions or priorities.

With respect to Infrastructure, the recommendations from the Dantec report were:

- Each jurisdiction should continue to be responsible for bus stops and shelters and a common design standard should be applied. Dantec suggests that bus stop and shelter infrastructure in the rural areas should be the responsibility of the CVRD and that CVRD should consider establishing an electoral area service to fund installation and maintenance.
- Major transit infrastructure such as exchanges and transit priority features should be the responsibility of the CVRD.
- CVRD should explore the potential of constructing a new CVRD owned bus depot for storage and maintenance of the buses to reduce deadhead time and costs (by approximately \$100,000 per year) as well as reduce barriers to competition in future service contract tenders.
- Design works should commence for new and/or improved exchanges in downtown Courtenay, the southern commercial area (Anfield/Driftwood) and at North Island College.
- That fixed route conventional buses not be routed on and through the new hospital property but that new bus stops be installed on Lerwick Road in front of the hospital and the NIC exchange be improved to service the aquatic centre and hospital as well.

The Committee did not question and appeared to support the first two recommendations which establish responsibility for transit facilities in the region.

With respect to working towards a new bus depot, the Committee questioned whether or not a specific savings value could be attributed to the potential benefit or a new garage.

Unfortunately, as location plays an overwhelming part in the costs of a transit facility and as a new garage will include many necessary upgrades and provisions for growth, it is not possible to identify even a preliminary value to the benefit of a new transit facility. It was expressed

that combining the transit facility with other municipal or regional public works facilities could deliver even greater value.

The Committee did not ask any questions with respect to transit exchanges and as the transit routing issue at the hospital had been resolved prior to the meeting, this recommendation was not an issue.

With respect to Funding the Dantec report recommendations were:

- Request the Provincial government to enact a 2.5 cent per litre fuel tax within the Comox Valley Regional District. This could generate approximately \$1,500,000 per year and could be used to reduce property tax requisitions and/or build reserves for future capital projects (e.g. new exchanges).
- Develop a charter service tariff and make buses available to private events at cost plus a markup.
- Investigate withdrawal from the provincial transit advertising contract and pursue a standalone contract. This could generate up to \$125,000 per year as compared to the current \$10,000 per year received from the provincial contract.
- Investigate community partnerships for major infrastructure projects and service expansions. Examples include partnering with NIC to fund the expansion/improvement of the exchange on the college's property or seeking funding from CFB Comox for improved transit service to the 19 wing base.
- Continue development of a marketing plan to promote awareness and availability of transit in the region.
- That the 900 hour handydart expansion identified as a high priority in the TFP be focused in the electoral areas to address the tax and service imbalance between rural and municipal areas.

The Committee questioned the mechanics and potential of the fuel tax recommended. It was recognized that such a tax would deliver great financial benefit but faced significant organizational barriers.

The Committee did not express any significant disagreement or concern or identify any priorities among the other funding recommendations.

However, the topic of funding raised the primary concern expressed during the meeting which was the allocation of funding and service to rural areas. Committee members addressed Figure 2 of the Dantec report (Cost Allocation and Service by Jurisdiction) which suggests that Electoral Areas are contributing a greater percentage of Regional costs than they are receiving in service. This issue is likely to continue to be a significant discussion item among the Committee.

With respect to Governance, the Dantec report recommendations were:

- That consideration be given to a standing committee of the board to function as a transit commission. This could allow unelected representatives from other stakeholders (e.g. NIC, BC Ferries) to participate (although not necessarily vote) and would remove the weighting of votes. Issues and reports pertaining to transit would come to the commission and subsequent recommendations would then go directly from the commission to the CVRD board

The Committee did not appear to support this additional level of governance. The primary concerns expressed during the governance discussion were the need for additional service in rural areas or adjustment of the funding allocations among the various jurisdictions of the District. These issues are appropriately addressed by the Board in the existing governance structure and the benefit of the recommended Transit Commission was not apparent to the Committee. The Transit Management Advisory Committee (TMAC) appears to mostly address the operational concerns of the Committee. Rural representation was highlighted as a gap in the current TMAC structure. None of the other governance options were pursued by the Committee in its discussions.

In summary, it is apparent that the funding and service allocation issue will continue to be significant to some members of the Board as it is with many jurisdictions. With respect to other recommendations, an action plan that staff puts forward to maximize benefit for the transit service should meet the Board's approval.

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<b>Subject: CVRD 2019 Transit Communications Plan</b>	<b>File:</b>
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**Project background:**

- The CVRD partners with BC Transit to oversee and deliver transit service and related communications and marketing in the region.
- CVRD and BC Transit have undertaken a number of initiatives in the past few years to enhance the transit experience including extra service hours, additional routes, new bus shelters, special services (e.g. free service to large community events).
- The region represents an interesting challenge when it comes to promoting transit. Travel by car or truck is relatively easy and generally quick. Parking is easy to find and usually free of charge.
- Changing behaviors and attitudes, particularly people’s enjoyment and deep-rooted reliance on cars will not happen overnight and is a long-term proposition that can only happen within a broader Active Transportation Strategy and Network.
- There is a small annual budget for Transit communications, so the ability to influence transit usage is limited.

**Guiding principles:**

- Build on the success of previous year’s Love the Bus Campaign and creative.
- Continue to focus on awareness building with a general audience.

**Key Messages (in development for 2019):**

- BC Transit has added more frequent and direct bus service within and between Courtenay and Comox.
- Traffic got you stressed? Take the bus and reduce the pressure on our roads at the same time.
- Feeling Nocturnal? BC Transit has extended evening bus service in the Comox Valley on Fridays and Saturdays.
- Take the bus to save money from rising gas prices.

**Communications strategy/tactics:**

Love the Bus Campaign	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Targeted digital ad campaign</li> <li>• Bus ads (on the side of the buses)</li> <li>• Web landing page refresh – <a href="http://lovethebus.ca">lovethebus.ca</a></li> </ul>
Provide free transit service for key community events.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Partner with BC Transit and community to promote free transit service for Victoria Day, Canada Day, BC Day, and the Federal Election.</li> </ul>
Spearhead Commuter Challenge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Celebrate and promote active and sustainable transportation</li> <li>• Build on the growing engagement from previous two years</li> </ul>
Info Tables at Events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Host an engaging info-table at select community events</li> </ul>
Seniors Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Seniors Transit Ambassador Program</li> <li>• Direct outreach to seniors’ homes</li> <li>• Newspaper advertising</li> </ul>
Student Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attend NIC Orientation Day with an info-table</li> </ul>



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attend Eco-Fair at Mark Isfield with an info-table</li> <li>• Launch School Group Pass program for SD71 classes to ride city transit for \$30 for field trips</li> <li>• Partner with BC Transit to launch Kids Ride the Bus Program for K-5 classes in SD71.</li> </ul>
Transit Smart Courses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide 3 Transit Smart Courses through Parks &amp; Rec. for people to learn how to ride the bus.</li> </ul>
Promote Transit Driver Appreciation Day and Transit Rider Appreciate Day	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Partner with BC Transit to acknowledge and promote days to celebrate transit drivers and riders.</li> </ul>
Support BC Transit Provincial Campaigns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collaborate with BC Transit on Provincial marketing efforts.</li> </ul>