

AGENDA ITEM NO: ADDITIONAL ITEM
15.2.1

MEETING DATE: April 18th, 2023

STAFF REPORT – COVER SHEET

SUBJECT: Transit Strike Update DATE: April 14, 2023

DEPARTMENT: Engineering PREPARED BY: D. Mossey

1. SUMMARY OF ISSUE:

This report will provide a status update of the current transit strike and provide a recommendation to help resolve the impasse affecting our bus transit service.


2. RECOMMENDATION:

Recommendation that the report on the "Transit Strike Update" be received for information; and further, that Council direct Staff to join other municipalities in the Fraser Valley by co-signing a letter to the BC Minister of Labour, requesting the assigning of a mediator to help resolve the impasse affecting our bus transit service


Kara Jefford, Director of Engineering

**3. CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER'S
RECOMMENDATION/COMMENTS:**

Supports recommendation.


Chris Crosman, CAO

**STAFF REPORT ON
Transit Strike Update**

PREPARED BY:	<u>Doug Mossey</u>	DATE:	<u>April 14, 2023</u>
POSITION:	<u>Manager of Transportation & Drainage</u>	DEPARTMENT:	<u>Engineering</u>

1. DEFINITION OF ISSUE:

The union representing transit workers across the Fraser Valley, CUPE Local 561, has been on strike since March 20 as part of a labour dispute with First Transit Canada, who is the contract operator hired by BC Transit to deliver transit services to the Fraser Valley. This dispute is between CUPE Local 561 and their employer, First Transit. These service disruptions included full service withdrawal, including all HandyDART services in Chilliwack which are not considered essential services.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 BC Transit is the Provincial Crown Agency responsible for the delivery of transit services outside of Metro Vancouver. To deliver these services, BC Transit contracts the services of private operating companies who manage and hire their own workforces.
- 2.2 First Transit is contracted by BC Transit to operate the bus services in Abbotsford, Mission, Chilliwack, Agassiz-Harrison, Hope, as well as the Fraser Valley Express (#66). BC Transit awarded a new nine year contract to First Transit commencing on June 1, 2020.
- 2.3 CUPE Local 561, which represents transit workers across the Fraser Valley, with transit centers in Abbotsford and Chilliwack, issued 72-hour strike notice in late January and has been in a legal strike position as of February 2, 2023.
- 2.4 The union started job action by refusing to collect transit fares starting in February and have also implemented two separate job disruptions, one on February 27 & 28 and a second on March 9, 10 & 11 in support of their members. These service disruptions included full service withdrawal, excluding essential HandyDART services. Further job action proceeded on March 20, which included withdrawing all services indefinitely, except essential service through HandyDART. The Fraser Valley Express and non-essential HandyDART will not be operating during this service withdrawal
- 2.5 HandyDART essential services are limited to specific medical procedures, such as renal dialysis, cancer treatment, and multiple sclerosis appointments. None of these procedures are offered locally in Chilliwack, therefore all HandyDART services are not operating locally during the job action.

- 2.6 The BC Labour Relations Code provides the framework for labour relations and specifically protects the rights of employers and employees to conduct bargaining without interference. In order to avoid interfering or influencing the negotiations and ensuring compliance with the BC Labour Code, BC Transit and local municipalities have a long-standing rule of not commenting publicly on the status of ongoing labour negotiations until the agreement is completed, as well as refusing to meet with representatives of either the employer or employees while collective bargaining is underway.
- 2.7 The Minister of Labour, Honourable Harry Bains, has the ability to weigh-in and assist with mediation and arbitration, but has not acted as of yet.
- 2.8 The Whistler-Squamish transit labour dispute lasted 136 days and was only settled after the province assigned Minister Vince Ready to mediate.
- 2.9 The City will pursue a coordinated and co-signed letter with City of Abbotsford, the City of Mission and the FVRD to the Minister of Labour to help resolve the labour dispute.

3. RECOMMENDATION:

Recommendation that the report on the “Transit Strike Update” be received for information; and further, that Council direct Staff to join other municipalities in the Fraser Valley by co-signing a letter to the BC Minister of Labour, requesting the assigning of a mediator to help resolve the impasse affecting our bus transit service