

**Ashton, Fran**

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**From:** Donald Malcolm Johnston [dmjohnston@imag.net]  
**Sent:** May 10, 2002 7:32 AM  
**To:** Ashton, Fran  
**Subject:** Re: Transportation

Ms. Ashton:

The following is the text of my proposed presentation. Question: Is an overhead projector available?

Malcolm Johnston

**Light Rail Committee**

Box 105,

Delta, B.C. V4K 3N5

Canada

Phone 604-889-4484

Fax 604-943-5314

Email dmjohnston@imag.net

May 13, 2002

# Transit in Richmond: From Second Prize to Booby Prize

A presentation to Richmond Council

The coming of the 98B RapidBus to Richmond signified the victory of the pro-SkyTrain lobby over *light-rail*. RapidBus was supposed to give a service on par with Light Rail Transit; if this were so Richmond would be the only city in the Western world where a bus service equaled that of LRT! RapidBus was not a better *mouse-trap* and the world has not come running to Richmond's door to view the miracle. TransLink's much touted *RapidBus* has not been a

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runaway success and is viewed by transit experts residing outside of BC, as merely an express-bus with a fancy name, operating on overly complicated bus-only lanes. The real reason that RapidBus was implemented, the politically astute *creme de la creme*, who reside on or near the former BC Electric *interurban* route on Vancouver's West side, the Arbutus Corridor, **did not want a tram operating on the former rail route.** The political power of Vancouver's *creme de la creme* is such, that not only do they control regional planning, they may even control the provincial government! While Richmond got *second prize* with RapidBus; Richmond may get the *booby prize* with the proposed SkyTrain subway, running from Vancouver, South to Richmond (?) and the airport, instead of LRT!

But why is modern LRT so important?

Affordable LRT is part of modern public transport philosophy or put another way, ignorance of LRT is ignorance of modern public transport philosophy because the two are so intertwined. This becomes more understandable when one considers that since SkyTrain was first marketed in the late 1970's, only six of the proprietary mini-metro systems sold, while during the same period over 70 new LRT lines have been built and more than 70 more light rail systems are under construction, or in advanced stages of planning. The winning combination of affordable construction and operation costs, flexibility of service and the proven ability of attracting the motorist from the car has made light rail the first choice of transit planners around the world. The inability of bus only transit solutions to effectively alleviate congestion is lost on our local crop of transit planners, as they continually plan for more costly yet ineffective transit solutions, including *RapidBus* and *mini-metro*. The *Peter Principle* (where people rise to their own level of incompetence) reigns supreme throughout TransLink and now it seems to have taken on a more malignant form in the City of Vancouver.

The city of Vancouver, or more exactly, Vancouver councilor, GVRD Chair, and TransLink member and former TransLink Chair, George Puil and mayor in waiting, Jennifer Clarke who lives near the Arbutus Corridor, are championing a \$2 billion plus SkyTrain subway to the airport. The foundation was laid when Puil signed the TransLink agreement, when the provincial NDP, desperate to get local politicians on side with SkyTrain, agreed to **pay 2/3 of only SkyTrain construction West of Commercial Drive in Vancouver!** One is certain, that deal ends at the Fraser River. If municipal politicians in Richmond don't *wake up and smell the coffee*, Puil, the *creme de la creme*, and the provincial Liberals will approve a SkyTrain subway to the airport, with only one station, possibly at Bridge Point, in Richmond. With costs exceeding \$150 million per km. to build, subways are planned very conservatively with the least possible distance between terminuses and a minimum of stations.

If this prediction proves correct, then a \$2 billion mini-metro to the airport, will again condemn Richmond to an expensive transit solution that will only benefit Vancouver's politicians egos and not the transit user! And why shouldn't it happen, as with the Millennium Line, SkyTrain subway planning is being done by stealth and secrecy, everyone involved is afraid of public scrutiny and debate! **The fix is in!**

Please consider this: Just 4 km. of subway construction (over \$600 million) could fund a LRT

link from downtown Vancouver to Steveston. For the cost of the proposed Vancouver - airport SkyTrain subway, one could fund 4 or 5 light rail lines, the makings of a successful light rail network in the GVRD!

#### Addendum

Despite massive investment in busways, ultimately costing more to build than was projected building with LRT, Ottawa's busways have seen a 15.7% decline in ridership from 1983 to 1997! (Bus or Light Rail: Making the right choice, Prof. Carmen Hass-Clau, Prof. Public Transport Systems, University of Wuppertal)

Ottawa's transit authority is now investing in diesel LRT operating on existing freight lines. One route now in operation.

Seattle's transit planners underestimated the cost of subway construction by over 50%!

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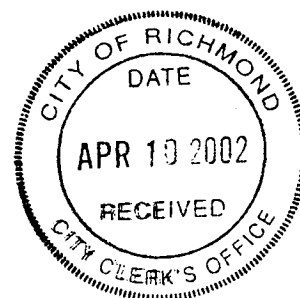
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Mayor and council, transportation  
and/or transit committees.

From:

The Light Rail Committee.

Total 5 pages



The Light Rail Committee  
Box 105, Delta B.C., V4K 3N5  
889-4484 E-mail dmjohnston@imag.net

# News Release

April 9 , 2002

## Light Rail Committee

Box 105,  
Delta, B.C. V4K 3N5  
Canada

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The following is the text of my presentation to be given to Vancouver Council on Tuesday April 9, 2002. It is important to remember that while in a time of severe economic difficulty in British Columbia, where schools, hospitals, courthouses, and other public works are being closed for lack of funding, the City of Vancouver is planning for a \$2 billion subway strictly to not offend the residents on Vancouver's influential West side! Not only does subway construction defy modern public transportation philosophy, it defies the rational for building a subway in the first place: There isn't the ridership on the route to justify subway construction!

The Light Rail Committee would like to ask this question: *What schools hospitals, courthouses and other public works must be closed by the provincial Liberals, which by the TransLink agreement must pay 2/3rds of only SkyTrain construction West of Commercial Drive to accommodate Vancouver's grand subway plans?*

Malcolm Johnston  
Light Rail Committee

A presentation to Vancouver Council  
The City of Vancouver's Transportation Strategy  
**Welcome to the 1950's - Vancouver's  
New Transportation Strategy**

The Light Rail Committee deplores the dated and inept transit planning that continues the downward spiral of public transport in greater Vancouver. The

*Vancouver Transportation Strategy* continues a long legacy of 'metro' planning, based on the *hocus-pocus* theories of the SkyTrain lobby, rather than established transportation philosophy and operation. The result: a dated regional transportation system that is obsessed with obsolete and hugely expensive SkyTrain, that is hoped one day to be the *magic bullet* to cure our transportation woes. If history proves correct, Skytrain may deter ridership rather than attract it!

### The Downtown Streetcar

Afraid to call it Light Rail, proposed downtown streetcar planning is so amateurish, that it must be a ruse to fool the *trolley-jolly* types, in hope they will not meddle with the proposed expensive subway planning. It's all so Monty Python-ish, "there's your streetcar, now play with it!" Until there is an LRT network in place, a downtown streetcar, that sort of goes here and sort of goes there, will be nothing but an over hyped tourist tram and not a serious transportation mode.

### Hybrid LRT

This term, referring to LRT "*which has priority at intersections*", only illustrates how out of touch planners are, as light rail has used signal priority for over 40 years! One questions if any real research about modern LRT was ever done!

### Subways

The first question **real** transit experts ask when a subway is proposed is; "*what's the ridership?*" If ridership isn't at least 300,000 to 400,000 passengers per day, then there no justification for investment in an expensive subway. Skytrain was conceived to be elevated, as it cost about one half per km. to build than a subway, yet it was a marketing failure and despite several name changes only six have been sold; all by private deals, done in secret, without public scrutiny or pre-tender.

The reason for SkyTrain's failure is that elevated or underground transit systems do not attract much new patronage. This phenomenon was first noticed in Europe where cities abandoned their tramways (LRT) in favor of subways: The result: overall ridership on the public transit systems, with

newly built subways, dropped! This phenomenon didn't happen with cities which retained their surface tramways. This and the economics of modern LRT has led many major cities with extensive subway or metro systems, including Paris, London, and Montreal, to plan for and build new LRT lines.

### A comparison with Calgary's LRT

The SkyTrain lobby always avoid comparisons with Calgary's LRT, because it cost much less to build and carries more passengers daily! The total cost of Calgary's *C-Train*, not including debt servicing charges, is \$548 million and it carries over 174,000 passengers daily. The total cost of the *Expo Line*, not including debt servicing charges, exceeds \$1.5 billion, yet carries only about 110,000 passengers daily. Calgary counts boardings on their LRT three times a year while TransLink counts loadings at key station, thus TransLink's ridership counts, unlike Calgary, are guesstimates.

Calgary's LRT has also proven cheaper to operate. The 1990 *C-Train* operating costs were \$15.3 million, while it carried 127,000 passengers daily. The operating budget for SkyTrain in 1989 was \$27.6 million, while it carried only 90,000 passengers daily! Calgary's LRT cost \$12.3 million cheaper to operate than Skytrain, while carrying 37,000 more passengers daily and helps to explain why, since 1980, new LRT systems have out sold SkyTrain by over 25 to 1!

### The Vancouver Transportation Strategy

The strategic plan continues a 22 year history of anti-LRT and pro-SkyTrain planning, which is not based on fact or merit, but on the nonsense theories of the SkyTrain lobby, including the Board of Trade, B.C.A.A., TransLink, and the province. The authors of the '*strategy*' didn't do much new research but relied on the discredited 1992 N. D. Lea Broadway-Lougheed Rapid Transit Study, which relied on deliberate misinformation and economies of the truth about modern LRT to support a SkyTrain subway solution. Independent research would have found LRT:

- Climbing 10% grades in Sheffield, England.
- Traveling at 100 kph in Karlsruhe, Germany.
- Carrying over 25,000 persons per hour per direction in Tuen Mun, Hong Kong.

- Carried 695,000 passengers in three days in San Diego, USA.
- Travels at 1 min. headways in Karlsruhe and 30 sec. headways in Basel Switz.
- Annual drivers wages in Calgary is \$2.8 million.
- Operate on-street in over 400 cities around the world without disrupting traffic.
- Preserve neighborhoods.
- Proven to attract the motorist from the car.

The debate between LRT and SkyTrain is not one of technology; SkyTrain lost that battle over 15 years ago when no one wanted to buy ALRT. The debate is one of mode: LRT or Metro and we do not have the ridership on any transit route that can economically support a hugely expensive subway now or in the near future. We can ill afford to subsidize further metro construction. Do you want hospitals, schools, courthouses or a SkyTrain subway, you can only afford one or the other; with LRT you can afford both!

#### Addendum

As there is much confusion in defining Light Rail and Metro, The European Conference of Ministers of Transportation Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development offer the latest definitions.

#### LRT

*"A rail-borne form of transportation which can be divided in stages from modern tramway to a rapid transit system operating its own rights-of-way, underground, at ground level, or elevated. Each stage of development can be the final stage, but it should also permit development to the next higher stage."*

#### Metro

*"Transit service using rail cars with movable capability, driven by electric power usually drawn from a third rail, configured for passenger traffic and usually operated on exclusive rights-of-ways, service generally utilizes longer trains and station spacing than light rail."*

Sources: Bus or Light Rail: Making the Right Choice; B.C. Transit; B.C. Transit Broadway - Lougheed & Richmond - Vancouver Corridor; Calgary Transit; Jane's Urban Transportation Systems; Light Rail Review: Volumes 1-8; Modern Railways; Tramways & Urban Transit