



**RESORT MUNICIPALITY OF WHISTLER**

4325 Blackcomb Way TEL 604 932 5535  
Whistler, BC Canada V8E 0X5 TF 1 866 932 5535  
whistler.ca FAX 604 935 8109

## STAFF REPORT TO COUNCIL

**PRESENTED:** January 24, 2023 **REPORT:** 23-005  
**FROM:** Transit and Transportation Demand Management **FILE:** 527  
**SUBJECT:** WHISTLER TRANSIT SYSTEM 2022/23 WINTER UPDATE

### RECOMMENDATION FROM THE CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER

That the recommendation of the General Manager of Infrastructure Services be endorsed.

### RECOMMENDATION(S)

That Council receive Information Report No. 23-005 regarding the status of the Whistler Transit System.

### PURPOSE OF REPORT

To update Council and the community on the delivery of transit service in Whistler for winter 2022/2023.

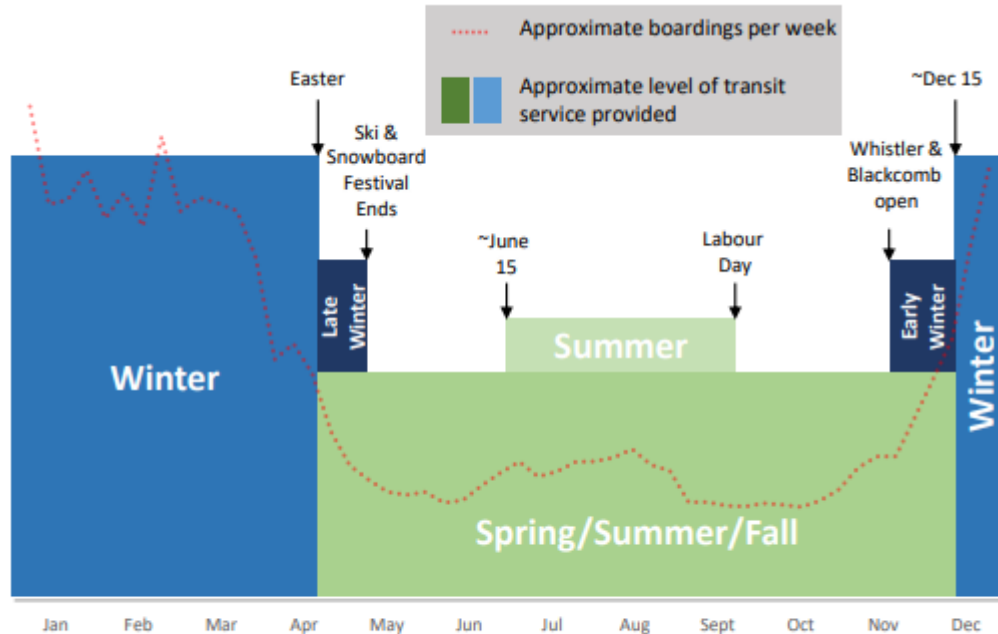
Information Report  Administrative Report (Decision or Direction)

### DISCUSSION

#### Background

The Whistler Transit System is operated in a partnership between BC Transit, the Resort Municipality of Whistler (RMOW), and the contracted operating company, Whistler Transit Ltd. (a wholly owned subsidiary of Pacific Western Transportation and the PWTransit group) (WTL) through the Regional Transit Systems program. WTL provides the operators for the Whistler Transit System. As with many businesses in Whistler, WTL has experienced challenges hiring new staff for winter 2022/23. This challenge appears to be especially difficult for the short-term staff needed for the additional winter level of service from December 15 to April 16.

The Whistler Transit System is designed to have two main service seasons, “Spring-Summer-Fall” base service and “Winter” with extra buses during those seasons to ramp service up and down to best match ridership needs in the community. This can be seen in the diagram below from page 11 of the recently adopted Whistler Transit Future Action Plan. This shows the “Early Winter” and “Late Winter” periods and additional service levels for those periods of the year.



Source: APC

Whistler – Transit Future Action Plan

11

## Analysis

On Tuesday, January 10, 2023, BC Transit updated RMOW staff regarding operations issues related to the Winter season Whistler Transit System capabilities. Currently due to transit operator staff shortages, there has been missed service over the peak holiday season and missed service is predicted to continue until the end of the full Winter season schedule in April. WTL has been working to fill critical scheduled bus times with existing staff. WTL Customer Service staff have also been letting passengers know about upcoming missed service through Customer Service Alerts posted on [bctransit.com/Whistler](https://bctransit.com/Whistler), on NextRide, as well as sending out Tweets on the @WhistlerTransit account. The Twitter feed is also posted on [bctransit.com/Whistler](https://bctransit.com/Whistler) so that customers do not need to have Twitter accounts to read the updates.

Due to current staffing levels as of January 10, 2023, if a driver calls in sick, there is no available “spare-board” drivers to cover the shift. These are drivers that are available for short notice shifts. Therefore, BC Transit presented two options to RMOW staff for the remainder of the Winter season:

- 1) Status quo: Continue to schedule full Winter Service Levels knowing that there will be daily missed service and communicate the missed service as soon as it is known through the different communication platforms; or
- 2) Reduce scheduled service to the Early Winter/Late Winter service level to be able to have all driver shifts covered and have a few drivers available for the spare-board.

Neither option was seen to meet the needs of the Whistler community. Therefore, the RMOW with BC Transit and WTL staff explored several other options including:

- starting with the current full Winter 2022/2023 schedule and permanently removing up to 150 trips per day for the rest of the Winter season; or
- taking the existing Late Winter schedule scheduled to begin in April 2023 and adding necessary trips to bring it up to a minimally acceptable service for our peak Winter season.

It was agreed that the best option for the Whistler community, transit passengers and the drivers would be to provide a more consistent and predictable service by moving to the 2023 Late Winter transit schedule plus additional scheduled trips beginning in February, which will be referred to as “Late Winter Plus”. The “Late Winter Plus” schedule will have additional scheduled trips to better meet passenger needs until mid-April. At the time of writing of this report, staff are still working on the “Late Winter Plus” trip times. This schedule will run through to Sunday, April 16, 2023 while both ski mountains are open.

The Whistler Transit System will shift to the Spring-Summer-Fall base service on Monday, April 17, 2023, when only Blackcomb Mountain will be open for spring skiing.

---

## POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

### Relevant Council Authority/Previous Decisions

The Whistler Transit System is provided through a partnership between BC Transit and the RMOW, and WTL is contracted to operate the system. The three partners manage the system through the Transit Management Advisory Committee (TMAC) who are appointed by Council. Whistler Transit System service levels and budgets are approved each year by the RMOW, also setting fares and local property taxes to fund the RMOW contribution to transit costs. This partnership is formalized through a series of agreements including the Annual Operating Agreement (AOA).

The [2022/23 AOA](#) was presented to Council in Administrative Report 22-104. No revisions to the AOA are required for the above described changes.

### Corporate Plan

The RMOW Corporate Plan is updated annually and articulates strategic direction for the organization. This section identifies how this report links to the plan.

### Council Focus Areas

- Community Balance

*Effectively **balance resort and community needs** through deliberate planning, partnerships and investment*

The Whistler Transit System serves the needs of both our residents and visitors. It is comprised of 13 routes: three routes which are funded through the Resort Municipality Initiative are focused on serving the resort visitors, and the other ten routes service the areas where our residents live, work, and play.

The goal of this revised Winter schedule is to provide more predictable and reliable transit service through to the end of winter 2022/23 for our residents and our visitors.

- Climate Action

*Provide leadership to **accelerate climate action and environmental performance** across the community*

Housing

*Advance strategic and innovative initiatives to enable and **deliver additional employee housing***

Pandemic Recovery

*Leadership and support for **community and tourism recovery and sustainability** – priority focuses are where recovery needs intersect with other Council focus areas*

Providing an affordable, convenient and reliable way to move around Whistler is needed for residents, employees and guests.

### Corporate Goals

- Community character and mountain culture is reflected in municipal initiatives
- Municipal decision-making supports the effective stewardship of natural assets and ecological function
- Corporate policies and operations ensure continuous excellence in infrastructure, facility and program management
- A high level of accountability, transparency and community engagement is maintained
- Corporate financial health is optimized to ensure long-term community success
- A vibrant local economy and safe, resilient resort community is effectively reinforced by organizational activities

The intent of this mid-winter transit service change is to make the Whistler Transit System more predictable and reliable for Whistler Transit System passengers.

### Community Vision and Official Community Plan

The Official Community Plan (OCP) is the RMOW's most important guiding document that sets the community vision and long-term community direction. This section identifies how this report applies to the OCP.

### Community Vision

The part of the OCP Community Vision that stands out when thinking about the delivery of the Whistler Transit System, is the statement “We value our relationships and work together as partners and community members.” As noted, the Whistler Transit System is delivered through a partnership with BC Transit and WTL. The RMOW values the relationship with its partners and passengers, as has been demonstrated over the past 30 years since the first day of service on November 27, 1991.

### Goals, Objectives and Policies

There are many goals, objectives, and policies in Whistler's OCP that guide the development of the Whistler Transit System. One overarching statement in the OCP that guides transit's role in the transportation system is included in Objective 11.4.2 “Make public transit affordable, **convenient, safe and enjoyable** throughout the year”.

### Other Relevant Policies

The [Sea to Sky Transit Future Plan](#), approved by Council in September 2022, outlines transit service levels for Whistler and the neighbourhoods throughout the community. The service levels in the 2022-2023 AOA reflect the Whistler Transit System as outlined in that plan, and are being used to guide the revision to our winter 2022-2023 service.

---

### BUDGET CONSIDERATIONS

BC Transit invoices the RMOW for the actual amount of service provided. Therefore, the RMOW will see some savings to the Transit budget, due to the reduction in service either by missed service or this planned reduced service level starting at the beginning of February.

---

### LÍLWAT NATION & SQUAMISH NATION CONSIDERATIONS

The RMOW is committed to working with the Lílwat People, known in their language as *L'il'wat7úl* and the Squamish People, known in their language as the *Skwxwú7mesh Úxwumixw* to: create an enduring relationship; establish collaborative processes for Crown land planning; achieve mutual objectives; and enable participation in Whistler's resort economy.

There are no specific considerations to include in this report.

---

### COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Level of community engagement commitment for this project:

Inform     Consult     Involve     Collaborate     Empower

BC Transit in partnership with the RMOW just completed an on-line survey regarding the Route 10-Valley Express route deviation pilot project. The preliminary results of that survey have also been taken into consideration when designing the "Late Winter Plus" service schedule.

The staff team at RMOW, BC Transit and WTL are working to produce a "Late Winter Plus" schedule to be implemented in February through to April 16, 2023. This schedule change will be communicated to the Whistler Transit passengers through the BC Transit and RMOW social media channels, our websites, direct emails and notices in the *Pique Newsmagazine*, on buses, and at bus stops.

---

### SUMMARY

Winter 2022/2023 has been another challenging year in Whistler for business to hire and maintain staff to meet the needs of our peak season. Like many businesses, WTL has also been challenged to hire and maintain enough staff to consistently provide the full Winter season scheduled transit service.

On January 10, 2023, BC Transit informed RMOW staff that due to schedule reliability issues, they are recommending a change to reduce the scheduled amount of transit service. The goal of this mid-winter transit service change is to make the Whistler Transit System more predictable and reliable for Whistler Transit System passengers.

The staff team at the RMOW, BC Transit and WTL are working to produce a “Late Winter Plus” schedule to be implemented from the beginning of February through to April 16, 2023.

---

## **SIGN-OFFS**

### **Written by:**

Emma DaSanto,  
Transportation Demand Management  
Coordinator

### **Reviewed by:**

James Hallisey,  
General Manager of Infrastructure Services

Virginia Cullen,  
Chief Administrative Officer