

DATE: May 9, 2019

FILE: 8500-20

TO: Chair and Directors
Committee of the Whole

FROM: Russell Dyson
Chief Administrative Officer

Supported by Russell Dyson
Chief Administrative Officer

R. Dyson

RE: Comox Valley Transit Service Improvements

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to seek direction from the Board on recommended transit improvements. Staff will provide a presentation at the Committee of the Whole to explain the transit planning processes and how these recommendations relate to the financial plan.

Recommendations from the Chief Administrative Officer:

1. THAT the 1,500 hour handyDART expansion which has been included in the current financial plan, at an estimated cost to Comox Valley Regional District of \$37,288 annually, be used to introduce service on Saturday and Sundays starting September 2019, as a first step toward aligning the handyDART and conventional transit services.
2. THAT a 2,000 hour conventional transit expansion be approved for implementation in September 2020 in order to improve the #1 Comox/Anfield, #3 Comox Local and West Courtenay routes, at an estimated cost to Comox Valley Regional District of \$186,520 annually
3. THAT a 600 hour custom transit expansion be approved for implementation in April 2020 in order to expand peak handyDART service and allow for a redesign of the #21 Cape Lazo/Point Holmes and #22 Huband Road/Seal Bay community bus services as described in this staff report, at an estimated cost to Comox Valley Regional District of \$22,747 annually.

Executive Summary

Many of the short term priorities identified in the Comox Valley Transit Future Plan have been successfully implemented since the plan's adoption in 2014. BC Transit annually requests confirmation from the Comox Valley Regional District (CVRD) through their Transit Improvement Program (TIPS) on the CVRD's intentions with respect to expansion.

- The previously approved 1,500 hour handyDART expansion (from 2018 TIPS) can be used to introduce weekend service this September and begin aligning the handyDART and conventional transit services.
- As part of the 2019 TIPS process (Appendix A) BC Transit has proposed a three year plan for expansions for conventional and custom transit.
- As seen in Table 3 below, there is essentially sufficient funds in the current budget to implement the proposed 2020 conventional expansion, while the 2020 custom expansion would require an additional \$22,747 (\$17,060 in first year due to partial implementation).

Providing commitment to BC Transit on the 2020 expansions allows them to proceed with securing the provincial share of funding and additional required fleet for next year. Committing to the 2020 expansions will also result in the required funding being included in the 2020-2024 financial plan. Other proposed expansions will have a more substantial budget impact and can be considered as part of the 2020-2024 financial planning process.

Prepared by:

Concurrence:

*M. Zbarsky**D. DeMarzo*

 Michael Zbarsky, B.Sc. AScT
 Manager of Transit and
 Sustainability

 Doug DeMarzo
 Acting General Manager of
 Community Services
Stakeholder Distribution (Upon Agenda Publication)

Transit Management Advisory Committee	✓
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Background/Current Situation

The Comox Valley Transit Future Plan identifies recommended service improvements over the short to long term for conventional and custom transit. Many of the short term priorities have been successfully implemented since the plan's adoption in 2014. The remaining improvements require expansions and, as these are cost shared between the CVRD and the Province, BC Transit annually requests confirmation from CVRD through TIPS on the CVRD's intentions with respect to expansion.

As part of the 2018 TIPS process, the CVRD Board approved a 1,500 hour handyDART expansion targeted for September 2019 implementation. Based on recent direction from the province around alignment of handyDART and conventional transit services, it is recommended that the 1,500 hours be utilized to introduce weekend handyDART service. Currently handyDART only operates on weekdays from approximately 8:30am to 4:30pm while conventional transit operates seven days per week with earlier morning and later evening service. Offering weekend handyDART service is a first step toward service alignment and BC Transit is recommending that approximately 14 hours of service be added on both Saturday and Sundays through this expansion.

As part of the 2019 TIPS process (Appendix A) BC Transit has proposed a three year plan for expansions for conventional and custom transit which include:

Table 1. 2019 TIPS Expansions

Transit Type	Service Hours	Implementation	Notes	CVRD Cost	Annual CVRD Total*
Conventional	2,000	September 2020	Improvements to #1 Comox/Anfield, #3 Comox Local and West Courtenay routes	\$186,520	\$209,267
Custom	600	April 2020	Additional peak handyDART/Route #21 & #22 Redesign	\$22,747	
Conventional	1,000	April 2021	Improvements to #12 Oyster River and #6 Uplands	\$56,674	\$77,286
Custom	500	April 2021	Extend handyDART service in evenings	\$20,612	
Conventional	1,500	September 2022	Improve local route frequency/span	\$87,561	\$96,524
Custom	100	April 2022	Introduce stat holiday handyDART service	\$8,963	

* Costs based on 12 months and would be less for the first year based on the implementation dates. The CVRD Board approval of the proposed expansions listed above would effectively complete implementation of the short term priorities identified in the transit future plan.

It is worth noting that the 600 hour custom expansion in 2020 is being recommended in order to facilitate some rural community bus service improvements targeted for the existing ‘on request’ services offered in Cape Lazo/Point Holmes (#21) and Huband Road/Seal Bay (#22). These services have been in place for many years and are designed so that riders in defined rural areas can request a trip during specific times of the day. The service has experienced very low, and often non-existent ridership and the buses have been redeployed to provide additional handyDART service when not in use in these areas. BC Transit has recommended redesign options aimed at improving ridership in the existing specified rural areas. The suggested improvements involve converting the existing ‘on request’ service into a flex-route operating on a defined schedule and utilizing formal bus stops as well as the opportunity to deviate off the route ‘on request’. This is a similar approach to the #13 Seal Bay/Merville and #14 Union Bay which was implemented recently and is expected to result in increased ridership in the Cape Lazo/Point Holmes and Huband/Seal Bay areas. As the bus would be operating on a scheduled route, it would no longer be available to redeploy to handyDART and so, to offset this loss, the 600 hour expansion of handyDART is required. A public and stakeholder consultation process will be utilized to refine the schedule and routing for the redesigned #21 and #22 services.

Some, but not all, of the proposed TIPS expansions have been included in the 2019-2023 financial plan, and at this time, staff recommend approving just the 2020 proposals so that the others can be considered as part of the 2020-2024 financial planning process. Providing commitment to BC Transit on next year’s expansions allows them to proceed with securing the provincial share of funding and additional required fleet. The current budget has sufficient funds for the proposed 2020 conventional expansion of \$186,520. The 2020 custom expansion would require an additional \$22,747.

The status of the transit future plan short term priorities and proposed 2019 TIPS expansions is shown below in Table 2:

Table 2. Transit Future Plan short term priorities

Short Term Priorities	Conventional	
	Implemented	Proposed
Phase 1 of Frequent Transit Network	Completed 2014/15	
Improve frequency/structure of #12 North Valley	Partial 2014/15	Remaining April 2021
Improve frequency/structure of #2 Cumberland	Partial 2014/15	Remaining September 2022
Phase 2 of Frequent Transit Network	Completed 2018/19	
Realignment of #3 Comox within Comox local	Completed 2018/19	
Improve frequency/structure of West Courtenay routes (#7/#8)		September 2020
Improve frequency/structure of #6 Uplands		April 2021

Custom		
Improve registration process (for new applications)	Completed 2014/15	
Recertification of existing registrants		TBD
Introduce weekend service		September 2019
Expanded weekday peak service		April 2020
Expanded evening service		April 2021
Introduce statutory holiday service		April 2022

Policy Analysis

At the November 13, 2014 meeting of the 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 implementation of the 2020 conventional and custom service improvements identified above.
2. Approve other service improvements identified above.
3. Direct staff to review alternative service improvement options not currently identified.
4. Do not approve further service improvements at this time.

The service improvements identified in this report are sourced from the Comox Valley Transit Future Plan, will respond to community requests for more convenient and effective public transportation and will help reduce community greenhouse gas emissions as well as traffic congestion. At this time, there is sufficient budget included in the 2019-2023 financial plan to implement the proposed 2020 conventional expansion. The 2020 custom expansion is not included in the financial plan but is important to address ineffective current community bus services. As such, option 1 is recommended at this time.

Consideration of these improvements and the recent review of transit reports and plans is identified as a “Now” action in the Board’s strategic priorities chart.

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 2020 - 2024 budget as part of the upcoming financial planning process.

The proposed expansions would cost CVRD approximately \$383,077 once fully implemented by 2023 (BC Transit’s share would be \$280,701). The CVRD would receive 100 per cent of the revenue from this expansion, estimated at \$62,510, to help cover the increased operating costs with the remainder, \$320,567, required to be covered by an increase in tax requisition.

The adopted 2019-2023 financial plan includes funding to implement some of the expansions based on the 2018 TIPS. The 2019 TIPS includes additional expansions and updated costing. Table 3 below shows the gradual costs of implementation based on the proposed TIPS as well as what was included in the 2019-2023 financial plan. Costing in this table is shown based on proposed implementation dates (i.e. less than full annual costs due to implementation part way through the year).

Table 3: 2019-2023 Financial Plan and TIPS expansion funding comparison

Year	Conventional		Custom	
	In Financial Plan	In TIPS	In Financial Plan	In TIPS
2020	\$ 60,000	\$ 62,173	\$ 0	\$ 17,060
2021	235,000	229,026	0	15,459
2022	250,000	272,381	0	6,722
2023	250,000	330,755	0	52,322

Should all of the TIPS expansions be approved, CVRD's financial plan would need to be increased from the current amounts by \$330,755 for conventional and \$52,322 for custom. So, while some funding has been included in the current financial plan for a conventional expansion (\$250,000), further funds are needed and can be considered in the upcoming financial plan. As only the commitment on 2020 expansions is critical at this time, staff recommend pursuing these and considering the others as part of the 2020-2024 financial plan. The 2019-2023 financial plan essentially has sufficient funds for the 2020 proposed conventional expansion but not the 2020 custom expansion which would require an additional total annual cost of \$22,747 (\$17,060 in first year due to partial implementation).

Later in 2019 staff will also be analyzing various recommendations from the Dantec Associates Transit Service Analysis which may result in financial impact and should be considered during the CVRD's financial planning process.

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 comprised of staff representatives from each municipality, CVRD, BC Transit and the transit operator are supportive of the proposed expansions.

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 Memorandum of Understanding reflect the desires of the public and will provide a transit system that will benefit all members of the community.

Attachments: Appendix A – “TIPS MOU Letter”



May 1, 2019

Attn: 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 2020-2021 through to 2022-2023. These initiatives are derived from recommendations outlined in the most recent service plan(s) received by your 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 updated order-of-magnitude costing for each Conventional and Custom Transit initiative. These are based on either the estimated annual increase to revenue service hours or, where appropriate, the estimated increase to the Taxi Supplement budget for Custom Transit initiatives as written into the description.

There are a few key considerations when reviewing your initiatives. It is important to realize that where proposed expansion is dependent on other infrastructure investment, this dependency will be noted in the proposed expansion initiatives table. Similarly, if your expansion requires additional vehicles, this is also identified and is factored into your estimated total costs. Please keep in mind that should fleet be procured to support your initiative following agreement to the MOU and a determination is made that expansion is no longer desired by the local government, the lease fees related to the new vehicles will still be added to your operating budget for a minimum of a one-year period. Finally, in the event expansion requests exceed the available funding, it is important to note a prioritization process is used to determine which projects receive funding.

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. If your proposed expansion requires additional vehicles in 2020-2021, a commitment from your Board is required by June 28th, 2019 to ensure sufficient time for BC Transit to include your requirements in our procurement process.

Following confirmation of the provincial budget, I will confirm with you if sufficient funding was secured 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,



Myrna Moore
Senior Manager, Government Relations
BC Transit

Expansion Memorandum of Understanding

Date	May 1, 2019
Expiry	June 28, 2019
System	Comox Valley Conventional and Paratransit System

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 EXPANSION INITIATIVES						
AOA Period	In Service Date	Annual Hours	Vehicle Requirements	Estimated Annual Revenue	Estimated Annual Total Costs	Estimated Annual Net Municipal Share
2020/21	Sept 2020	2,000	2	\$25,764	\$281,848	\$160,756
		Description	Improvements in local routes, including evenings on route 3 and West Courtenay and FTN improvements.			
2021/22	Apr 2021	1,000	0	\$12,882	\$106,310	\$43,792
		Description	Improvements to Route 12 North Valley (680 hours) & Route 6 Uplands (325 hours)			
2022/23	Sept 2022	1,500	0	\$19,266	\$164,249	\$68,295
		Description	Local Route improvements – including weekends			

PROPOSED CUSTOM EXPANSION INITIATIVES						
AOA Period	In Service Date	Annual Hours	Vehicle Requirements	Estimated Annual Revenue	Estimated Annual Total Costs	Estimated Annual Net Municipal Share
2020/21	Apr 2020	600	0	\$2,299	\$51,629	\$20,448
		Description	Route #21/22 Redesign – two days a week service (Mon & Wed)			
2021/22	Apr 2021	500	0	\$1,881	\$45,626	\$18,731
		Description	Later evening service to align with conventional transit**			
2022/23	Apr 2022	100	0	\$418	\$14,116	\$8,545
		Description	Introduce holiday service on statutory holidays – to align with conventional transit (i.e. Victoria Day, Canada Day, BC Day & Easter)**			

** Subject to optimization review of flexible service options and initiatives

Approval

On behalf of the Cowichan Valley Regional District, I am confirming to BC Transit to proceed with the request for funding to the province on our behalf for the 2020/21 Fiscal year, and that we are committed to budget accordingly for the 3 year expansion but will review and confirm on an annual basis as per the advice provided and with the knowledge a more detailed budget will follow as service details are confirmed.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Name: Mike Zbarsky

Position: Manager of Transit and Sustainability

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Name: _____ Position: _____

On behalf of BC Transit, prepared by

Signature:

Date: May 1, 2019

Name: Myrna Moore

Position: Senior Manager, Government Relations