

Rapid transit leans to streetcars

by [Edward Hill - Goldstream News Gazette](#) : June 15, 2010

BC Transit is leaning toward long, articulated buses or streetcars for its regional rapid transit project between Victoria and the West Shore.

At public forums held last week in Colwood and Victoria, transit planners highlighted what are called “articulated rubber tire vehicles” — long buses with the profile of a train — and electric streetcar or light rail-type systems.

“Because the population of Victoria or the future population growth doesn’t warrant a SkyTrain or subway, the vision of transit is a tram or streetcar system,” said Erinn Pinkerton, project manager for BC Transit’s Victoria Regional Rapid Transit.

Pinkerton said at-grade systems are more pedestrian friendly and less expensive than elevated or below ground transit. Transit planners will come back in September with a breakdown in costs of rubber tire versus electric systems.

Transit is also laying the groundwork for two main transit exchanges, one at the intersection of the Trans-Canada Highway, Island Highway and the E&N rail line — called the Six Mile exchange — and one next to Uptown in Saanich.

Provincial land for the station at Six Mile is available, but Uptown is a bit trickier.

The Uptown exchange is tentatively penciled in on a wedge of land between the Trans-Canada and Carey Road, near

the Galloping Goose and Lochside trails. Some land is owned by the Ministry of Transportation and Saanich, but some is private.

“We are in conversation with Uptown, Saanich and MOT about building an exchange adjacent to Uptown,” Pinkerton said. “We are looking at options to minimize (buying private land).”

The rapid transit corridor runs from Colwood Corners along Island Highway to the Trans-Canada to Uptown and then Douglas to downtown Victoria. The leg from Colwood to Langford remains off the map.

Langford has refused to endorse BC Transit’s idea to run rapid transit along Goldstream Avenue, preferring instead the E&N rail corridor.

Coun. Denise Blackwell noted that the E&N runs from Langford past CFB Esquimalt property, where thousands of West Shore commuters drive each day.

“We are missing a huge opportunity by not investing in the E&N,” Blackwell said. “Most of West Shore (commuter) traffic goes directly to DND. I don’t see that addressed anywhere in these plans.”

Pinkerton said they are waiting on results from the long-awaited MOT study on the viability of commuter rail between Victoria and Courtenay.

“We want the results of the study so we can talk with Langford with all options on the table.”

For more on the regional rapid transit project, see www.bctransit.com/vrrt.