



## **Committee of the Whole Report**

### **For the Meeting of June 14, 2018**

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<b>To:</b>	Mayor and Council	<b>Date:</b>	June 1, 2018
<b>From:</b>	Fraser Work, Director, Engineering and Public Works		
<b>Subject:</b>	Capital City Station Bus Depot and BC Transit Downtown Terminal Pilot Projects – Update		

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### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

That Council:

1. Conclude the 18-month trial, maintain the current configuration of Capital City Station for the next four years beyond the current term ending September 30, 2018, and continue to monitor and assess performance, as appropriate.
2. Maintain the current BC Transit turnaround/layover configuration at Government/Superior, and continue to monitor and assess performance, as appropriate.

### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Capital City Station in the 700 block Douglas Street, and a BC Transit turnaround/layover zone in the 600 block Government Street, have been in operation since mid-2016.

Capital City Station is a downtown inter-city commercial bus terminal, providing on-street pick-up/drop-off space for approximately 14,000 bus trips annually. Since the commencement of operations in July 2016, the operators have used established schedules and curb-time standards to minimize the numbers of roadside buses, adhered to City bylaws for noise and idling, and developed monitor/control systems to safely and efficiently manage pedestrian activities generated by the Station. Aside from a few minor changes implemented shortly after commencing operations, Capital City Station site is assessed to be operating safely and efficiently in its current configuration.

BC Transit commenced operations at its new turnaround/layover on the east side of the 600 block Government Street in September 2016, following road alignment reconfiguration at the Douglas/Superior intersection for bus turning movement accommodation. There have been no identified safety or efficiency concerns associated with the new circulation pattern. The addition of the turnaround/layover site at this location has enabled more efficient BC Transit bus operations in this busy area. Staff's assessment of mobility performance and safety suggests the turnaround/layover space on the east side of Government Street is operating safely and efficiently in its current configuration.

## **PURPOSE**

The purpose of this report is to update Council on the performance of Capital City Station in the 700 block Douglas Street, and at BC Transit's turnaround/layover in the 600 block Government Street.

## **BACKGROUND**

In February 2016 Council endorsed the creation of an on-street intercity bus terminal in the 700 block of Douglas Street for an 18-month trial, as well as the creation of a BC Transit turnaround/layover area near the Government/Superior intersection. Following Council approval, on-street improvements for BC Transit and for commercial bus operations were implemented, and Wilson's Transportation made leasehold improvements at the Crystal Garden for the new bus station terminal (Capital City Station). An 18 month lease agreement with Wilson's Transportation was signed, effective from July 1, 2016 to December 31, 2017. Capital City Station commenced operations July 1, 2016, while the new downtown BC Transit turnaround/layover terminal on Government Street north of Superior Street commenced operations September 6, 2016.

Following a February 2017 update report, Council approved extending the trial period for Capital City Station to September 30, 2018. Staff were instructed to return with an operations update and long term recommendations for these installations in October 2017; however staff delayed the operations update report to coincide with a staff report on lease recommendations, which was delayed as Wilson's Transportation was negotiating a long-term contract (4 year initial term) with BC Ferries for the Connector service, and Greyhound Canada had announced that scheduled service would be discontinued on Vancouver Island in early 2018. These matters have now been resolved, with Tofino Bus taking over Greyhound passenger services and confirming its continuing use of Capital Station.

## **ISSUES & ANALYSIS**

### **Capital City Station**

Prior to opening Capital City Station in 2016, local stakeholders raised concerns about a number of potential issues and the requirement to minimize negative impacts of increased bus traffic along the lower Douglas Street corridor. These concerns are summarized as follows:

1. Aesthetic impacts from a high volume of buses,
2. Increased noise and emissions/vehicle idling,
3. Pedestrian safety/congestion on crosswalk, along the sidewalk and within the station,
4. Traffic safety and efficiency impacts.

To address these issues, the operators were required to adhere to established schedules and curb-time, to minimize the numbers of roadside buses. The requirement to abide by City bylaws for noise and idling was also reinforced and monitored. Pedestrian safety was a key management requirement, and operators had to closely monitor and control the load/unload and congregating of passengers, to ensure normal pedestrian travel on the public sidewalk was unimpeded.

Staff have periodically assessed operations at the Capital City Station site since the station opened in July 2016, and have determined that, following some minor changes implemented in 2017, there have been very few safety or operational issues associated with the current configuration. Operations continue to be appropriately managed.

### **1. Aesthetic impacts from a high volume of buses:**

There were approximately 14,000 vehicle stops at Capital City Station in 2017. The YYJ Airport Shuttle accounted for the majority of daily stops. Motor coach services (BC Ferries Connector, Greyhound and Tofino Bus), accounted for over 85% of total curb occupancy time. 75% of all vehicles departed within 30 minutes. However, on-site management ensured that 97% of vehicles departed within the regulated 35-minute time limit, suggesting CCS staff continue to be vigilant regarding rules and traffic management.

### **2. Increased noise and emissions/vehicle idling:**

In the first three months of operations in 2016, Capital City Station staff received four complaints about noise, idling and/or emissions, all from residents of the Aria building on Humboldt Street, east of the new station. In each instance, Capital City Station staff contacted the residents to discuss, confirming regulations regarding idling and following up with bus drivers on requirements, as required. Since September 2016, Capital City Station staff have not received idling/emissions/noise complaints. No additional complaints have been registered with City staff through various liaison activities. Dedicated engagement with affected residents has not taken place. Wilson's continues to track incidents/issues monthly, and forwards the information to City staff.

In addition to drivers adhering to the City's Idling Bylaw, the Curb Concierge's responsibilities also include ensuring idling and parking adherence, and buses leaving on schedule, further limiting noise. City Bylaw Services staff conducted sound readings in the 700 block Douglas Street when the terminal commenced operations, and compared them with 2009 samples taken at the adjacent residential property on the 700 block Humboldt Street. Commercial bus idling/start-up levels recorded were less than levels recorded for BC Transit operations.

### **3. Pedestrian safety/congestion on crosswalk, along the sidewalk and within the station:**

Initially, commercial buses at Capital City Station occasionally parked very close to the existing mid-block crosswalk, creating a potential sightline issue for people standing on the east side of the street at the crosswalk. The commercial bus zone was shifted 6m south in early 2017, to improve sightlines at the crosswalk, effectively addressing this concern.

Wilson's places stanchions on private property to ensure bus travellers are lined up in an orderly fashion, and do not block the public sidewalk. Passenger loading activity outdoors, bus activity and area cleanliness is also managed/monitored by Wilson's Curb Concierge.

Interior seating space, combined with the adjoining ticket sales area, has provided sufficient waiting space for passengers. Wilson's also provides additional waiting space at the Capital City Café, in the adjoining leased unit. In addition to interior improvements, Wilson's improved overall curbside aesthetic appeal to the units in Crystal Gardens. During summer months, many passengers were observed using benches/seating areas in the plaza north of the Crystal Garden. Increased activity/cleanliness in the business area and plaza space has generated positive feedback on social improvements from local business/tourism members, who also see this conveniently located service as invaluable to the downtown retailers, hotels and restaurants.

Wilson's upgraded an existing washroom in Capital City Café to be accessible, and incorporated the provision of tourist information services at the terminal, in response to numerous inquiries for directions/tourist information. Following receipt of numerous requests in 2016, Wilson's now provides temporary luggage storage services at the terminal, reducing the need for passengers to stay with, or be required to walk around with, their luggage.

#### **4. Traffic safety and efficiency impacts:**

There have been no reported collisions involving pedestrian or cyclists and bus operations in the 700 block Douglas Street. Similarly, there were no reported vehicle collisions involving either BC Transit and/or commercial buses in this block since Capital City Station commenced operations. Site inspections have been completed by Transportation staff to review mobility and safety performance in the zone. Note: continual-sensor monitoring has not been completed, and is currently beyond the capability of staff assets and resources.

The added volume of commercial buses in the corridor (30-45 of the total 550-600 buses along Douglas Street, per day) associated with Capital City Station continue to have only minor impacts on road congestion. BC Transit volumes on the 700 block Douglas Street (~500/day) remain consistent with pre-trial conditions.

Staff's assessment of mobility performance and safety suggests Capital City Station is operating safely and efficiently in its current configuration.

#### **BC Transit Turnaround / Layover (Government/Superior)**

BC Transit and City staff do not currently have any safety or efficiency concerns with the new circulation pattern. The Douglas/Superior intersection was upgraded in 2016 to ensure bus turning movements could be safely accommodated. A wooden Telus pole on the north side of Superior Street east of Douglas Street was relocated in 2017 to reduce the chance of contact by BC Transit bus mirrors, as were two cluster lamps at the turnaround/layover site on Government Street.

There have been no reported collisions involving pedestrian or cyclists and BC Transit operations in the 600 block of Government Street. The addition of the turnaround/layover site on the east side of Government Street has allowed BC Transit to better manage bus operations in this busy area, by having bus turnaround movements occur clockwise and counter-clockwise on the Douglas/Superior/Government/Belleville block.

Staff's assessment of mobility performance and safety suggests the turnaround/layover space on the east side of Government Street is operating safely and efficiently in its current configuration.

BC Transit's Local Area Planning process is examining options to shift some current services to cross-town routing, which may reduce the overall demand for downtown layover space. Staff will continue to work cooperatively with our partners at BC Transit to improve overall transit efficiencies, while limiting the use of on-street space in high-demand areas.

### **OPTIONS AND IMPACTS**

#### **Capital City Station**

1. Conclude the 18-month trial, maintain the current configuration of Capital City Station for the next four years beyond the current term ending September 30, 2018, and continue to monitor and assess performance, as appropriate. **(Recommended)**.

This option has the following key considerations:

- Experience with the trial at Capital City Station indicates the configuration is operating safely and efficiently, with minimal impacts.
- Longer-term certainty on the location of the commercial bus terminal is provided, with timelines consistent with those being considered for bus terminal off-street facilities at Crystal Gardens.



2. Extend the 18-month trial at the Crystal Garden site to July 1, 2019, and continue to monitor. **(Not recommended)**

This option has the following key considerations:

- Based on current configuration and experience with the trial at Capital City Station, significant new issues are unlikely to emerge during an extended monitoring period.
- An extended monitoring period is currently beyond the capability of staff assets and resources.
- Longer-term certainty on the location of the commercial bus terminal is not provided for the operators and general public at this time.

3. Extend the 18-month trial at the Crystal Garden site to July 1, 2019, and direct Wilson's to seek an alternative site for Capital City Station. **(Not recommended)**

This option has the following key considerations:

- No alternative bus precinct site has been identified to date.
- Relocation may result in commercial bus operations performing street pickup and drop offs, only.
- Loss of public bus amenity at this location without a suitable alternative could negatively impact tourists, revenues, convenience, and overall customer experience.
- Wilson's business decisions are benefitted by increased certainty about operational locations, up to 10 months in advance, thereby suggesting that an extension in the current timelines would allow adequate time for business planning.

#### **BC Transit Turnaround/Layover (Government/Superior)**

1. Maintain the current BC Transit turnaround/layover configuration at Government/Superior, and continue to monitor and assess performance, as appropriate. **(Recommended)**

This option has the following key considerations:

- Experience with the turnaround/layover indicates the configuration is operating safely and efficiently for BC Transit operations, with minimal impacts to the general public.
2. Maintain the current BC Transit turnaround/layover configuration, monitor and assess the current operations, and gather stakeholder feedback **(Not Recommended)**.
    - Experience with the turnaround/layover indicates the configuration is operating safely and efficiently for BC Transit operations, with minimal impacts to the general public. Significant new issues are unlikely to emerge during an extended monitoring period.
    - An extended monitoring/stakeholder feedback period is currently beyond the capability of staff assets and resources.
  3. Eliminate the current turnaround/layover space to street parking, and direct BC Transit to use other existing local/downtown bus zones as turnaround/layover space. **(Not Recommended)**

This option has the following key consideration:

- Eliminating the existing turnaround/layover space would result in the use of existing transit zones on local and/or downtown streets, and could see a return of unfavourable impacts to residential noise, congestion and aesthetics in those locations.

#### *Accessibility Considerations*

Passenger accessibility at Capital City Station could be improved with the provision of a curb let down in the General Loading Zone area immediately south of the Station, used by the general public

for passenger pick-up/drop-off. BC Ferries Connector Lines has a limited number of wheelchair lift equipped coaches in its fleet. 48 hour advance reservations are required for passengers who require the service of a wheelchair lift equipped coach.

#### *Strategic Plan*

Objective 9 - Complete a Multi-modal and Active Transportation Network.

2016 Outcomes: Bus Terminal is replaced

2016 Actions: Support replacement of bus terminal

#### *Financial Plan*

Increased revenues are being obtained through commercial leases of units in Crystal Gardens, and curb space, offset somewhat by the initial loss of 12 on-street parking spaces. On street parking transactions since the Capital City Station inception have remained consistent overall, with healthy and high turnover rates. There is currently no indication the trial has had a negative impact on parking revenues, likely since drivers can relocate to other available on-street parking.

#### *Official Community Plan Consistency Statement*

Section 7: Transportation and Mobility – Broad Objectives

7f) That new and upgraded intercity bus and inter-regional rail terminals are located in close proximity to rapid and frequent transit stations in the Downtown Core Area.

7g) That land transportation interconnects effectively and conveniently with marine, air and ferry transportation in and adjacent to the Harbour.

### **CONCLUSION**

The two pilot projects have now been in operation for approximately 22 months – feedback gathered as well as staff observations of the service suggests Capital City Station operations have been a success. City staff also engaged with industry stakeholders to gain feedback about the pilot project - the connectivity it provides and the impact on businesses and the downtown core. Letters of support for Capital City Station have been provided by Tourism Victoria, the Chamber of Commerce and the Downtown Victoria Business Association (Annex A). All three organizations confirm the downtown transportation hub is critical to tourist and business travel. Further, in 2017 City staff did not receive any complaints from surrounding small businesses, nor were there any complaints registered on the Capital City Station monthly logs.

Staff have reviewed turnaround/layover operations at the Government/Superior – no operational issues have been identified by the public or BC Transit staff.

Respectfully submitted,



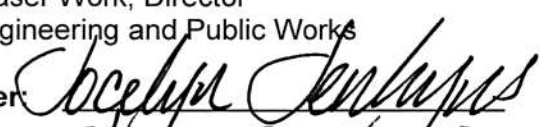
Brad Dellebuur, Assistant Director,  
Transportation



Fraser Work, Director  
Engineering and Public Works

Report accepted and recommended by the City Manager:

Date:

  
Date: June 8, 2018

#### **List of Attachments**

Appendix A – Letters of Support