



NANAIMO TO COWICHAN EXPRESS POST IMPLEMENTATION REVIEW UPDATE

RECOMMENDATION

That the Board receive the Nanaimo to Cowichan Express Post Implementation Review Update for information.

BACKGROUND

The Nanaimo to Cowichan Express (NCX), is an interregional transportation service between the Regional District of Nanaimo (RDN) and Cowichan Valley Regional District (CVRD) that was introduced in March 2022. The NCX is designed to connect the RDN and CVRD to provide a reliable, comfortable, and convenient interregional transportation option that can compete with personal vehicles. In the initial implementation plan for the NCX, it was identified that BC Transit, in partnership with the RDN and CVRD, would prepare a detailed review document after the first year of NCX service to examine operations and performance, solicit customer feedback, and identify potential adjustments and improvement priorities. The resulting *Nanaimo to Cowichan Express Post Implementation Review* document can be found as Attachment 1.

The post-implementation review document summarizes information that was collected through the review process and presents recommended priorities to move forward broken down into the following four categories: 'Ridership and Route', 'Marketing', 'Scheduling', and 'Other/miscellaneous'. Some key highlights include:

- The NCX carried over 32,000 passengers in its first year. Based on other interregional routes, ridership may rise by as much as 12,000 passengers per year.
- As of March 2023, the system was carrying 5.4 riders per hour and is close to reaching the target of six rides per hour.
- Although only three of the route's eight stops are within the RDN, they account for more stop activity than the five stops situated within the CVRD. The most used stop was the Downtown Nanaimo Exchange.
- For frequent riders their main trip purpose was for work or education, but overall, the main trip purpose was for leisure or shopping. For RDN trip origins, the main trip purpose was leisure, and for CVRD trip origins, the main trip purpose was shopping or recreation.

The post-implementation report concludes the NCX performed well over its first year in comparison to other interregional routes. The service was used heavily by RDN riders, and minor adjustments will be considered moving forward. Below is a summary of the recommendations that are found within the post-implementation report that will be reviewed and monitored going forward:

Ridership and Route

- Explore the possibility of expanding the route (to include destinations such as Vancouver Island University, Nanaimo Regional General Hospital, or Duke Point Ferry Terminal).
- Work with MOTI to explore the possibility of adding an additional stop along the highway to serve residents of Chemainus as well as create a Highway Traffic Incident Plan.

Scheduling

- Adjust the schedule to ensure on-time reliability, improve connections within the RDN and CVRD, and consider adding service on Sundays as well as additional trips on Saturdays.

Marketing

- Improve marketing to ensure information about the NCX is readily available and easy to understand.

Other/miscellaneous

- Consider the NCX fare as part of the overall fare review that will commence in Fall 2023.
- Review the stopping policy to allow riders to get off and on at all stops within the RDN and CVRD.

The expanded list of recommendations can be found in Table 4 of the *Nanaimo to Cowichan Express Post Implementation Review* (Attachment 1). RDN Transportation Services will work closely with the CVRD and BC Transit to ensure the on-going success of the NCX.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There is no cost to the RDN to receive this report for information.

STRATEGIC PLAN ALIGNMENT

Transportation and Transit - Provide opportunities for residents to move effectively through and around the Region.

REVIEWED BY:

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ATTACHMENT:

1. Nanaimo to Cowichan Express Post Implementation Review