

DATE OF MEETING JANUARY 24, 2022

AUTHORED BY JAMIE ROSE, MANAGER, TRANSPORTATION

SUBJECT BUS SHELTER AND BENCH STRATEGY UPDATE

OVERVIEW

Purpose of Report:

This report provides an update on the Bus Shelter and Bench Strategy in support of the motion moved by Council at the November 22nd, 2021 Governance and Priority Committee meeting.

BACKGROUND

The community benefits of transit are well documented, and both the City of Nanaimo (the City) and Regional District of Nanaimo (RDN) have ambitious goals to increase transit ridership and to make transit a more appealing option than personal vehicles. It is also well documented that in addition to providing a reliable service, first mile/last mile amenities need to be safe, convenient, reliable, and attractive for successful mass transit.

The historical approach to providing end of trip transit amenities within the City, has been through a third party. Contracting this service began in the 80's with the current contracts scheduled to end in June of 2022. This approach is currently providing the City with approximately \$70,000 of revenue annually, but limits control over placement and renewal of the infrastructure. The current shelters are about 20 years old, with the oldest being 30+ years old.

In order to provide shelters in areas without any, the City, RDN, and BC Transit (BCT) have collaborated to install roughly 10 City-owned shelters in high use areas. These shelters typically cost \$50,000 to install, but are eligible for a 53% / 47% cost share between BCT and the City. This program is available annually through BCT, but is typically limited to 4 or 5 shelters and are only available with a single, provincially approved, shelter manufacturer ([Monarch structures](#)).

DISCUSSION

During the November 22nd, 2021 GPC, Staff presented the Bus Shelter and Bench Strategy report (Attachment A) outlining options for providing transit stop amenities. This report generated a number of key issues in the discussion.

1. Transit stop amenities need to be high quality, well maintained, and appropriately located.
2. A long duration contract is undesirable.

3. Generation of revenue is a lower priority than providing a quality service.

Ultimately Council passed the following motion; “It was moved and seconded that the City of Nanaimo engage with BC Transit and the Regional District of Nanaimo on the topic of developing a long-term transit shelter deployment plan, and return to Council with a report by January 30th, 2022.”

Staff discussed the opportunity to undertake a collaborative effort to provide transit stop amenities with the RDN and BCT. Both agencies expressed interest in participating, but identified a number of challenges.

1. Neither agency has the resources, (staff or funding), to support a program within the next 18-24 months.
2. Adopting a City/RDN run program would require additional operational resources (staff, equipment, etc). Assuming 1 additional FTE and a suitable vehicle and equipment, the preliminary estimate would be approximately \$125,000 annually to inspect and maintain the current number of assets on a monthly basis; unforeseen repair or maintenance would generate additional costs.
3. If a collaborative program were to be developed, the only shelters or benches that would be eligible for co-funding would be those offered by the provincially approved supplier which is currently [Monarch Structures](#).
4. The purchase of benches and shelters could cost as much as \$2 million. Two options for grant funding are available; however, they both have limitations:
 - a. The provincially funded 53% / 47% cost share, which has been utilised previously, has limitations on the number of structures an agency can receive.
 - b. The provincially/federally funded, Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program, which would reduce the City or RDN investment to 20%, would be subject to a grant application which does not carry assured success.

As noted in the Bus Shelter and Bench Strategy report (Attachment A), the City has a Corporate Procurement Policy which is used to guide fair and equitable procurement of goods and services. One of the elements within this policy is limiting contract duration to 5 years unless other factors make it impractical or inappropriate. If there is a demonstrated need to enter or extend a contract beyond this timeframe, the Director of Finance has the latitude to approve that decision. Each of the current contracts have reached the maximum term for extensions; however, in light of the discussions that have taken place Staff have concluded that extending the existing contracts for a short duration would enable a more thorough review and development of a long term strategy and exploitation of partnership opportunities.

CONCLUSION

Acknowledging that the current contracts will be terminating in June 2022, and that there is interest but no financial and staffing resources available, Staff propose to extend the current contracts by up to 24 months to provide adequate time for the City and all partnership agencies

to collaborate on a long term business plan which can be put forward as part of the 2023 Financial Planning Process.

SUMMARY POINTS

- City contracts for provision of bus shelters and benches expires in June 2022.
- City and potential partnership agencies do not have access to funds or resources to take over service prior to the expiration of the contracts.
- City will issue extensions to existing contracts to provide time to develop a long term business strategy for transit stop amenities within the City.
- Business plan will be presented as part of the 2023 Financial Planning Process.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A – Bus Shelter and Bench Strategy report, dated November 22, 2021 |

Submitted by:

Jamie Rose
Manager, Transportation |

Concurrence by:

Poul Rosen
Director, Engineering

Bill Sims
General Manager, Engineering & Public
Works

Laura Mercer
Director, Finance |