

DATE: September 5, 2018

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

The purpose of this report is to provide the Comox Valley Regional District (CVRD) Board with an update on transit service to the new hospital.

Recommendation from the Chief Administrative Officer:

This report is for information purposes only.

Executive Summary

In November 2017 the CVRD Board supported access to the new Comox Valley Hospital from conventional transit via bus stops on Lerwick Road and handyDART to the front door. Further, the board directed staff to provide a follow up report on the effectiveness of the Lerwick Road bus stops in 2018.

- Based on a recent ridership survey there is very little activity at these stops except some students taking the #99 VMP Connector (school special route) toward GP Vanier Secondary.
- HandyDART service is provided to the front door of the Comox Valley Hospital with ridership of approximately four pickups and drop offs per day.
- BC Transit and Island Health have not received any feedback from transit riders or hospital users requesting improved transit access to the new hospital.
- Moving conventional transit closer to the hospital via the parking lot would cost an additional \$50,000 per year from the CVRD.

Staff will continue monitoring the effectiveness of this bus stop and should conditions arise which warrant moving the bus stop closer to the front door of the hospital staff would bring a report to the board at that time.

Prepared by:

Concurrence:

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Stakeholder Distribution (Upon Agenda Publication)

Transit Management Advisory Committee	✓
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Background/Current Situation

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 recommended 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), and resulting costs (\$50,000 per year) as well as potential for reduced ridership. Operational and safety concerns were also raised by BC Transit and the transit operator associated with navigating the bus through a busy parking lot. 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. In November 2017 the CVRD board supported keeping conventional transit on Lerwick Road and that a follow up report on the effectiveness of this stop be provided in August 2018.

The City of Courtenay has moved the existing bus stops on Lerwick Road closer to the entrance road for the new hospital and BC Transit undertook a ridership count earlier this year to determine the activity at these stops. Results show essentially no activity at the new stops except some students taking the #99 VMP Connector (school special route) toward Vanier Secondary. BC Transit has also tracked customer feedback and to date there has been nothing submitted with regards to access to the new hospital. Further, staff from Island Health have not received any requests for improved transit access to the new hospital. CVRD staff also met with the Comox Valley Accessibility Committee to discuss the matter and committee members had varied opinions on the matter with some hoping for a closer bus stop and others preferring the current situation.

BC Transit and the CVRD will continue monitoring this bus stop. Should conditions arise which warrant improving transit access to the hospital staff would bring a report to the board at that time with analysis and recommendations. BC Transit have also indicated that the automatic passenger counters being installed as part of the new smartbus program will be functional starting in September 2018 and that this will assist in monitoring ridership for the new stops.

Policy Analysis

The following motions were carried at the CVRD board's November 7, 2017 meeting:

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.

Options

This report is for information only.

Financial Factors

There are no costs to the transit service to continue using the existing 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 a 650 hour expansion at a cost of approximately \$50,000 from the CVRD or by reallocating these hours from the existing service.

Routing through the hospital is also expected to result in reduced ridership throughout the system 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

The Transit Management Advisory Committee has been supportive of the proposal to keep buses 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 the majority of current and potential transit riders.