

**DATE:** August 10, 2017

**FILE:** 8500-20/CV

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

**FROM:** Russell Dyson  
Chief Administrative Officer

**RE:** Transit Service to the new Comox Valley Hospital

---

### **Purpose**

To confirm the Comox Valley Transit System route in the area of the new Comox Valley hospital.

### **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.

The Comox Valley Transit Future Plan has a mode share target of three per cent by 2038 (currently approximately one per cent) and the transit service will need to attract new riders to the system in order to achieve this.

### **Executive summary**

BC Transit recommends that conventional transit service stay on Lerwick Road rather than route through the hospital parking lot primarily due to the additional time that would be added to each trip as well as operational issues. The additional trip time totals 650 hours per year for the #6 and #12 routes that currently travel on Lerwick Road to the new hospital (equivalent to approximately \$50,000 for CVRD share). Operational concerns were primarily related to safety of the bus navigating in a parking lot with other vehicles and pedestrians. The Dantec Transit Service Analysis completed in 2015 recommends that HandyDART service be provided to the front door of the new hospital but that conventional transit not be directed onto the hospital property.

The conventional transit service currently uses bus stops on Lerwick Road approximately 300 meters from the front door of the new hospital. These existing bus stops provide the stop on the curb travel lane of the roadway which is appropriate on multi-lane roads such as Lerwick. This is also consistent with the approach used on other major roadways in the Comox Valley including Ryan Road and Cliffe Avenue. BC Transit has proposed that the existing bus stops be moved on Lerwick Road closer to the hospital such that they be located approximately 100 meters from the front entrance. BC Transit are also recommending that these relocated bus stops continue to provide the stop in the curb travel lane. BC Transit has reviewed the road conditions including speed, geometry, volume as well as proximity to the concrete ambulance island and have no concerns. CVRD staff will work with staff from BC Transit and the City of Courtenay to further review this bus stop relocation to ensure that it meets appropriate standards.

**Recommendation from the Chief Administrative Officer:**

THAT the conventional BC Transit service routes that travel to the new Comox Valley hospital remain on Lerwick Road rather than routing through the hospital parking lot.

Respectfully:

***R. Dyson***

---

Russel Dyson  
Chief Administrative Officer

**Background/current situation**

In October 2013 the Comox Valley Accessibility Committee sent a letter to the CVRD chair and board and City of Courtenay council expressing concern that the new hospital was not planning to accommodate transit on their site. The board chair responded by letter and indicated that CVRD and BC Transit had met with Island Health to discuss transit at the new hospital, that HandyDART would travel directly onto the hospital site but that it was undesirable to route large conventional transit buses onsite. CVRD's response also noted that a new transit exchange central to the hospital, aquatic centre and North Island College (NIC) was envisioned (this is also the recommendation from the recent Frequent Transit Network Corridor Study). The City of Courtenay council also responded to the accessibility committee letter and at their November 18, 2013 meeting carried a motion that Council write to BC Transit to advocate for a bus stop immediately adjacent to the hospital entrance.

BC Transit has reviewed this request and recommends that conventional service stay on Lerwick Road rather than route through the hospital parking lot primarily due to the additional time that would be added to each trip (up to six minutes) as well as operational issues. The additional trip time totals 650 hours per year for the #6 and #12 routes that currently travel on Lerwick Road to the new hospital (equivalent to approximately \$50,000 for CVRD share). Operational concerns were primarily related to safety of the bus navigating in a parking lot with other vehicles and pedestrians.

The Dantec Transit Service Analysis completed in 2015 recommends that HandyDART service be provided to the front door of the new hospital but that conventional transit not be directed onto the hospital property. The Dantec analysis supports the concept of a new transit exchange central to the college, hospital and Aquatic Centre and suggests this be the main bus stop for hospital visitors with supplementary stops on Lerwick Rd.

As part of the site design for the new hospital, a bus stop was included in the hospital parking lot near the front door, consisting of a small curb cut bus bay and shelter. Communication from Tom Sparrow, Chief Project Officer for the new hospital, indicates that they would continue to use the shelter for HandyDART and other pickup/drop offs should conventional transit not travel into the parking lot.

The conventional transit service currently uses bus stops on Lerwick Road approximately 300 meters from the front door of the new hospital. These existing bus stops provide the stop on the curb travel lane of the roadway which is appropriate on multi-lane roads such as Lerwick. This is also consistent with the approach used on other major roadways in the Comox Valley including Ryan Road and Cliffe Avenue. Existing bus stops are also located on Mission Road close to Lerwick Road, and in front of the Aquatic Centre on the NIC roadway close to Lerwick Road. The latter is also the location of a proposed expanded transit exchange and is utilized by additional bus routes.

BC Transit has proposed that the existing bus stops be moved on Lerwick Road closer to the hospital such that they be located approximately 100 meters from the front entrance. BC Transit are also recommending that these relocated bus stops continue to provide the stop in the curb travel lane. In the current and proposed bus stop scenario other vehicles in the curb lane can wait for the bus to continue or change lanes and pass the bus. With buses stopping for an average of one minute and bus frequency along this road of approximately 30-60 minutes, the impact to traffic is expected to be extremely low. BC Transit has reviewed the road conditions including speed, geometry, volume as well as proximity to the concrete ambulance island and have no concerns. Given the anticipated low to moderate use of this bus stop, a bus stop post and sign is considered sufficient. CVRD staff will work with staff from BC Transit and the City of Courtenay to further review this bus stop relocation to ensure that it meets appropriate standards. The current and proposed bus stop locations are shown in Appendix A.

### **Options**

The board has the following options for bus stops at the new hospital:

1. Support the use of bus stops on Lerwick Road;
2. Support the use of the bus stop on the hospital site and direct staff to review options to cover the additional 650 service hours required.

Staff are recommending option 1 as this will avoid increased costs to the transit service and reduced ridership.

### **Financial factors**

There are no costs to the transit service to use existing or relocated bus stops on Lerwick Road.

Should the CVRD wish to direct service through the hospital site, an additional 650 service hours would be required. This could be accomplished through cutting service on existing routes and reallocating those service hours, approving an additional 650 hour expansion (approximately \$50,000 from CVRD) or reallocating these hours from the 4000 expansion approved in July (reducing the effectiveness of the planned improvements).

These options will result in increased cost to the transit service and reduced ridership. Increasing ridership on the transit system will result in additional revenue for the CVRD from bus fares.

### **Legal factors**

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

### **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 (TMAC) members are supportive of the proposal to keep buses on Lerwick Road. TMAC representatives from the City of Courtenay expressed concern that this did not address the November 2013 council motion. Following the last regular meeting staff provided the following explanation to Island Health:

Routing the bus through the hospital site would require a service change which are approved by the board. To support the board's consideration of this matter, BC Transit and an independent transit consultant both reviewed this service change and recommended that the conventional buses stay on Lerwick Road. The reasons being that the extra time to route through the hospital site was extremely costly (~\$50,000/year to CVRD) and was undesirable to the vast majority of transit riders who want quick and direct trips. There are also operational concerns, specifically regarding safety of the bus navigating in a parking lot with other vehicles and pedestrians.

The current bus stops on Lerwick Road are approximately 300 meters from the front entrance to the hospital and we are planning to relocate them to approximately 100m from the entrance. In addition we are planning to relocate the NIC exchange to a location closer to the hospital, likely in front of the Aquatic Centre. The HandyDART service will provide door-to-door pickup/drop off for people with disabilities wanting to visit the hospital.

Island Health responded that they have a bus shelter installed and have decided to continue to use the shelter for the HandyDART bus clients and others as a convenient pick up and drop off location

Staff from the CVRD and BC Transit will work closely with City staff to relocate the bus stops on Lerwick Road.

**Interdepartmental involvement**

The matter is being led by staff from the Community Services Branch.

**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 number one request from the public is for more frequent and direct transit. Keeping the bus on Lerwick Road is the preferred option for current and potential transit riders.

Prepared by:

***M. Zbarsky***

---

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

Concurrence:

***T. Ian Smith***

---

T. Ian Smith, MCE  
General Manager of Community Services

Attachments: Appendix A – “Photo Bus stops near new Comox Valley Hospital”

Appendix A – Bus stops near new Comox Valley Hospital

