



May 9, 2016

Mayor & Councillors  
City of Victoria  
#1 Centennial Square  
Victoria, BC V8W 1P6

**Re: Impacts of changes to 40km/h within the City of Victoria**

Dear Council,

Approximately 15 months ago, the City of Victoria reduced the posted speed limit to 40 km/hr on several corridors relied upon by transit. In response to observed deterioration of system performance, the Victoria Regional Transit Commission directed BC Transit staff to write a letter on their behalf to document their concerns.

While lower posted speed limits may be perceived as helping active modes of transportation they can also act to negatively impact transit services. Changes to the posted limit have the potential to reduce on-time performance and increase transit travel times. Since there is no such thing as "free" time in a transit system, increases to transit travel times often mean that the number of trips would need to be reduced (to stay within existing system resources) or that additional resources would be needed to maintain existing service frequency.

As part of the regular transit service planning cycle, BC Transit monitors transit system and route performance. In the first half of 2015, BC Transit Operations reported increasing issues with on-time performance with routes that operate frequent transit service on arterial roads where the posted speed limit changed. Reports of on time performance on these routes is of concern because of the high levels of transit ridership and service.

Transit travel time data was reviewed for this time period and corrective action was taken in the Fall of 2015 and schedules were updated to reflect more realistic travels times. This realignment of existing resources unfortunately resulted in the effective cancellation of approximately 30 weekday trips or 1 percent of weekday trips.

In the case of Local Transit corridors like Bay, Cook and Richardson Street —where lower ridership service operates less frequently--no changes to service have been required. In the case of the Frequent Transit corridors noted above, changes to the posted speed limit were likely a contributing factor to issues with on-time performance along with general changes to traffic levels.

The Victoria Regional Transit Commission is supportive of initiatives that improve or encourage active modes of transportation such as cycling, walking and transit because all of these modes are symbiotic and enhance each other. Residents may choose to cycle for some trips and take transit for others. The more diversity and quality of transportation choice, the easier it is for people to choose a lifestyle that relies less on automobiles.

However, the Commission is not supportive of reductions to posted speed limits on arterial corridors or other road design changes that increase transit travel times and reduce transit service levels. The existing transit service levels are required to meet the existing high level of ridership on these corridors. Reductions in service lead to passenger overcrowding and increased passenger pass ups making transit a less attractive transportation choice. Further changes to transit travel times will require a reduction of service to the City and other parts of the region, effectively adding costs while losing ridership.

There are a number of transit investments identified across the region to meet existing transit customer needs and implement the Transit Future Plan Vision. At the same time there is finite funding available to implement and deliver on these existing priorities, which makes it more important that municipal plans support making effective use of the existing resources.

Transit travel times are important to provide transit customers with reliable, frequent, direct service that is comfortable and safe. BC Transit looks forward to continuing to work with municipalities to make transit viable and attractive transportation choice for transit customers in Victoria and the region as a whole. BC Transit on behalf of the Commission requests that the City:

- Consults with BC Transit staff when changes are being considered to roads that transit operates on
- Maintain the speed limit at 50km/hr on arterial roads identified as Frequent or Rapid Transit Corridors in the Official Community Plan
- Consider the inclusion of transit priority measures as part of transportation improvement projects on arterial roads identified as Frequent or Rapid Transit Corridors in the Official Community Plan to improve the effectiveness of transit.

Yours sincerely,



Brian Anderson

Vice President, Operations & Chief Operating Officer

cc: Commission Members