

DATE: October 11, 2017

FILE: 8500-20/CV

TO: Chair and Directors
Committee of the Whole

FROM: Russell Dyson
Chief Administrative Officer

Supported by Russell Dyson
Chief Administrative Officer

R. DYSON

RE: Transit Service to the new Comox Valley hospital

Purpose

To seek board direction on transit service to the new Comox Valley hospital.

Recommendation from the Chief Administrative Officer

THAT the conventional transit service routes that travel to the new Comox Valley hospital remain on Lerwick Road;

AND FURTHER THAT a report on the effectiveness of the Lerwick Road bus stop at the new Comox Valley hospital, including consideration ridership and safety, be provided to the Comox Valley Regional District board in August 2018.

Executive Summary

As part of the site design for the new Comox Valley hospital, a bus stop was included in the hospital parking lot near the front door, consisting of a small curb cut bus bay with a shelter. BC Transit and the Dantec Transit Service Analysis recommend that handyDART service be provided to the front door of the new hospital and that conventional transit service stay on Lerwick Road. This is primarily due to the additional time that would be added to each trip (up to six minutes) as well as operational concerns. This matter was the subject of a special Committee of the Whole which included a site tour on September 19, 2017 to review the bus stop options.

The conventional transit service currently uses bus stops on Lerwick Road which is consistent with the approach used on other major roadways in the Comox Valley and throughout other BC Transit communities. BC Transit has proposed that the existing bus stops on Lerwick Road be moved closer to the hospital approximately 150 meters from the front entrance (see appendix A).

- BC Transit has reviewed Lerwick road conditions including speed, geometry, volume and proximity to the concrete ambulance island and have no concerns.
- Given the anticipated low to moderate use of this bus stop, a bus shelter is not required.
- Should the Comox Valley Regional District (CVRD) board support the use of bus stops on Lerwick Road, CVRD staff will work with staff from BC Transit and the City of Courtenay (City) to relocate the bus stop such that it meets appropriate standards.
- In addition, CVRD staff will work with hospital staff to look at opportunities to improve pedestrian connectivity from the bus stop to the front entrance of the hospital.

Another option that the board may wish to consider is to direct conventional transit routes #6 and #12 through the new hospital parking lot.

- To do so, the board would need to support an expansion of the transit system by approximately 650 hours (cost to CVRD of approximately \$50,000) or reallocate these hours from the 4000 hour expansion previously approved for September 2018 implementation.
- The additional trip time could negatively affect ridership by making these routes less direct for existing and potential bus riders.
- Operational concerns were primarily related to safety of the bus navigating in a parking lot and a concern associated with buses travelling over the speed bumps on the hospital site.
- BC Transit staff have indicated that it would take a minimum of six to eight months to plan for a schedule change of this scope and that summer 2018 would be the soonest these changes could be made.

Staff are recommending to keep conventional transit service on Lerwick Road as this will avoid increased costs to the transit service as well as the potential for reduced ridership. Further, it is recommended to monitor the ridership and safety impacts associated with this change and to report back to the board in August 2018.

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Stakeholder Distribution (Upon Agenda Publication)

Transit Management Advisory Committee	✓
North Island Hospital Comox Valley	✓
North Island College – Comox Valley Campus	✓

Background/Current Situation

In October 2013 the Comox Valley Accessibility Committee sent a letter to the CVRD chair and board and City council expressing concern that the new Comox Valley 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 Comox Valley 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 new Comox Valley hospital, Aquatic Centre (CVAC) and North Island College (NIC) was envisioned (this is also the recommendation from the recent Frequent Transit Network Corridor Study). The City 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 new Comox Valley hospital entrance. As part of the site design for the new Comox Valley hospital, a bus stop was included in the hospital parking lot near the front door, consisting of a small curb cut bus bay with a shelter.

The Dantec Transit Service Analysis completed in 2015 recommends that handyDART service be provided to the front door of the 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 CVAC and suggests this be the main bus stop for hospital visitors with supplementary stops on Lerwick Rd.

BC Transit has also recommended 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). The additional trip time could also negatively affect ridership by making these routes less direct for existing and potential bus riders. Operational concerns were primarily related to safety of the bus navigating in a parking lot with other vehicles and pedestrians. In addition there is a concern associated with buses travelling over the speed bumps on the hospital site which may cause bus riders to lose balance and fall.

The conventional transit service currently uses bus stops on Lerwick Road (at Mission Road intersection) 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 close to Lerwick Road on Mission Road and in front of the CVAC on the NIC roadway. The latter is also the location of a proposed expanded transit exchange and has more frequent transit service.

BC Transit has proposed that the existing bus stops on Lerwick Road be moved closer to the hospital such that they be located approximately 150 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 Lerwick road conditions including speed, geometry, volume and proximity to the concrete ambulance island and have no concerns. Given the anticipated low to moderate use of this bus stop, a bus shelter is not required. The current and proposed bus stop locations are shown in Appendix A.

BC Transit reviewed traffic concerns identified by directors at the September 19 site tour and confirm that the posted speed limits, traffic volumes and cross walk characteristics all support a bus stop on Lerwick Road. Should the CVRD board support the use of bus stops on Lerwick Road, CVRD staff will work with staff from BC Transit and the City to relocate the bus stop such that it meets appropriate standards.

Should the CVRD board wish to direct conventional transit routes #6 and #12 through the new hospital parking lot, the board would need to support an expansion of the transit system by approximately 650 hours (cost to CVRD of approximately \$50,000) or reallocate these hours from the 4000 hour expansion scheduled for September 2018 implementation. Reallocating the hours from the approved expansion would involve removing Sunday service on route #7 Arden and #9 Lake Trail (300 hours) as well as less trips per day on the Frequent Transit Network (350 hours). BC Transit staff have indicated that it would take a minimum of six to eight months to plan for a schedule change of this scope and that summer 2018 would be the soonest these changes could be made.

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.

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.

At their July 25, 2017 meeting the board carried the following motion:

THAT the motion that the conventional transit service routes that travel to the new Comox Valley hospital remain on Lerwick Road rather than routing through the hospital parking lot be referred to the August 29, 2017 board meeting.

At the August 29, 2017 meeting the matter was referred to a special Committee of the Whole to be scheduled with a site visit to the new hospital. This site tour occurred on September 19, 2017.

Options

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

1. Support the use of bus stops on Lerwick Road; or
2. Support the use of the bus stop on the hospital site and reallocate the additional 650 service hours required from the September 2018 expansion.

Staff are recommending option 1 as this has been recommended by BC Transit and Dantec Associates and will avoid increased costs to the transit service as well as 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 by approving an additional 650 hour expansion at a cost of approximately \$50,000 from the CVRD or by reallocating these hours from the existing service or the expanded service approved in July. Routing through the hospital is expected to result in reduced ridership and in turn reduced bus fare revenue.

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 have been 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 City of Courtenay council motion. TMAC

representatives also suggested that additional analysis be undertaken on the potential ridership and safety impacts associated with the hospital bus stop options and that this be presented to the board to assist in their decision. BC Transit identified that this analysis was not possible at this time due to staff and time availability.

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

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 the majority of current and potential transit riders.

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

Appendix A – Bus stops near new Comox Valley Hospital

