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**TO:** Transit Select Committee                      **MEETING:** September 27, 2018

**FROM:** Erica Beauchamp                              **FILE:** 8330 01 EA F  
Superintendent, Transit Planning &  
Scheduling

**SUBJECT:** Feasibility of Transit in Electoral Area F

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## RECOMMENDATION

That the Board direct staff to begin Phase II planning for transit in Electoral Area F, using Option 2: Flex-Route/Paratransit and an ARBOC bus, with a forecasted expansion of 5-10 years.

## SUMMARY

In November 2016, the Regional District of Nanaimo Board provided direction to examine transit service options for Electoral Area F. In partnership with BC Transit, a feasibility study was conducted (Attachment 1: '*Area F Feasibility Study*'; BC Transit) which outlines two transit service options both operating Monday to Sunday. Service Option 1 provides fixed-route conventional transit service. Service Option 2 provides a flex-route, paratransit service offering the scheduling of a fixed-route with added time in the schedule to allow flexibility for the bus to deviate from the route up to 2 kilometres. These options for transit service to Electoral Area F will be added to the service expansion priorities matrix, according to their recommended medium-long term priority of 5-10 years. It is recommended that Option 2: Flex Route/Paratransit be selected for transit service to Area F.

## BACKGROUND

Regional District of Nanaimo (RDN) Electoral Area F is a primarily rural Electoral Area with a population dispersed among wide-spread properties. It is located southwest of Parksville and Qualicum Beach (Map 1: Study Area). Electoral Area F, encompassing the communities of Coombs-Hilliers and Errington along Highway 4A, does not currently have transit service. The community of Coombs, with a resident population of 1,500 (Statistics Canada, 2016), experiences a significant influx of tourists during peak summer months leading to traffic congestion and parking issues. This influx of visitors is primarily due to the Coombs Country market, a bustling attraction. Errington, with a population just over 2,600 and similar age demographics to Coombs, also has a dispersed population as well as areas of industrial complexes and businesses.

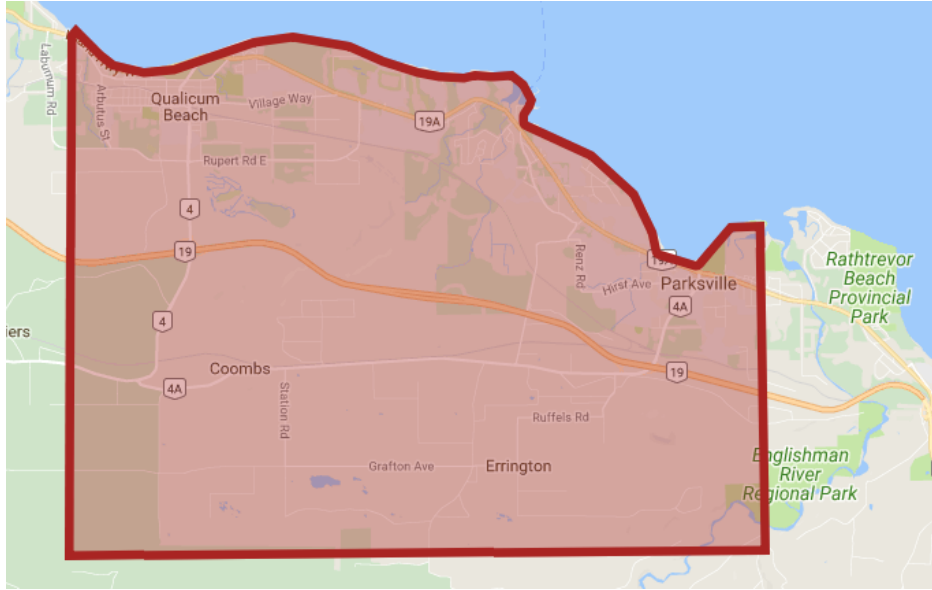


Figure 1: Study Area (BC Transit: Area F Feasibility Study)

According to population statistics (Statistics Canada, 2016) for the communities of Coombs and Errington, 20% of the population is aged 65 years and over, and 13% is under 14 years of age. Transit research indicates that seniors (those over 60 years), as well as those aged under 19 years, have a greater propensity towards transit use. As well, as seniors age they are more dependent on transit and are more likely to benefit from door-to-door service.

Residents of Electoral Area F generally access services in the communities of Qualicum Beach and Parksville, as well as Nanaimo, since available services within Electoral Area F are few. As well, many residents travel outside the area for employment opportunities. As a result, a transit route in Electoral Area F would best benefit residents by reducing car dependency and connecting them to the centres where services are currently utilized: Parksville, Qualicum Beach and Nanaimo.

BC Transit, in partnership with the Regional District of Nanaimo, examined the population demographics noted above, as well as land use characteristics within Electoral Area F. This research was used to generate two transit service options, which would connect residents of Coombs & Errington to Parksville, Qualicum Beach and the whole of the Regional District of Nanaimo transit system. A summary of the service options can be found in Table 1.

Service Options	Service Type	Routing	Buses Required	Estimated Hours	Estimated Ridership	Estimated Local Share Cost (ARBOC)	Estimated Local Share Cost (CNG New Flyer)
Option 1	Fixed route	Qualicum to Parksville along Hwy 4	2	4,000	6,000	\$272,600	\$273,200
Option 2	Flex route, paratransit	Same as Option 1 with deviation up to 2km	2	3,000	3,000	\$222,500	\$223,100

Table 1: Service Option Summary (financial estimates provided by BC Transit)



Figure 2: Service Option 1, fixed route conventional (BC Transit: Area F Feasibility Study)

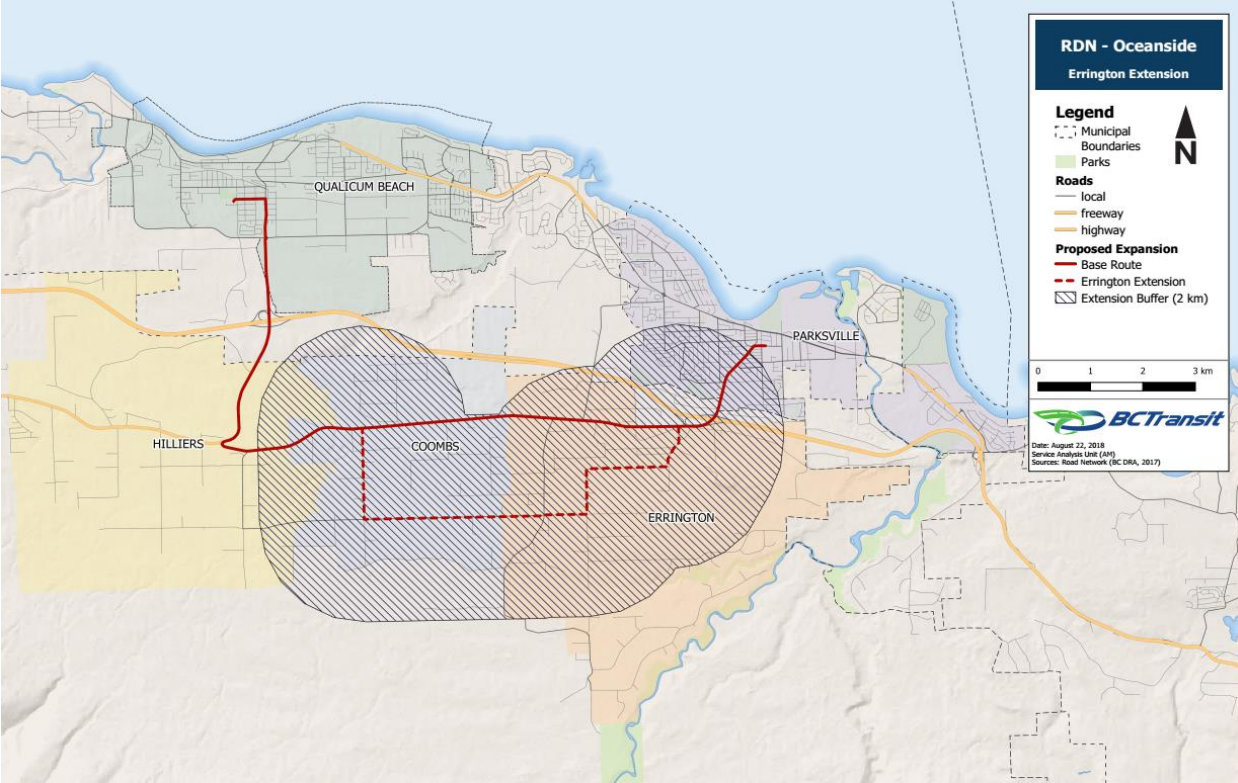


Figure 3: Service Option 2, flex-route conventional (BC Transit: Area F Feasibility Study)

Each of the 2 service options for transit to Electoral Area F would require 2 additional buses. Option 1 requires an estimated 2,500 hours while Option 2 requires an estimated 1,500 hours, with potentially less trips per day, however with the flexible option to venture off-route up to 2 kilometres.

Transit service to Electoral Area F is a medium-long term priority based on the expansion priorities matrix, making it an expansion possibility in 5 to 10 years.

## ALTERNATIVES

1. That the Board direct staff to begin Phase II planning for transit in Electoral Area F, using Option 2: Flex-Route/Paratransit, and an ARBOC bus, with a forecasted expansion of 5-10 years.
2. That alternate direction be provided.

## FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

As this project is a medium-long term priority, it places an expansion of transit into Area F within a 5-10 year time frame. A more detailed cost analysis will be provided during Phase II planning, and will outline cost allocation for each Northern Electoral Area according to Bylaw No. 1196: 'Northern Community Transit Service Committee'.

Current estimated financial implications are as follows:

- Option 1: \$272,600 (ARBOC) to \$273,200 (CNG) annually
- Option 2: \$222,500 (ARBOC) to \$223,100 (CNG) annually.

These costs are estimates, are dependent on option selected, and are reliant on BC Transit having expansion hours available.

## STRATEGIC PLAN IMPLICATIONS

This service expansion aligns with the RDN Strategic Plan Key Focus Area to 'Focus on Service and Organizational Excellence', specifically the strategic priority to "...advocate for transit improvements and active transportation". Improving and expanding transit within the service area results in greater access for the public to more sustainable transportation and economic opportunities throughout the RDN and surrounding municipalities.



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September 4, 2018

Reviewed by:

- D. Marshall, Manager, Transit Operations
- D. Pearce, Director, Transportation and Emergency Services
- P. Carlyle, Chief Administrative Officer

Attachments

1. Area F Feasibility Study, BC Transit 2018