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REPORT TO SALT SPRING ISLAND LOCAL COMMUNITY COMMISSION MEETING OF THURSDAY, MARCH 19, 2026

SUBJECT Salt Spring Island Transit Service - Fare Review

ISSUE SUMMARY

To present the findings of the Salt Spring Island (SSI) Transit Fare Structure Review and seek approval from the SSI Local Community Commission (LCC) for a revised fare structure.

BACKGROUND

BC Transit completed a comprehensive fare structure review for the SSI Transit System in response to rising operating costs and declining cost recovery. Fares on SSI have remained unchanged since 2017, despite significant increases in labour, fuel, and maintenance costs. The SSI Transit Services cost recovery has fallen from 32% in 2019/20 to 17% in 2024/25. Transit revenues have not kept pace with system costs, resulting in a growing reliance on local property taxation to sustain service levels.

The fare review developed three options that align with BC Transit's Fare Strategy and consider community affordability, operational impacts, revenue generation, and alignment with peer transit systems. BC Transit held a fare engagement open house at the Rainbow Recreation Centre on January 23, 2026, where community members learned about the fare review, provided feedback on the proposed options, and indicated their preferred choice while also engaging in discussions about how transit services are funded, including the roles of provincial and municipal contributions and the importance of fare revenue and property taxes in supporting local service. Approximately 20 people participated, with 15 offering input through an in-person dot-voting activity. An online survey was also conducted to provide an accessible alternative for public input, receiving 44 responses, with results summarized in (Appendix A).

Survey findings showed that Option 3 received the highest level of support (45%), and 51% of respondents reported that the proposed fare changes would not affect how frequently they use transit. Participants identified increased service frequency, continued investment in service improvements, and maintaining affordable monthly passes for regular riders as the key factors that would encourage greater transit use.

The objectives of the fare review sought to:

- Improve cost recovery and reduce the burden on local taxation.
- Ensure fare products remain simple, fair and aligned with BC Transit Fare Guidelines.
- Support ridership growth while generating sustainable revenue.
- Prepare for future implementation of electronic fare technology (Umo).

Summary of Options:

Option	Summary	Year 1 Revenue Increase	Year 1 Ridership Impact
Option 1	Gradual increase over three years	+\$13,164 (+9%)	-2%
Option 2	Full immediate increase to inflation levels	+\$35,920 (+25%)	-6.6%
Option 3	Moderate increase to \$2.75 with reduced monthly pass multiplier	+\$23,135 (+16%)	-4%

ALTERNATIVES

Alternative 1

That the Salt Spring Island Local Community Commission approve Option 3 – moderate increase to \$2.75 for a single-ride fare, with lower monthly pass cost as the preferred fare change and that staff work with BC Transit to implement the revised fare structure at the next feasible service change.

Alternative 2

That the Salt Spring Island Local Community Commission approve Option 2 – immediate increase to inflation levels as the preferred fare change and that staff work with BC Transit to implement the revised fare structure at the next feasible service change.

Alternative 3

That the Salt Spring Island Local Community Commission refers the report back to staff for additional information.

IMPLICATIONS

Financial Implications

Option 1 – Gradual Increase to Align with Inflation

A three-year phased increase generates moderate, steady revenue growth, with Year 1 revenue rising by \$13,164 (+9%) and ridership declining by about 2%. Revenue continues to increase in Years 2 and 3, but at a slower pace. Overall, Option 1 provides the smallest annual revenue gains but also the mildest ridership impact.

Option 2 – Immediate Increase to Inflation-Aligned Fares

A one-time increase to a \$3.00 single-ride fare results in the largest revenue gain at \$35,920 (+25%) in Year 1 but also the largest ridership decline at 6.6%. This option offers the greatest improvement in cost recovery but presents affordability challenges for riders.

Option 3 – Moderate Increase with Lower Monthly Pass Multiplier (Recommended)

This two-year increase starts with a jump to a \$2.75 fare while reducing the monthly pass multiplier to support frequent riders. Year 1 revenue increases by \$23,135 (+16%), with a 4% ridership decline, followed by an additional \$11,810 (+7%) revenue gain in Year 2. Option 3 provides a strong balance of revenue growth, moderate ridership impact, and improved affordability for regular users.

CONCLUSION

The SSI Transit Fare Review demonstrates the need to update fares to address rising operating costs and declining cost recovery. Among the options presented, Option 3 provides the most balanced approach by improving revenue while maintaining affordability for regular riders. This option also reflects the strongest community support and aligns with BC Transit’s fare guidelines. Implementing Option 3 will strengthen the long-term financial sustainability of the transit system while supporting continued service delivery on SSI.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Salt Spring Island Local Community Commission approve Option 3 – moderate increase to \$2.75 for a single-ride fare with lower monthly pass cost as the preferred fare change and that staff work with BC Transit to implement the revised fare structure at the next feasible service change.

Submitted by:	Dan Ovington, BBA Senior Manager, Salt Spring Island Administration
Concurrence	Stephen Henderson, MBA, PG.Dip.Eng. BSc, General Manager of Electoral Area Services Department

ATTACHMENTS:

Appendix A – BC Transit Fare Structure Review Report, Dated February 13, 2026.