



TRANSIT IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM – THREE YEAR TRANSIT EXPANSION PLAN

RECOMMENDATION

That the Board approve the Transit Improvement Program - Three Year Transit Expansion Initiatives Memorandum of Understanding for the 2024-2025 fiscal year.

BACKGROUND

This three-year Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), Attachment 1, with BC Transit relates to 2024-2025 transit expansion plans, approval of transit expansion priorities for the subsequent two years expansion initiatives required to support Regional District of Nanaimo (RDN) Transit System growth and Transit Redevelopment Strategy (TRS)¹.

In the MOU BC Transit confirms service expansion plans on an annual basis to coordinate the development of three-year budgets and capital plans with the Provincial Service Plan. Confirmation of the following year's desired level of transit service expansion is also required to support the procurement of buses.

BC Transit request the MOU to formalize the process of securing provincial funding on the RDN's behalf. This MOU summarizes the RDN's specific transit expansion initiatives from 2024-2025 through to 2026-2027 to support transit service. These initiatives are derived from recommendations outlined in the most recent service plan(s) received by the RDN Board and validated in collaboration with RDN staff. The future RDN Transit expansions, Attachment 1, are included in the proposed RDN 2024 – 2028 Financial Plan.

Once the three-year expansion initiatives are approved by the RDN Board, BC Transit will include the RDN's initiatives in their draft Provincial Service Plan funding request to the Province. Following confirmation of the provincial budget, early to mid 2024, BC Transit will confirm with the RDN if supporting provincial funding was secured and initiate a transit service implementation plan to advance capital infrastructure planning as required and ensure alignment with transit service expansion initiatives.

The BC Transit MOU is planning expansions for both Conventional (including interregional hours for the 99 Deep Bay), Custom (handyDART) and Nanaimo Cowichan Express.

The 9,400 annual Conventional service hour expansion is scheduled for January 2025. These hours will be applied to Strategy 1, 3, 4 and 5 from the RDN Transit Redevelopment Strategy (TRS). This expansion will be aligned with BC Transit's procurement of buses that are expected to arrive late 2024 and will be included in the 2025 proposed RDN budget year.

¹ <https://www.getinvolved.rdn.ca/20831/widgets/83457/documents/80110>

Of the 9,400 Conventional expansion hours, 500 hours will be allocated to the 99 Deep Bay route adding service on Sundays and Mondays, will be implemented January 2025, and will be included in the proposed 2025 RDN budget year. This will establish a connection with the Comox Valley Regional District Transit System to introduce Interregional service.

The 2,000 annual Custom (handyDART) service hour expansion is scheduled for September 2024 and will be included in the proposed 2024 RDN budget year.

The Nanaimo to Cowichan Express (NCX) is noted to receive 500 annual service hours for September 2024 and will also be included in the proposed 2024 RDN budget year.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Conventional Expansion:

The implementation of the 9,400 annual service hours and the addition of eight (8) leased buses for this expansion in the Southern Conventional transit system is estimated at an annual net RDN share of \$817,455. Each leased bus will be approximately \$33,290, for a total of \$266,320 annually, of which the RDN's share is \$141,975. Of the 9,400 proposed annual service hour expansion, 5,000 hours in Conventional Transit was included in the Board approved 2022 budget year. All cost associated with the 9,400-hour expansion has been incorporated into the 2024 – 2028 Financial Plan.

Of the 9,400 expansion hours, the 99 Deep Bay, Northern Transit System, Electoral Area H, will receive 500 service hours that will cost the RDN a net \$43,485.

The Conventional transit expansion scheduled for January 2025, due to the timelines BC Transit requires to procure buses to support the expansion and within BC Transit's fiscal year, April 1, 2024, to March 31, 2025.

Custom Expansion:

The estimated annual net RDN share to implement 2,000 annual service hours in Custom (handyDART) transit is \$89,568 and one (1) leased bus. The 2,000 annual service hours in Custom Transit has been included in the 2024 Budget year.

Nanaimo to Cowichan Express Expansion (NCX):

The estimated annual net RDN share to implement 500 annual service hours for the NCX is \$53,377 and no leased bus. The 500 annual service hours for the NCX has been included in the proposed 2024 budget year.

These future RDN Transit expansions, Attachment 1, will be included in the proposed RDN 2024 – 2028 Financial Plan.

Please note that should BC transit vehicles be procured following MOU signoff and a Board decision is made to not pursue service expansion(s), the lease fees for the new transit vehicles will still be added to the RDN's operating budget for a minimum of one year.

BC Transit will confirm with the RDN in early to mid 2024, if supporting provincial funding was approved to initiate a transit service implementation plan to support the transit service expansion initiatives.

STRATEGIC PLAN ALIGNMENT

Transportation and Transit - Work with BC Transit to expand transit service (e.g. transit hours) to connect important community hubs.

REVIEWED BY:

- M. Manhas, Acting Chief Financial Officer
- D. Holmes, Chief Administrative Officer

ATTACHMENT:

1. Expansion MOU 2024-25 to 2026-27 RDN