

Summary of Cowichan Commuter Survey April 2011

1. OVERVIEW

- 107 responses were collected between March 18 and April 5, 2011.
- The vast majority of respondents use the service for commuting to/from work (90%).
- Most respondents indicated that they take #66 Duncan whereas fewer people indicated that they take #99 Shawnigan Lake (67% and 14%, respectively). Many reported that they use both routes (18%).
- Passengers live throughout the region rather than being concentrated in a single area such as greater Duncan. For this reason, Park 'n' Rides and local connector services are an important aspect of the commuter service. The following table shows key origins in red.

Place of Residence	Response Count	Response Percent
<i>Chemainus</i>	2	1.9%
<i>Cobble Hill (East of Hwy 1)</i>	11	10.5%
<i>Cobble Hill (West of Hwy 1)</i>	12	11.4%
<i>Cowichan Bay</i>	6	5.7%
<i>Cowichan Station / Sahtlam / Glenora</i>	2	1.9%
<i>Crofton</i>	2	1.9%
<i>Duncan</i>	21	20%
<i>Ladysmith</i>	3	2.9%
<i>Lake Cowichan/ Youbou / Honeymoon Bay</i>	8	7.6%
<i>Maple Bay</i>	9	8.6%
<i>Mill Bay</i>	14	13.3%
<i>Shawnigan Lake</i>	13	12.4%
<i>Other</i>	2	1.9%

- Frayne Rd is the most popular Park 'n' Ride followed by Valleyview Centre (42% and 22%, respectively). A significant number of respondents indicated that they used "other" informal Park 'n' Rides (36%).
- Cost savings are the main reason for using the commuter service. Only several people said that they felt that they were getting poor value for their money and/or that the fares were too high.
- Overall, respondents reported a high level of satisfaction with the Cowichan Commuter service. Two-thirds of respondents indicated that the service was either "very good" or "excellent." Many people commented on the drivers' professionalism and positive demeanor.

2. TIME PREFERENCES

Work / School Start and End Time

Reported start / end times are grouped into three areas, including Duncan, Mill Bay and Shawnigan Lake. “Duncan and Surrounding Areas” includes Ladysmith, Chemainus, Maple Bay and Lake Cowicham, while “Mill Bay” also includes Cobble Hill.

Common start and end times are shown in red. In addition, a handful of people indicated a degree of flexibility in their schedule – for example, being able to start work between 7:30 and 8:30 AM.

Duncan and Surrounding Areas						
Start Time	Response Count	Response Percent		End Time	Response Count	Response Percent
6:00 AM	0	0%		3:00 PM	1	2%
6:15 AM	0	0%		3:15 PM	1	2%
6:30 AM	0	0%		3:30 PM	9	18%
6:45 AM	1	2%		3:45 PM	10	20%
7:00 AM	7	13%		4:00 PM	7	14%
7:15 AM	11	20%		4:15 PM	3	6%
7:30 AM	7	13%		4:30 PM	3	6%
7:45 AM	7	13%		4:45 PM	2	4%
8:00 AM	7	13%		5:00 PM	6	12%
8:15 AM	0	0%		5:15 PM	0	0%
8:30 AM	7	13%		5:30 PM	1	2%
8:45 AM	1	2%		5:45 PM	0	0%
9:00 AM	2	4%		6:00 PM	1	2%
Other	4	7%		Other	2	4%
Flexible	2	4%		Flexible	3	6%
Total	56	100%		Total	49	100%

Mill Bay / Cobble Hill						
Start Time	Response Count	Response Percent		End Time	Response Count	Response Percent
6:00 AM	0	0%		3:00 PM	4	10%
6:15 AM	0	0%		3:15 PM	0	0%
6:30 AM	5	13%		3:30 PM	4	10%
6:45 AM	1	3%		3:45 PM	8	20%
7:00 AM	5	13%		4:00 PM	6	15%
7:15 AM	3	8%		4:15 PM	3	7%
7:30 AM	7	18%		4:30 PM	4	10%
7:45 AM	4	10%		4:45 PM	4	10%
8:00 AM	5	13%		5:00 PM	4	10%
8:15 AM	1	3%		5:15 PM	0	0%
8:30 AM	4	10%		5:30 PM	1	2%
8:45 AM	1	3%		5:45 PM	0	0%
9:00 AM	1	3%		6:00 PM	1	2%
Other	0	0%		Other	0	0%
Flexible	3	8%		Flexible	2	5%
Total	40	100%		Total	41	100%

Shawnigan Lake						
Start Time	Response Count	Response Percent		End Time	Response Count	Response Percent
6:00 AM	0	0%		3:00 PM	1	10%
6:15 AM	0	0%		3:15 PM	0	0%
6:30 AM	0	0%		3:30 PM	3	30%
6:45 AM	1	11%		3:45 PM	1	10%
7:00 AM	1	11%		4:00 PM	2	20%
7:15 AM	2	22%		4:15 PM	3	30%
7:30 AM	2	22%		4:30 PM	0	0%
7:45 AM	0	0%		4:45 PM	0	0%
8:00 AM	0	0%		5:00 PM	0	0%
8:15 AM	2	22%		5:15 PM	0	0%
8:30 AM	1	11%		5:30 PM	0	0%
8:45 AM	0	0%		5:45 PM	0	0%
9:00 AM	0	0%		6:00 PM	0	0%
Other	0	0%		Other	0	0%
Flexible	0	0%		Flexible	0	0%
Total	9	100%		Total	10	100%

3. QUALITATIVE COMMENTS

Positive Feedback

Overall, service is liked / appreciated

- I think it is an excellent service.
- Love the commuter bus and the drivers have all been great. Have taken it since inception.
- I am very happy with the service and the drivers - even the really old first bus home is fine. I know there has been extreme complaining by some passengers, but I am not among them. I think the majority of daily riders are satisfied with the current service.
- I am fairly new to the system but do enjoy the morning commute. Buses are nice, the driver is great.
- Don't change a thing, I am happy the way it is.
- I love taking the bus - thanks for having the commuter service.
- Excellent service, keep up the good work!
- I have been very happy with the service - when we had concerns regarding the change in schedule around December 2010 they were heard and promptly the schedule was returned to accommodate the working commuter. I have no complaints, it is an excellent service and I plan to continue taking it through my working career. Thank you.
- I consider this service excellent for my needs, however, I can see that in the future additional service will be needed as the population grows and the service becomes more and more popular. This is a very important service and is greatly appreciated by all of those who use it.
- I think this is a great service for the Cowichan Valley - cost effective, safe for the users and less vehicles on the road. The bus drivers are excellent drivers, knowledgeable and very personable.

Drivers are excellent

- The drivers are friendly and professional.
- My rating with respect to the drivers would be "excellent".
- Kudos to drivers Ken, Doug, Robin. I am sure that the others are great too.
- Your drivers are amazing and do a great job (Terry, Dale, Robin, Brian, Glen, Don, Richelle, Yvonne the ones I know) I thank them daily for doing the trip twice a day and riding back and forth. They get us to Victoria and back on time and safely everyday dealing with extreme traffic especially this year. They cope with complaining passengers, snow, traffic delays and accidents and still smile.

Scheduling / Overcrowding

Maintain existing service

- The current schedule works great with my work schedule.
- As the service grows, I hope that you maintain stability in the existing service in order to maintain the confidence in the people who use it.

- I adjusted my work hours the last time the bus schedule changed and I am content with the current schedule and service. I would prefer that the schedule NOT change, as I cannot keep changing my work hours.

Add additional PM Peak trips (e.g. 4:00 PM)

- There needs to be more buses leaving Victoria in the afternoon between 3:30 and 4:15. The 3:45 bus is too full.
- The first bus home in the afternoon is too full and the time until the next one is too long. No matter what time the first bus has left Victoria, it has always been the fullest. The departure times need to be spaced more closely together.
- The 3:45pm (Duncan) bus is extremely busy. One suggestion is to move the 4:10 Shawnigan bus to 3:45 - which would help split the load (since a large proportion of people on the 3:45 bus get off at Frayne).
- It is very obvious that there needs to be more buses coming back from Victoria at earlier times. There is a lot of demand for the earliest afternoon bus, because of non-commuters using the service from Victoria to Duncan.
- Increase frequency of early #66 bus leaving Victoria for Duncan.

Consider adding a later AM/PM Peak return trip

- The morning routes are all too early. Can't the service be spread out more?
- I would be interested in taking the commuter bus if it could leave later. As a mom with young kids that have to go to daycare prior to me leaving for work, I can't make the last bus at 6:30AM, and would need to leave between 7:30 - 8:00. Perhaps there are others in the same situation.
- Need a bus that gets to Vic later, by 8:30 am.
- I'd also like to have an even later bus leaving Victoria (even after 6:00pm). While I have seen that the late buses are not near capacity, the later buses would allow me (and others I assume) greater flexibility on days when work runs late.
- I would love to see a few more buses to expand the service a little later on both ends of the day. Sometimes I need to be at work at 9 - 9:30 Am and leave work at 6PM. The bus does not work for me on those days. But I love the days it does!
- I would take the bus more if there was another later bus going home because I have to stay at work late sometimes.

Consider adding earlier AM/PM Peak return trip

- I wish there was an early bus to Victoria.
- I live in Shawnigan and have to park at the Frayne park and ride because I need to get home close to 5pm and the 1st bus out of Victoria is the Duncan one. Would really like to see a Shawnigan bus leave Victoria earlier than 4:20.
- I am glad that the bus leaves Victoria earlier than originally set. Do wish the bus arrived a bit earlier and left at 3:45.
- Since moving to the Valley in August 2010 I have noticed a dramatic increase in the number of new users. I would like to see an earlier bus in the afternoon from Victoria to Duncan so that a rider would have an option of riding the bus home before the afternoon rush.

Investigate demand for “reverse commute” (Victoria to Duncan)

- I was just wondering why there is no service in the morning going the other way? I wouldn't think there would be a giant amount of people commuting to Duncan every day from Victoria, but I'd assume there would be enough to at least fill a bus trip up in the morning...
- I live in Victoria and I have meetings in Duncan often. However the service does not work at all. I seem to be going the wrong direction to be able to use this service. My suggestion would be to think about people coming from Victoria wanting to travel back and forth at all times of the day.

Investigate demand for weekend service

- We also need to go down there for entertainment purposes, and shopping so it would be nice to see weekend service as well.

Reduce wait-times at certain stops

- It does not take 15 minutes to drive from Helmchen to Millstream. The 99 is suppose to be at Helmchen at 4:39 but does not come until 4:47, because the stop at Millstream is at 4:54. So the driver waits at other stops so we don't have to sit a Millstream for 10 minutes. It never takes 15 minutes to drive that distance. Please change the Millstream pick up to actually reflect that time the driver will get there. The drivers are wasting 15 minutes a day to make that stop at Millstream.

Route

Reinstate Hutchinson Rd stop

- The Hutchison road stop should be re-instated. It makes no sense not to have it. There is a parking lot there, a lot of people walked to the stop.
- Why can't at least one of the bus routes provide a pick up at Hutcheson Road and the Highway?
- Removal of the Hutchinson Road park and ride took away one of the few stops where a lot of people walked to catch the bus. We now have to drive 5km each direction to the nearest park and ride, which significantly adds to our overall carbon footprint.

Consider by-passing Mill Bay on #66 trips

- In order to reduce crowding, the Duncan bus could miss the Mill Bay stop, thus forcing those folks to take the less crowded Shawnigan bus.
- No need for the 66 bus to stop in mill bay, that's what the 99 is for.

Consider bypassing certain stops

- I feel that the Koksilah stop should have been eliminated. It is not a park and ride stop. Riders park their cars on the street. There is a dedicated park and rider 3 minutes south of this stop. Riders should have to drive this three minutes to the Valley View stop. The northbound bus is forced to cross over the Island Highway twice to drop one or two riders off. The Koksilah intersection is one of the frequent accident sites in the Duncan/Cowichan area.

- Consider dropping the beach estates portion of the run (i.e., cobble hill road then onward to Shawnigan village). None of the other routes have such a suburban meander - why are these folks so special? Doing so could get the first Shawnigan into Victoria quicker. 2) Change the time of the home depot pm pickup. why do 44+ people have to park and sit and wait for no one to show up while Spencer road intersection clogs up?

Transit Connections

Improve transit connections to Lake Cowichan & Honeymoon Bay

- It would be beneficial for those of us living in Lake Cowichan area (Youbou, Honeymoon Bay, Mesachie) to have a connector bus to the Cowichan Valley Commuter - currently there are no connections and riders drive themselves to & from Duncan.
- It would be nice if the number 66 could meet up with any of the Lake Cowichan buses in the morning. It's very difficult trying to get the most out of my very early day when the buses don't meet and I have to wait or get a ride into Duncan. There's only a seven minute difference, why can't you just make it perfect?
- The service between Honeymoon Bay and Lake Cowichan is not convenient at all. The buses from Honeymoon Bay to Lake Cowichan leaving for Duncan, don't connect well at all. The wait time is too long.
- Connector Service to Lake Cowichan in the AM would be great.

Improve transit connections to Shawnigan Lake

- Is there a way to connect the Duncan bus with the Shawnigan lake bus or the Shawnigan / Mill Bay bus #12 at Frayne rd? Or could the Duncan bus turn down Hutchinson and stop at Cobble Hill station before going to Valleyview?
- One more Shawnigan bus would be worthwhile considering.
- There needs to be a later bus on the Shawnigan connector. Most people are not done their day by 4:30.

Park 'n' Rides

Improve customer amenities at Park 'N' Rides

- Thank you for the parking lot lines and bus shelter at Frayne Rd - it is appreciated!
- It would be good if it were possible to have a shelter and/or light at Valleyview - the parking is lit but the stop is not, and I once missed the bus by staying in my car.
- I would like to see some lights at the Valley View bus stop. It is a very unsafe situation there in the winter months, especially for women.
- Require a Park & Ride lot for Koksilah Road.
- Much more could be done to encourage riders to leave their cars at home by offering a few more accessible stops and providing bicycle friendly services such as more bike racks on the bus, and safe bike stands at the bus stops.

Fares

Reduce or maintain current fares

- Thinking about starting to drive because it is cheaper. Qualicum to Nanaimo - \$60 or so per month. Comox Valley to Campbell River - \$60/month. Sooke to Sidney - \$82/month. Duncan to Victoria - \$165/month. Do you see a problem here????? Price is way out of line compared to the rest of the Island.
- It is also important that the cost not increase greatly from what it is currently.
- I still don't appreciate the 10% increase for south end that favoured Duncan riders; I stayed with the bus to avoid driving but no longer consider it a bargain and will reconsider continuing my ridership if similar arbitrary increases are applied in future.

Make it easier to purchase tickets / passes

- The bus pass system could be improved; supply dates to vendors are such that I cannot buy too early for the next month and have to make a special trip to not be without. On line purchase or top up for daily commuters or other options such as weekly, quarterly, six month or annual tickets should be explored. The day tickets are useful for holiday times when a partial month is travelled but weekly ones might be handier.

Consider restructuring fares

- I am a high school student so why don't I get a student rate? And why do Mill Bay commuters pay the same as Duncan commuters?
- A one zone fare rate is not quite 'fair' given the driving distance/cost of fuel from Frayne to Duncan. Any monthly pass increases should first be applied to a Koksilah north zone - in other words again a two zone rate as Duncan riders themselves say it is a 'really good deal for us, not for you in the South.'
- Revenues are critical - suggest a higher 10 ticket rate and a two-week pass also at a higher rate - to discourage afternoon 'shoppers' taking needed commuter seats when monthly passes are prepaid in advance. A higher rate will still be better than Coachlines' rate and a two-week pass at a slightly higher rate than the monthly pass would work to keep revenues up and probably catch the ridership that is on 2-3 days a week. Tickets (10 for \$90.00) and two-week pass (expires in month purchased) \$85.00.

Passenger Comfort

Replace old vehicles

- The old bus you are currently using is not suitable for the long commute - I hope that you will retire it soon.
- The Classic is very uncomfortable, no storage space, no air, stairs, has trouble on the Hat Hills. Not what we signed up for.
- By the time I get home from work I have been sitting for 11.5 hours. When taking the old bus home I get extremely sore. There is no where to put your bags so they sit on your lap for 1.5 hrs and the seats are extremely uncomfortable. I am 30 years old and 5'8" and by the time I get off the bus I can barely stand up. The ergonomics are a nightmare!
- I can handle the plastic seats. [But] It definitely seems unsafe to have people standing on a bus going over the Malahat.

Communication

Continue to provide information onboard using posters and leaflets

- Next time you state in a "Rider Alert" that you will post a notice on the bus about something (in this case this survey) Please do so - I found out by accident that the survey was up on your website.
- The Rider Alert on March 1 was helpful and informative. We have been watching for the Survey poster which we saw on the bus. Thanks very much. We want to participate with meaningful information and feedback - the alerts and posters are needed reminders in our busy days when we can't check the computer.
- Communications suck. You published leaflets for announcing plans for a survey, but one unreadable poster when it was published.