

**DATE:** September 11, 2019

**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: Comox Valley Regional Transit**

### **Purpose**

Transit is a board strategic priority and this report has been prepared as background to the upcoming strategic planning session in October, 2019. Given Board interest in transit and questions about more aggressive mode share targets the report considers timing of an update to the 2014 Comox Valley Transit Future Plan (TFP).

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

THAT the update of the 2014 Comox Valley Transit Future Plan to consider more aggressive mode share targets in order to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and address the climate crisis, be considered at the October 2019 Board strategic planning process;

AND FURTHER THAT staff be directed to prepare a schedule and work plan for the Comox Valley Transit Future Plan update in consultation with BC Transit and municipal stakeholders.

### **Executive Summary**

Comox Valley Regional Transit is managed through a partnership between the Comox Valley Regional District (CVRD) and BC Transit as well as the local operating contractor. This partnership is formalized through operating agreements that set out the roles and responsibilities of each partner as well as annual service levels and fares, both of which are set by CVRD.

A number of info graphics and short video have been prepared to assist in educating the public and Board on how the administration of transit works in the Comox Valley these have been included in Appendix A and will be presented at the September 2019 Committee of the Whole meeting.

Development of the transit systems is driven by many things including budget availability (CVRD and provincial), local transportation infrastructure, landuse patterns, environmental interests, public need and strategic plans (e.g. Regional Growth Strategy (RGS), Official Community Plans (OCP), transportation plans). The Comox Valley TFP was completed to take these factors into account and to provide a detailed guide for improvement of the transit system. The TFP was completed in 2014 and involved significant public and stakeholder consultation to determine and prioritize transit service and infrastructure improvements over the short, medium and long term.

The TFP has a transit mode share target of three per cent of all trips throughout the region by 2038 and recommends that to achieve this a higher frequency transit service be implemented on the major corridors connecting to local routes that provide less frequent service into other areas of the community. It is aligned to the Comox Valley RGS as well as the CVRD and member municipality OCP's and transportation plans which all call for improved transit as well as increased ridership and mode shares. The RGS has a transit mode share target of two and a half per cent by 2030 and

includes an objective to increase public transit use through transit oriented land development, transit supportive road networks and specialized transit services for rural areas.

Since the TFP was completed various system improvements have been undertaken with a major restructuring and expansion occurring in September 2018. With this restructuring the transit system has been aligned with the TFP. Recent analysis by BC Transit shows that by maintaining the recent investment and expansion level demonstrated over the past couple of years, CVRD could achieve the three per cent mode share by 2038 (currently at approximately 1.8 per cent ). This investment level equates to an annual average increase of approximately 2500 conventional service hours (\$200,000 additional CVRD contribution). The current CVRD financial plan for transit has total expenses at \$3,067,625 with the transit operating contract representing \$2,677,806 of this.

At the June 25, 2019 CVRD board meeting a motion was passed to consider more aggressive mode share targets in order to help reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and address the climate crisis. Consistent with the TFP, BC Transit has suggested that the key to increasing ridership is through expanded service levels with a focus on increased frequency in higher density areas of the community. Further, BC Transit recommends that any new mode share and ridership targets, as well as the necessary service and infrastructure improvements to support them, be considered as part of an update to the TFP. The TFP is now five years old and most of the short term service improvements have been implemented. There is also strong interest in the community to improve transportation options, address traffic congestion and reduce GHG emissions.

Mode share target options and implications can be reviewed in detail during the TFP update which would involve public and stakeholder engagement to ensure community support for the target and associated service improvements and costs. Should the board support proceeding with the TFP update, BC Transit are prepared to initiate the engagement period for the TFP update in fall 2019 to coincide with planned consultation and service planning for the 2020 transit expansions (2000 hour conventional and 600 hour custom). The TFP update engagement must be coordinated with other efforts being undertaken in the community by municipal and other stakeholders and staff will work with them to develop an appropriate engagement plan and schedule. The TFP update will review recent improvements, suggested priorities, new ideas from the community and identify costs and other requirements (e.g. buses, infrastructure). It will also provide opportunities to consider different targets (including mode share) and address changes in the community land use (e.g. development patterns). Once completed in late 2020 and approved by the CVRD Board, implementation of further improvements could be considered as part of the 2021 budget.

The typical process for CVRD to approve service improvements is through the Transit Improvement Program (TIPS). Every spring BC Transit recommends increased service levels, through the TIPS process, to CVRD for approval by August which are then included in the subsequent CVRD five year budget for implementation the following year. A placeholder expansion could be identified in spring 2020 to ensure that sufficient funds are allocated in the 2021 budget for implementation of improvements arising from the TFP update.

As suggested above, another significant factor in increasing ridership is through improved transit infrastructure (e.g. exchanges, shelters, bus priority measures). Currently there is very little in the way of transit infrastructure in the community. The model in place right now involves the member municipalities being responsible for this infrastructure within their boundaries. While this level of responsibility will likely continue in the future for smaller infrastructure like bus shelters, CVRD could consider assuming responsibility for major regional infrastructure such as exchanges. To help inform this decision CVRD and BC Transit will need to retain an engineering consultant in 2020 to

refine details such as location, design and costs of the required transit exchanges. This information could be incorporated into the transit future plan update process.

Prepared by:

Concurrence:

***M. Zbarsky***

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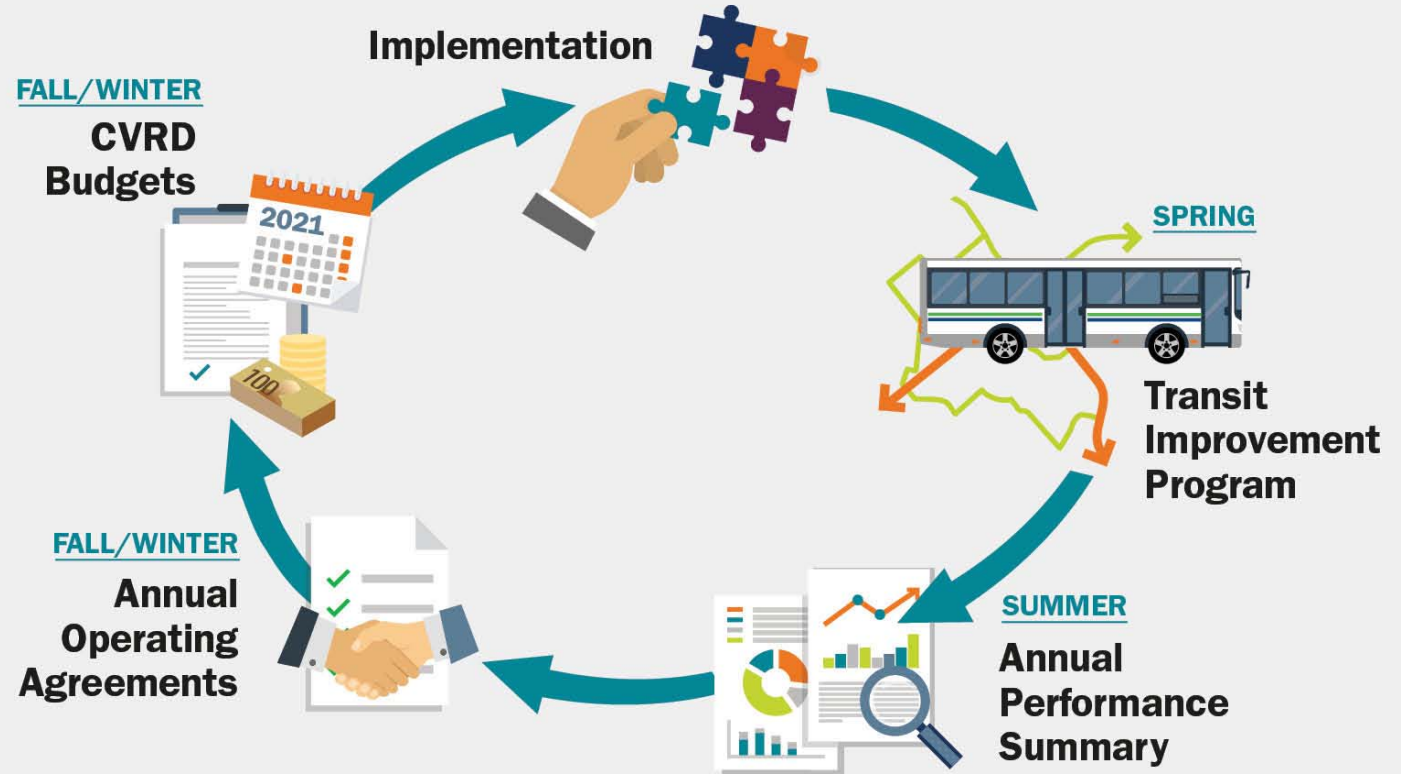
Attachments:           Appendix A – “Presentation: Transit COW”



# Comox Valley Regional Transit



# BC Transit & CVRD Partnership



# What's Driving Transit Decisions

**Budget Availability**  
(CVRD and Province)



**Transportation Network**



**Strategic Direction**



**Environmental Interests**



**Public Need**



**Land Use Patterns**

# Transit Future Plan Working Together with Regional Growth Strategy

**Attract New Riders & Increase Ridership**



**Direct & Align with Region's Key Centres**



**Integrated with Other Modes of Transportation**



**Be Efficient & Cost Effective**



**Be Safe & Accessible**

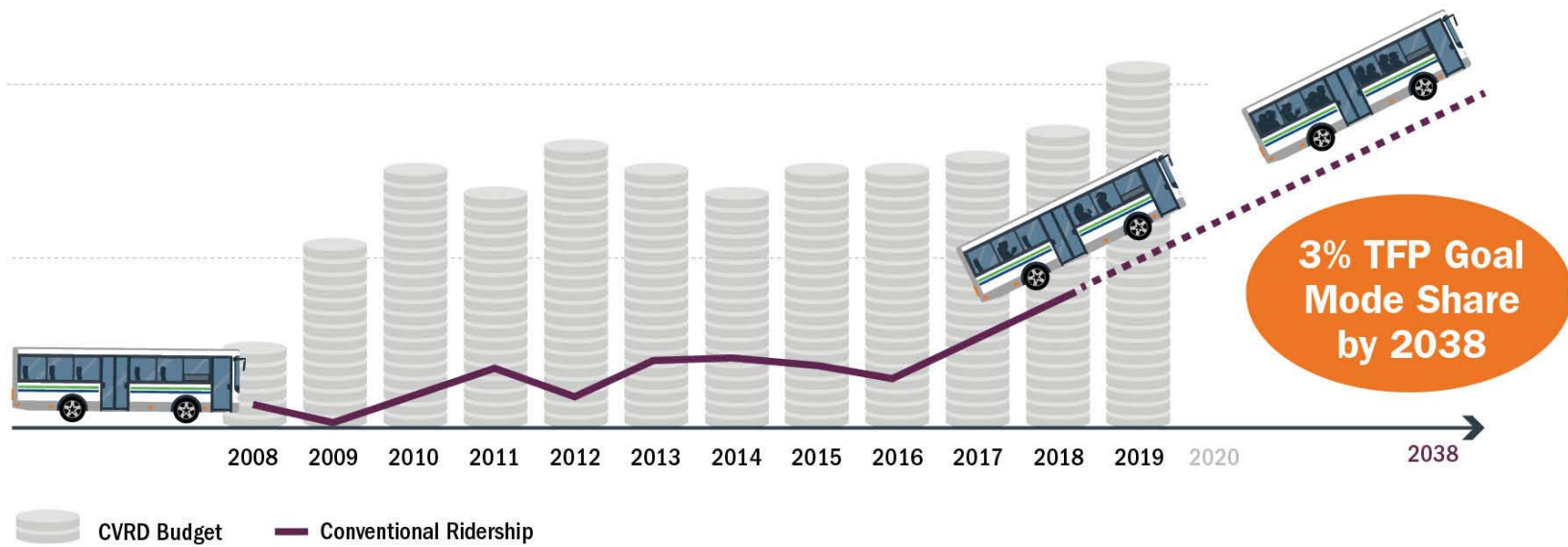


**Be Collaborative & Customer Focused**





# Ridership Investment



# Proposed Transit Improvements Timeline



- + Proposed Transit Future Plan Update/Consultation
- + Transit Expansion – Conventional & Custom
- + Proposed Fare Update
- + Potential 5th Street Bridge Impacts

+ Transit Future Plan Update Will Guide Service & Infrastructure Improvements Within Region





# Moving Forward with Transit Video

<https://youtu.be/IliOFdKYyLw>