

January 29 2025

City of Vernon
3400 30 Street
Vernon, BC V1T 5E6

Vernon City Council,

I write to you today seeking a letter of support from the City of Vernon Council for BC Transit and MOTT to expand the BC Transit Route 97 to include the existing route 90. This would connect Vernon, Lake Country, Kelowna, YLW, UBCO and West Kelowna to one rapid bus line. Once combined, by continuing the route 97 existing schedule, bus service would begin at 5am and conclude as late as 2am with peak service times operating every 15 minutes.

More than 400 community members from our region signed a petition in support of this. Premier Eby has also expressed desire for the Provincial Government to improve intercity transit in the Okanagan as mentioned in the attached mandate letter to the new Minister of Transportation & *Transit* (formerly infrastructure). MLA Harwinder Sandhu has expressed her support for this initiative in the attached letter to MOTT. Lake Country Council has already expressed interest in the expansion of route 97 into Lake Country as part of their transit strategy for this year. I humbly request that Vernon City Council do the same and request the extension continue all the way to Vernon following the existing route 90.



Some of the key benefits to our community:

AIR TRAVELERS:

Currently there is no stop on the rapid bus route 97 for Kelowna Airport YLW and the current route 90 runs too infrequent to be relied upon by air travelers. With a stop in each direction for YLW, air travelers will finally have a frequently operating transit option encompassing the entire daily flight schedule so no matter the flight, or if your flight comes in late – you can take a bus. Airport parking is also a concern, with the Airport itself regularly posting announcements to use other means of getting to and from the airport. In addition, as part of my proposal I have asked for the stop at YLW to be adjusted to the bus drop off zone (which many other buses already use) since this is 250m closer to the front doors than the current bus stop location.

STUDENTS, SENIORS, TOURISM, COMMUTERS:

The expanded bus service window and direct connection to Kelowna and West Kelowna will enable students/faculty/staff to get to UBCO as early as 6am with regular service throughout the day to bring folks to and from Okanagan Community College (many students take courses at both). Commuters would finally be able to get to downtown Kelowna as early as 630am, West Kelowna by 7am and with the frequency being every 15 minutes during peak hours – folks can get to and from work no matter their schedule, or other bus connection time. Even night shift workers would be able to take the bus to avoid driving on the highway while tired. During our peak tourism months, folks from near and far will be able to travel within the Okanagan to our wineries, orchards, restaurants, sporting events, concerts, popular community events (Memorial Cup, Curling, BC Games, Winter Carnival) with a guaranteed safe ride home as the bus service would end with a return to Vernon at 2am. Seniors throughout the Okanagan will have more independence thanks to the expanded bus service times and frequency allowing them to get to more appointments on their own – this was actually a re-occurring comment from many seniors through the petition and online social media. Overall, every single group within our communities will benefit from expansion of this bus route.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Fraser Young', with a stylized, flowing script.

Fraser Young

email: fraseryoung@telus.net

mobile: 778-868-4887

789 Pottery Road Vernon BC V1B3A5



January 16, 2025

Honourable Mike Farnworth
Minister of Transportation and Transit
Parliament Buildings
Victoria, BC V8V 1X4

Dear Minister Farnworth:

Congratulations on your appointment as Minister of Transportation and Transit at a critical time for our province. Serving as a member of the executive council is a privilege and responsibility which I am confident you will fulfill with integrity and a commitment to the people of our province.

British Columbians have trusted us with a mandate to deliver for them in ways that make a tangible difference in their daily lives. They expect us to listen and learn from people of different perspectives – and work together to make things better for everyone.

Specifically, we will tackle the challenges people worry about at the kitchen table:

- **Grow the economy by creating good jobs across British Columbia.** We will collaborate with businesses, workers, and communities to attract investments in both new and traditional sectors as well as emerging sectors of the economy. This approach will bring certainty for business, security for workers, and generate the wealth needed to support the essential services British Columbians rely on.
- **Reduce costs for families** including by helping people access homes they can afford through support for first-time homebuyers, increasing the supply of rental housing stock, and stronger measures to crack down on housing speculation.

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- **Strengthen health care** by expanding access to family doctors and recruiting and training more health professionals, ensuring that every British Columbian can access the care they need, no matter where they live. We will also increase access to addictions treatment and provide help for people whose struggles require intensive supports.
- **Make our neighbourhoods and communities safer** by working with law enforcement and social agencies to address street disorder, crack down on organized crime, and do all we can to ensure repeat offenders stay behind bars.

Our commitment to take action on climate change remains foundational and will be key to a healthy and prosperous BC for future generations.

Underlying all this work is our partnership with Indigenous peoples. Advancing reconciliation, implementing the *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act* and working in partnership with First Nations rights-holders to advance shared interests is the responsibility of every Minister.

Over this mandate I expect you to prioritize making progress on the following:

- In order to protect key services that British Columbians rely on, work with the Minister of Finance to review all existing Ministry of Transportation and Transit programs and initiatives to ensure our programs remain relevant, are efficient, are responsive to the needs of commuters, grow the economy, and help keep British Columbians moving. This is important in the context of current Provincial budget constraints and the priorities of communities in the province.
- Support improvements in BC's road infrastructure balanced with integrated transit opportunities to ensure that people can get home and to work faster, and goods can get to market more efficiently in our province.
- Find ways to support low-income people including seniors and young people in accessing affordable transit.
- Drive the development and expansion of transit across the province and work with communities across BC to find ways to strengthen key rural and intercity transportation services. This includes supporting regional transportation plans such as the Central Okanagan Transit Future Plan and working toward regular local transit along the Sea to Sky corridor.
- Ensure that our provincial transit services are being delivered in a way that is cost-effective for taxpayers, responsive to the concerns of transit riders, and not duplicative of administration by reviewing the private delivery model for provincial transit systems starting with handyDART.

- Work with BC ferries to address administrative costs and ensure affordable, reliable, and sustainable ferry services.
- Identify affordable and efficient opportunities for expansion of SkyTrain, RapidBus, and rail service in the province to meet the transportation and goods movement needs of growing populations.
- Lead work to advance progress on the Broadway extension to UBC, including by working with the federal government, UBC, the City of Vancouver, First Nations, and all relevant government agency stakeholders. Work with the Minister of Housing and Municipal Affairs to advance related government objectives on housing density and identify opportunities to achieve reduced carbon pollution and economic development. Delegate key responsibilities as you are able to the Parliamentary Secretary for Transit to support the extensive coordination and relationship building required by this file.
- Find ways to support taxi and ride hail operators and ensure safe and affordable transportation options for British Columbians.
- Support the Minister of Public Safety and Solicitor General in ensuring safety and efficiency across our public transportation system through partnerships with TransLink, BC Transit, and local governments to permit the use of technology in relation to enforcement of public transportation safety.

To assist you in meeting the commitments we have made to British Columbians, you are assigned a Parliamentary Secretary for Transit whose focus will be to:

- Work with you and the Minister of Housing and Municipal Affairs to identify and champion transit-oriented development sites with local governments, stakeholders, and the private sector in order to maximize success of this initiative.
- Work with you to advance progress on the Broadway extension to UBC, including by building relationships with the relevant contacts in the federal government, UBC, the City of Vancouver, First Nations and all relevant government agency stakeholders. Work with the Minister of Housing and Municipal Affairs to advance related government objectives on housing density and identify opportunities to achieve reduced carbon pollution and economic development.
- Work with you to identify opportunities to improve transit in underserved areas with greatest need, with a goal of connecting communities.

You will work closely together and ensure your Parliamentary Secretary receives appropriate support to deliver on this work.

As you are aware, we have established an accord with the BC Green Caucus that supports our shared commitment to ensuring stable governance focused on delivering progress and tangible outcomes for British Columbians. The commitments in that accord complement the direction in these mandate letters.

As a Cabinet, we will uphold the highest standards of ethics, collaboration, and good conduct in service of the public, and as a Minister of the Crown, you are expected to review, understand, and act according to the *Members' Conflict of Interest Act*. You will establish a collaborative working relationship with your Deputy Minister and the public servants under their direction, who provide the professional, non-partisan advice that is fundamental to delivering on our government's priorities. Your Minister's Office must meet the highest standards for integrity and provide a respectful, rewarding environment for all staff.

The work we have ahead takes place in a profoundly challenging geopolitical environment. Close friends and neighbours to our south are contemplating imposing draconian tariffs on our products that would hurt both Americans and Canadians. Our allies internationally face governmental instability. Hate and racism are on the rise around the world. Artificial intelligence breakthroughs with unclear implications and astonishing potential are announced daily. Global inflation, snarled supply chains, and war are threatening global economic growth and prosperity as well as the transition to a low-carbon economy.

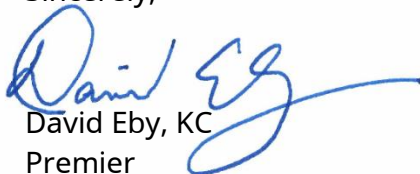
We have an obligation to protect and defend British Columbians, as well as seize opportunities, in these uncertain times.

The good news is that we have everything we need to succeed, and we will succeed. British Columbia's people – our workers, entrepreneurs, business leaders, artists, and innovators – are among the most talented in the world. We are home to world-class educational institutions and public services. Our natural beauty is unmatched, we have internationally envied resources, and we are one of the most diverse places on the planet. Your job is to help us leverage these advantages in perilous times.

Use this mandate letter to guide your work, and do not be afraid to challenge assumptions, or be innovative, bold and aggressive in achieving the goals set out for you and your Ministry by the people of this province.

Thank you for joining me in the work ahead.

Sincerely,



David Eby, KC
Premier

cc: George Anderson, MLA
Parliamentary Secretary for Transit



Harwinder Sandhu, MLA
Vernon-Lumby

January 7, 2025

Dear Parliamentary Secretary Anderson,

Re: Support for Expanded Transit Routes to Better Serve Vernon, Lake Country, and Kelowna

I am writing to express my strong support for enhancing public transit connectivity between Vernon, Lake Country, and Kelowna as proposed by Vernon-Lumby constituent Fraser Young. This proposal to extend BC Transit Route 97 and integrate it with Route 90 presents an excellent opportunity to improve regional accessibility, safety, economic connectivity, and environmental sustainability.

Currently, the Route 90 serves UBCO students and passengers ride to Kelowna for school, work, travel or pleasure. However, the service begins at 7 a.m. and is often overcrowded, forcing passengers to stand. This creates significant safety concerns, particularly given the high-speed travel along Highway 97. Unlike commercial liners, public transit buses lack seat belts and enforce minimal seating protocols. Mr. Young's proposal addresses these concerns by suggesting the use of double-decker buses from the existing BC Transit fleet to enhance capacity and safety.

Additionally, the lack of early morning transit options prevents Greater Vernon commuters from reaching downtown Kelowna before 8:30 or 9 a.m., which creates a barrier to the use of public transit. This limitation reduces access to employment, education, healthcare, and other essential services, while discouraging residents from choosing sustainable transportation options. Consequently, road infrastructure is overburdened, and carbon emissions increase.

The proposed extension of Route 97, which currently operates between UBCO and West Kelowna, would integrate it with Route 90, connecting UBCO and Vernon. This plan would include early morning service starting at 5 a.m. to accommodate commuters between Kelowna and Vernon. This route would give passengers the ability to connect to key locations such as Vernon Jubilee Hospital, Kelowna International Airport, Kelowna General Hospital, Prospera Place, and Orchard Park Shopping Centre, and late-night service with the last bus departing at 2 a.m., better serving shift-workers, tourists and people travelling home from social activities.

This extension would significantly improve accessibility by providing residents with better connections to employment centers, healthcare facilities, and recreational venues. It would also enhance safety by offering a reliable late-night commuting option and support economic growth by strengthening connections between Vernon, Lake Country, and Kelowna, benefiting local economies and tourism. Furthermore, it would encourage public transit use, reducing vehicle traffic and greenhouse gas emissions, while promoting equity by offering improved service to seniors, low-income families, and tourists reliant on public transportation.

While funding for transit services is provided by the provincial government, I understand decisions about routes and service levels rest with local governments and BC Transit. I appreciate that BC Transit has already identified this proposal for consideration in the City of Vernon's updates to its Official Community Plan and Transportation Plan. However, I urge your Ministry to prioritize and support this proposal in collaboration with local governments in Kelowna, Lake Country, Vernon and the Regional District of North Okanagan.

Mr. Young is actively engaged with local governments and received positive feedback regarding this proposal. A commitment from your Ministry would inspire municipalities to move this project forward, given its significant regional benefits.

This initiative is crucial for fostering a more connected, inclusive, and environmentally conscious future for our communities. I would welcome the opportunity for Mr. Young to meet with you and your staff at your earliest convenience to share his ideas and discuss how existing BC Transit resources can best be utilized.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I look forward to your Ministry's guidance and support in advancing this important proposal.

Warmest regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'H. Sandhu' with a stylized flourish at the end.

Harwinder Sandhu
MLA for Vernon-Lumby