

# REPORT TO COUNCIL



**Date:** September 28, 2011  
**File:** 1405-04  
**To:** City Manager  
**From:** Jerry Dombowsky, Regional Programs Manager  
**Subject:** Transit expansion request - fall 2011 passenger overloads

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## Recommendation:

THAT Council approves the addition of transit service to comprise two additional buses and their operation as passenger overload relief at a cost of \$21,565 per month, less provincial share, for an approximate City of Kelowna cost of \$11,496 per month with a corresponding revenue increase for the remainder of 2011;

AND THAT the 2011 budget be amended to accommodate this transaction;

## Purpose:

Growth in transit ridership coinciding with the onset of the fall school year has lead to critical capacity issues on two major routes. Passenger overloads and pass-ups need to be addressed through additional transit service in order to meet needs of existing riders and to continue attracting new ones.

## Background:

Transit ridership as of September 2011 increased significantly, particularly on key routes serving UBC Okanagan, Okanagan College, and Kelowna Senior Secondary/KLO Middle School. Both post secondary institutions have seen an increase in student enrollment, particularly UBCO which has grown by over 800 full time students.

The key routes - #97 Express and #8 University, are experiencing morning peak volumes which are resulting in regular ongoing rider pass up situations, in some cases leaving passengers waiting as long as 45 minutes while two to three buses pass by full to maximum occupancy. The morning capacity issue has also expanded past the normal 7am - 9am peak as full buses are now the norm well past noon on the #97 Express. The #16 Southwest Mission route is also in an occasional pass by situation.

Overall system ridership has also been growing, as evidenced by the latest CUTA statistics. Kelowna Regional Transit, with a 2010 growth rate in ridership of 9% was the third highest in the country. This has resulted in increased service demands for the system overall.

The current fleet of buses in the Kelowna Regional Transit system is fully in service during the morning peak period. All buses, excluding a bare minimum of three which are out of service for repair or maintenance, are assigned to routes in the morning, leaving no room for service expansion without the addition of new buses. BC Transit and the operator have done a complete review of the system to determine if there are any efficiencies within existing routes that could provide some relief. Some adjustments to routings have been made, but they have concluded that without sufficient hours of service and additional vehicles, further improvements cannot be made.

To accommodate the transit service capacity problem in the short to mid-term, BC Transit is able to provide two standard model 40 foot buses from their contingency fleet. These could be put into service within a week of the City's approval. BC Transit has also confirmed their participation in operating funds based on the standard cost sharing model. The buses would be used to add additional runs to supplement #97 Express and #8 University overloads. The buses would also add a degree of flexibility to transit operations in the event of unforeseen fleet deficiencies e.g., accidents, unusual equipment failure,... The Operator, First Bus Canada, has driver capacity through their part time driver pool.

A long term solution and strategy needs to be implemented, and will be part of the 2012 budget submissions. A potential future option to address these overload and pass-up situations would be to have additional double-decker buses in the fleet. A double-decker bus can carry a maximum of 83 passengers (112 standing) as compared to 36 maximum passengers (79 standing) in a regular (40') bus. BC Transit advises that all available double-decker buses are being fully utilized and as well that the earlier models cannot be used with the new high-platform stations along Hwy 97. BC Transit has been asked to consider the business case for the acquisition of new model double-decker buses in the next round of bus purchases. Delivery of new buses can take 18 - 24 months once an order has been placed.

Growth in ridership has also led to growth in system revenue which will offset the cost of this proposed service expansion. Year to date system revenue is up by 5% over 2010. It is anticipated that the rise in UPASS revenue from UBCO alone as a direct result of increased enrollment, will provide for the expansion costs to the City (not including the provincial share). With the increased revenue from other ridership growth the City's share of this expansion is essentially a no net cost scenario. However, this doesn't account for the City's desire to move to a higher cost recovery rate overall.

With demand for transit services growing dramatically to serve the needs of the community, and the City's goals and objectives of sustainability and efficient use of roads and transportation infrastructure in mind - responding to increased demand by providing additional service seems prudent. Based on this and the financial impact as detailed, support for this proposed service expansion is respectfully requested.

**Internal Circulation:**

Director, Financial Services

**Financial/Budgetary Considerations:** Budget amendment required.

**External Agency/Public Comments:** BC Transit approval.

**Considerations not applicable to this report:**

Legal/Statutory Authority: N/A

Legal/Statutory Procedural Requirements: N/A

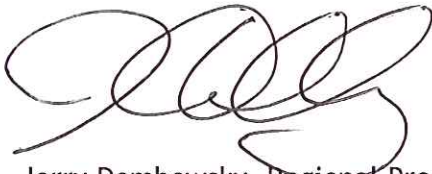
Existing Policy: N/A

Personnel Implications: N/A

Communications Comments: N/A

Alternate Recommendation: N/A

Submitted by:



Jerry Dombowsky, Regional Programs Manager

Approved for inclusion :



R. Westlake, Director, Regional Services

cc: Director, Financial Services

September 28, 2011  
File: KEL.1

Ron Westlake  
Director of Regional Services  
City of Kelowna  
1435 Water Street  
Kelowna, BC V1Y 1J4

Keith Grayston  
Director of Financial Services  
City of Kelowna  
1435 Water Street  
Kelowna, BC V1Y 1J4

Dear Sirs:

**SUBJECT: Kelowna Regional Transit Expansion Conventional - October 2011**

In September 2010 the Kelowna Regional Transit System launched the first RapidBus route within BC Transit. This express route between downtown Kelowna and UBCO has been very successful, so much so that we are now experiencing pass ups during the peak rush hour times.

The convenience of this route, which provides limited stops and 15 minute frequency during rush hours, has attracted many new people to transit. Record enrollment in UBCO has also contributed to passenger loads which are currently exceeding capacity, occasionally leaving passengers behind waiting to catch the following bus. This level of ridership was not anticipated or planned for by both staff and BC Transit. The transit system risks losing ridership momentum as new passengers who encounter continued pass ups and overloaded conditions choose to abandon the bus in favour of the single occupancy vehicle.

The ability of the transit system to react to these pressures is constrained as the current agreement does not contain sufficient hours to operate additional services and, most importantly, there are no vehicles currently available within the transit system.

City of Kelowna, BC Transit and First Canada staffs have worked collectively to address this situation and present the following for your consideration.

**1.0 Addressing Capacity Issues**

There has been an increase of 9% in ridership on the Kelowna Regional Transit System over the past year, one of the highest in Canada. This has resulted in increased pressures on a number of routes during the peak morning and afternoon hours. BC Transit along with City staff and the transit operator have been carefully monitoring the feedback and tracking areas where there are significant issues.

The three areas that have been identified as critical are:

- Route #8 between Orchard Park and UBCO
- Route # 97
- Route #16 in the AM peak

In order to effectively deal with the issues the transit system requires additional resources. These resources come in the form of additional funding to provide the service needed to reduce the current pass up conditions and additional buses to enable the operating company to act on the recommendations.

The following improvements to the conventional portion of the Kelowna Regional Transit System are recommended:

- Acquisition of 2 additional buses
- Addition of 1,300 hours of service annually in order to address the overload situations.

The costs of associated with the above are:

<u>Cost of providing an additional 1,300 hours of annual service</u>			
	<b>Total Cost</b>	<b>Municipal Share</b>	<b>Provincial Share</b>
<b>Debt service for 2 buses</b>	\$ 132,000	\$ 70,369	\$ 61,631
<b>Operating costs</b>	\$ 126,776	\$ 67,584	\$ 59,192
	<b>\$ 258,776</b>	<b>\$ 137,953</b>	<b>\$ 120,823</b>

The implementation strategy will be to deploy the additional equipment as effectively as possible to reduce pass ups and overload issues. This will be accomplished by:

- Adding a bus to Route #8 that would travel between Orchard Park and UBCO only.
- Adding a bus to the #97 during peak hours.
- Redeploying equipment to address the overloads in the Mission area on Route #16 (this redeployment can only occur with the additional buses)

I trust that this report contains all the necessary information required for both staff and council to make an informed decision.

Please feel to contact me if you have any questions on the above

Sincerely,



Steve Harvard  
Senior Regional Transit Manager Southern Interior  
Cc: Jerry Dombowsky, Mike Kittmer: City of Kelowna