



CITY OF RICHMOND

REPORT TO COMMITTEE

TO: Public Works and Transportation Committee **DATE:** March 15, 2001
FROM: Gordon Chan, P. Eng. **FILE:** 0154-03
Manager, Transportation
Jane Bird
Project Director, Richmond/Airport-Vancouver Rapid Transit Study
**RE: RICHMOND/AIRPORT-VANCOUVER RAPID TRANSIT STUDY (PHASE 2) –
PROGRESS REPORT**

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

1. That Council receive the attached report on the status of the Richmond/Airport-Vancouver Rapid Transit Study for information; and that staff continue to participate actively in the Project.
2. That staff and the Project Director provide further updates to Council on the work progress, including the conclusions and recommendations reached at the end of Phase 2 of the study.

Gordon Chan, P. Eng.
Manager, Transportation

Jane Bird
for Project Director
Richmond/Airport-Vancouver Rapid Transit Study

FOR ORIGINATING DIVISION USE ONLY
CONCURRENCE OF GENERAL MANAGER

STAFF REPORT

ORIGIN

At the regular Council meeting held on December 11, 2000, staff presented a report that outlined the progress to date on Phase 2 of the Richmond/Airport-Vancouver Rapid Transit Project. The primary objective of Phase 2 is to determine whether there is a need, and potential to fund, a rapid transit line in the corridor in the next 10 years. This report provides a second update of the Phase 2 progress to date and discusses the remaining work plan items for the balance of Phase 2.

ANALYSIS

1. Phase 2 Work Plan

The work plan for Phase 2, scheduled for completion at the end of March 2001, has three primary elements:

- an evaluation to compare the costs and benefits of building the line by 2010 versus a later date; communicating the conclusions of that analysis and consulting with decision makers, key stakeholders and the community;
- seeking public sector funding, in particular from the Federal Government; and
- exploring the potential for private sector involvement.

2. Completion of Multiple Account Evaluation (MAE)

As outlined in the December progress report, the evaluation to compare the costs and benefits of a rapid transit connection consists of a "multiple account evaluation" (MAE). The evaluation measures the merits of two rail transit development scenarios: rail transit with an in-service date of 2010 and rail transit with an in-service date of 2021. The costs and benefits of the 2010 and 2021 options will be weighed against a "base case" that includes a #98 B-line service and other bus services in the corridor, with realistic service improvements, over the same period.

Context of MAE Accounts

Rather than analysing all of the costs and benefits in a single "equation" and arriving at one composite "score," the MAE bundles like costs and benefits into separate "accounts." This multiple account approach is similar to the approach used by the Federal Transit Administration in the US to evaluate rapid transit projects. The Provincial government also uses this model to evaluate major capital projects.

For this Project, the accounts are:

- financial (fare revenue and capital and operating costs);
- transportation user (transit user, auto and truck driver implications and impacts on congestion and road infrastructure);
- urban development (land implications and the potential to reinforce desired land use patterns);
- economic (implications for the broader regional economy);
- environmental (implications for greenhouse gas emissions and local air pollutants); and
- social (impacts on affected communities, including construction impact, safety, privacy, and visual intrusion).

The separate accounts allow the agencies and the public to review the costs and benefits of the implementation scenarios from several perspectives. In addition, the approach recognizes that not all benefits and costs can be expressed in dollar terms.

Noting the broad range of expertise required to conduct this analysis, the Project Team retained a consulting team comprised of eight firms, led by IBI Group, to perform the evaluation.

Review of MAE Report

The Project Team and the consulting team began discussing the early MAE results with the Project Technical Committee (comprised of senior staff from each agency) in mid February, 2001. Over the past month, the Technical Committee has provided input and feedback on various issues including the assumptions used in modelling future ridership projections (employment and population projections, train travel time, bus improvements), cost assumptions and land use assumptions. On the basis of the Technical Committee's input, the consultants have continued to refine their analysis, and have conducted additional work to test the "sensitivity" of various assumptions. Sensitivity work involves redoing the analysis with different assumptions or data to see if the outcomes (in this case, the costs and benefits) change and by how much. For example, the ridership predictions are sensitive to the travel time of the train (generally, the faster the travel time, the greater the ridership). Based on input from the Technical Committee, the consulting team has examined various ways to improve the travel time of the train in the hypothetical examples used in the analysis:

- by grade separation, (which involves substantial capital costs);
- by "hard" signal pre-emption on cross-streets, which involves fewer capital costs and may impact cross-street traffic significantly; or
- by "conditional" signal pre-emption on more cross-streets, with implications for train control and traffic.

The consulting team then examined the impact of these changes in the assumptions on the costs and benefits of the various scenarios. The sensitivity work is almost complete and the Project Team expects that the full MAE report will be available by late March.

3. Communication / Consultation Program

The Project Team has developed a communication and public consultation program to share with the public the general results of the MAE. The public consultation plan has three primary objectives:

- communicate information to the public about the results of the analysis in order to raise awareness and increase the level of understanding regarding the Project and the issues;
- engage the public in the Project by seeking their input on the issues and findings; and
- assess the level of support for a rapid transit line connecting Richmond and the Airport to Vancouver, and determine where it ranks as a transportation priority in the region.

The communication and consultation program consists of the following elements.

Informational Postcard

The Project Team has developed a postcard that shows a map of the existing and proposed rapid transit routes in the Lower Mainland on one side and summarizes the purpose and stages of the current Rapid Transit Study on the reverse side. Readers are directed to the Project web site for further information and are encouraged to attend forthcoming public open houses and to complete the on-line survey on the web site. The Project Team has distributed these postcards at various meetings with interest groups and stakeholders.

Web Site

The Project has a web site at www.yourcity2010.com. The web site has a number of pages that provide information on the Project, its status and the participants. The headings and topics include:

- About Us – description of Project team, participants and contact information;
- Fast FAQs – answers to 16 questions including “What is the study?”; “Who decides and when?”; and “Why are we doing this now?”;
- What’s New – project status and media clips;
- Project – Project description, including background, timeline, goals, study question, and evaluation, plus Project reports; and
- On-Line Survey – currently under development, this page will solicit comments and opinions from the public on issues related to the project, such as the relative importance of the various accounts that comprise the MAE (i.e., financial, environmental, social, etc); respondents will be tracked by geographical location.

The web site is accessible in both English and Chinese and includes links to the web sites of participating agencies.

Quantitative/Qualitative Research

The Project Team has retained a research firm to conduct a two-stage research program. The first stage consisted of seven focus group discussions with residents and businesses in the Lower Mainland. The focus group sessions included two Richmond groups, with one conducted in English and one in Chinese. The second stage involves a telephone survey of residents and businesses in the Lower Mainland. The survey will provide statistically accurate results (unlike the on-line survey) to questions similar to those to be included in the on-line survey, such as whether this Project is a transportation priority and the relative importance of the various MAE accounts.

Public Open Houses

A total of five open houses will be held to present the results of the MAE analysis and gather public feedback. The tentative dates and locations of the events are:

- March 22, 2001 – Vancouver International Airport
- March 23, 2001 – Vancouver School Board (Broadway and Fir Street)
- March 27, 2001 – Pacific Centre Mall
- March 30, 2001 – Richmond Centre Mall
- March 31, 2001 – Aberdeen Mall

Project Team members will be in attendance at all five events and City Transportation staff will attend the open houses scheduled in Richmond. Members of the consulting team responsible for the MAE analysis will attend three of the five open houses (locations to be determined).

Presentations to Stakeholders

During March and early April 2001, the Project Team will be making presentations to a variety of stakeholders and interested parties including Chambers of Commerce, Vancouver Board of Trade, Richmond Asia Pacific Business Association, Better Environmentally Sound Transportation (BEST)/David Suzuki Foundation, and UBC and SFU transportation planning groups. As described below, the Project Team will continue to meet with the Richmond Rapid Transit Public Advisory Committee.

4. Richmond Rapid Transit Public Advisory Committee

At the second meeting of the Richmond Rapid Transit Public Advisory Committee on February 27, 2001, members of the Project Team provided an overview of the proposed communications plan and presented the initial results of the MAE analysis. Members of the advisory committee provided constructive feedback on how to make the technical results of the study accessible, engaging and relevant to the public. Suggestions included:

- making the language of the report more inviting and pertinent to individuals by personalizing some of the benefits and costs of the Project;
- phrasing the decision as sooner versus later rather than specifying years (i.e., 2010 versus 2021), as an in-service date of 2010 may appear too distant to some people; and
- noting the projected favourable estimates for the operating margin for the rapid transit line.

The next meeting of the advisory committee is scheduled for March 27, 2001, at which time the final results of the MAE analysis will be presented.

5. Private Sector Participation

TransLink has retained the services of Macquarie Bank of Australia to provide advice on the potential of a public-private-partnership (PPP) approach for two potential projects: a bridge to replace the Albion ferry and a Richmond/Airport-Vancouver rapid transit line. Macquarie Bank has extensive worldwide experience in transportation infrastructure financing, including the development of the Brisbane and Sydney airport rail links, both of which involved the private sector in the construction and operation of the systems. Macquarie Bank will be reviewing the results of the MAE and will be providing a final report to TransLink in April, 2001.

6. Public Sector Funding

The Project Team reports regularly to Transport Canada and Vancouver International Airport Authority, which are providing funding for Phase 2. Both agencies have expressed continued interest in the Project. In particular, they are supportive of the multi-stakeholder process, the cost/benefit methodology, and the early exploration of the potential to involve the private sector. The Project Team will be presenting the final results of the MAE to these agencies in early April, 2001. In addition, the Project Team understands that TransLink will be presenting the results of the work by Macquarie Bank to the agencies as well.

7. Conclusion of Phase 2

Following the public consultation program, the Project Team will provide a full report to the Steering Committee and to the participating agencies. The report will consist of the final MAE results, a review of the multi-stakeholder review process, the results of the public consultation program, and recommendations.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

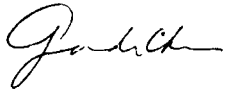
Transport Canada and the Vancouver International Airport are providing funding for this phase of the Project.

The City is providing office space and equipment for the Project team and provides staff representation on the Steering and Technical Committees. The City's graphics department provided design assistance with the Informational Postcard. The City receives credit for the contribution of office space and staff resources towards its share of the total funding for the Project.

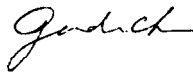
CONCLUSION

The work plan for Phase 2 of the Richmond/Airport-Vancouver Rapid Transit Project is nearing completion. The objectives of this Phase are to determine whether there is a need to build rapid transit in this corridor in the next 10 years, to explore the merits of involving the private sector and to assess the potential for public sector funding. The final Multiple Account Evaluation report will be complete by late March 2001. The Project Team will be presenting the results at a series of public open houses to be held during the last two weeks of March 2001. The Project Team will also obtain input from the public through a quantitative survey, on-line surveys on the Project's web site and presentations to various interested parties and stakeholders. The Project Team will also continue to work with TransLink to explore the potential to involve the private sector. The Project Team will provide its final report to participating agencies in early April 2001.

Staff are supportive of the progress to date of the Richmond/Airport-Vancouver Rapid Transit Study and recommend continued active staff participation on the study Steering Committee and Technical Committee. Further reports will be presented to advise Council on the progress of the study and to seek input and direction.



Gordon Chan, P. Eng.
Manager, Transportation



Jane Bird
Project Director
Richmond/Airport-Vancouver Rapid Transit Study