

Victoria numbering system

The Beginning

BCER's Victoria division operated the first motor bus in the company's fleet in 1922, numbered one. Twenty-two coaches entered service through the end of World War II, and these were numbered V1-V22, the letter to differentiate the bus from the mainland "M" series. When the first Brill C36s arrived in 1946, they initially carried a 2 digit number in sequence with earlier coaches; in short order all Victoria buses were renumbered into the 600 series (the author assumes the full unit number was likely M6xx-- North Vancouver and New Westminster divisions received their own number series at same time).

Fleet growth and why Victoria number series begin with a zero

One quirk that has been a puzzlement to observers is why BCT number series on the mainland always begin with a one (i.e. 4701) whereas Victoria sequences traditionally start on the zero (i.e. 800) The following paragraphs attempt to explain why.

BCER Victoria's post war fleet grew rapidly as Streetcars were phased out and competing transit operators were bought out. Numbering of buses continued to be done sequentially, hence when 600 series was used, 700 was the next number. The last C36s arrived in 1950, and with deliveries of diesel coaches from GMC and CCF/Brill in the late 1950s, the numbering sequence extended to 745.

In 1963 newly formed BC Hydro began renewing the fleet with 35' GMC New Look diesels. Over 11 years 54 units were placed in service, numbered 746-799. In 1974 the first batch of 40' GMCs was delivered to Victoria; by absolute coincidence, the next available fleet number was 800. As new classes of equipment were acquired, beginning the numbering sequence on the zero became the convention observed for many years.

The 900 series began with the deployment of 12 TDH 5303s purchased second hand from Chicago South Suburban Safeways in 1975. These were numbered 900-911. In 1980, service was expanded to outlying areas formerly served by Vancouver Island Transit Ltd. The ex-VITL coaches became the base of the suburban fleet. The new Saanich Peninsula and Western Communities services required new sign sets; rather than redo signs in the whole fleet, a new numbering series was created for buses that had the new signs. The VITL buses were numbered 950-958; within a year 17 T6H 5308Ns were fitted with the new signs and renumbered from 813-834 for suburban duty as 959-975.

UPF numbers, the 8000 series, the 80s, anomalies, and exceptions

When BC Hydro assumed responsibility for BCER's transit operations in 1962, each garage was given its own unique number series. Victoria's coaches were "officially" renumbered into the 8000 series, the

last three digits being the former BCER number. However, the full four digit number was never displayed on the buses, and to this day the full unit number of pre-1991 coaches appears only on paper.

The Unified Provincial Fleet numbering system was developed in 1975, so that each vehicle in the possession of the province would have an unchanging unit number regardless of its numbering within a particular fleet. Normally only buses in small communities systems have displayed the UPF number in service. A few coaches have worked Victoria under their provincial numbers, however.

8705 and 8707 were actually 705 and 707 in the provincial fleet, but these ex-LA TDH 4801s had the 8xxx added to their numbers to distinguish them from Brill C36TCs which were still on the roster at the time. At least one other TDH 4801, #711, operated for a period without the fourth digit added.

A number of 1980 Orion Is were used for a few months on the fledgling suburban services prior to delivery of new T6H 5307Ns. The Orions carried their 67xx series numbers.

6229 was loaned from Naniamo for a time in 1987. In 1989 three of Victoria's original batch of New Looks returned for temporary duty after many years in small system assignments. These units retained their UPF numbers during their stay, to keep them distinct for assignment purposes--they were used strictly as trippers.

The next wave of fleet renewal came in 1989, as MCI Classics joined the fleet. These were numbered beginning at 920, while a batch of Orion IVs the following year became the second "600" series.

The Low Floors--#s in the 90s

The UPF numbers for the MCI Classics and Orion IVs were identical to the official 4 digit Victoria numbers; as usual, only the last three digits were displayed on the buses.

The first D40LFs arrived in late 1991 and were numbered 8001-8008. For the first time the whole 4 digit number was displayed on the coach; once again, this number was the UPF number as well. Units bound for Small Communities were numbered sequentially with Victoria units. This numbering system covers 1991-1996 deliveries.

In 1997 new D40LF deliveries for Victoria and Small Communities began to be numbered with the last two digits of the year of delivery becoming the first two digits of the unit number (i.e. 9701). Victoria did not receive any new coaches in 1997; in 1998, however, units were delivered with the first coach being numbered 9815. Why not 9801? Because Victoria garage personnel refer to ALL old and new buses by the last three digits of the number; therefore effort was made not to duplicate existing 800 (8800) series unit numbers.

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