City of Richmond

Report to Committee

To PW & T - Aug 20, 2003

To:	Public Works and Transportation Committee	**Date:**	July 30, 2003
From:	Gordon Chan, P. Eng. Director, Transportation	**File:**	6480-03-02
Re:	**DRAFT TRANSLINK THREE-YEAR TRANSIT PROGRAM PLAN (2004-2006)**		

Staff Recommendation

1. That Council endorse the submission of the list of prioritized transit service improvements in Richmond, as described in the attached report, to TransLink for consideration in the development of its draft Three-Year Transit Program Plan for 2004-2006.

2. That staff be directed to report back on the evaluation by TransLink of Richmond's submission of transit service improvements for inclusion in the Three-Year Transit Program Plan and the development of the final Three-Year Transit Program Plan for 2004-2006.

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Director, Transportation
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CONCURRENCE OF GENERAL MANAGER

Staff Report

Origin

In July 2002, the TransLink Board approved a 3-Year Transportation and Financial Plan that included specific transit improvements for implementation between 2002 and 2004. TransLink is now updating and extending the Three-Year Plan to address requirements in the period between 2004 and 2006, including bus, SeaBus, SkyTrain and West Coast Express service and facilities improvements. As part of this process, TransLink has requested each member municipality review a proposed list of transit service improvements for 2004-2006 and submit a prioritized list of candidate projects to facilitate development of a new Three-Year Transit Program Plan for 2004-2006. The Plan is intended to reflect a funding strategy that allows a modest expansion of transit service similar to that of the current Three-Year Transportation Plan.

This report presents, for Council's endorsement, the City's submission of prioritized local and regional transit service improvements for 2004-2006 to be considered for inclusion in TransLink's Three-Year Transit Program Plan (2004-2006).

Analysis

1. Draft 2004-2006 Transit Program Plan – Bus Service Components

The new Three Year Plan (2004-2006) is being developed concurrently within the overall context of TransLink's new Strategic Transportation Plan (STP) that will identify improvements to the region's transportation system over the next ten years. TransLink staff expect to submit the Three-Year Plan and the STP to their Board for approval in early 2004. As part of the STP development, TransLink has prepared a draft 10-Year Bus Outlook. The Bus Outlook identifies five key market priorities for bus service improvements over the next decade as follows:

- *Metropolitan Vancouver Core* – the downtown peninsula and central Broadway areas have the highest rates of transit usage and relatively low auto ownership and will be targeted for further bus service improvements to maximize transit's market share.
- *Core Bus Riders* – this market comprises those riders who do not have access to a vehicle either by circumstance or choice and makes up approximately one-half of existing bus riders. The market can be expanded by providing a basic, affordable and cost-effective network of bus routes that offers mobility and accessibility during the core daytime hours of the day.
- *High School and Post-Secondary Students* – this market, which already has the highest rate of transit usage in terms of weekly transit trips per capita, has significant potential for further growth through the introduction of improved bus services to educational institutions and the introduction of more U-Pass programs.
- *Emerging Suburban Centres* – suburban town centres with higher density development are a growing market for transit services. Providing more direct and frequent bus service between suburban town centres and linking town centres with SkyTrain, SeaBus and West Coast Express would attract new bus service markets in the fastest growing areas of the region.
- *Tourists and Special Events* – tourists and special events that generate high volumes of trips represent an opportunity to better utilize bus capacity during off-peak periods, particularly in the more densely populated parts of the region and on the North Shore.

These market priorities will be recognized in identifying and evaluating potential transit service improvements for the next three years. Other criteria besides the above-noted market priorities that will be used to assist in identifying and evaluating potential transit service improvements for 2004 to 2006 include the following:

- *Project Identified in Existing Plan* – service improvements included in the existing Three-Year Plan, 2003 Coast Mountain Bus Company Service Plan, Area Transit Plans or municipal transportation plans will have the highest priority for implementation;
- *New Net Ridership* – estimated new net ridership generated by each improvement relative to the resources required to implement the project;
- *Operational Feasibility* – whether or not the service improvement can be accommodated within operational constraints and opportunities (e.g. whether the improvement is dependent on provision of transit priority measures or other supporting infrastructure); and
- *Transit Service Design Guidelines* – how well the project supports meeting the new Transit Service Design Guidelines, particularly with respect to overcrowding.

2. Draft 2004-2006 Transit Program Plan – Assumptions

The financial resources for service expansion and the available transit fleet in 2004-2006 will have a major impact on the scope and types of transit service improvements that can be introduced. The following key factors will guide the development of the Three-Year Plan:

- *Moderate Service Expansion* – while the new STP could provide for an increased rate of transit service expansion over the next decade using new funding sources, it is unlikely that substantial increases in funding would be available until 2006. It has therefore been assumed that overall bus service in 2004-2006 would continue to grow at a moderate rate similar to that of the current Three-Year Transportation Plan (i.e., average of approximately 80,000 to 100,000 additional annual bus and community shuttle service hours and, on average, 20 to 25 conventional buses added to service each year exclusive of community shuttle vehicles).
- *No Major Rail Transit or SeaBus Changes* – no additions to the existing rail transit network will be in service within the next three years, except for the opening of two new stations on the Millennium SkyTrain Line that were previously committed. Similarly, no new SeaBus vessels would be put in service before 2007.
- *No Expansion of Trolley Buses* – trolley bus capacity will not expand until 2007. The new trolley buses will be phased in to active service between 2005 and 2007, initially replacing the existing fleet that is over 20 years old. Thus, 2004-06 peak period service improvements on existing trolley routes and new trolley services will have to be provided by operating a mixture of trolley and diesel buses on some routes.
- *Compressed Natural Gas Buses* – TransLink currently has 50 40-foot CNG buses that were put into temporary storage due to their high costs of operation. Depending on their operating condition, it may be possible to refurbish (at a cost) some of these vehicles and reintroduce them to expand conventional bus services in 2004-2006. The Plan conservatively assumes that 25 vehicles would be available for service expansion pending modifications to these vehicles to improve reliability and reduce operating cost.
- *New Conventional Buses* – assuming the TransLink Board approves the new Three-Year Plan in early 2004 and a capital budget request for new buses by July 2004, new buses could be delivered in late 2005 or early 2006. The Plan assumes that these buses would be available for operation by Spring 2006.

3. Approved Improvements per the Richmond Area Transit Plan

Since the completion and approval of the Richmond Area Transit Plan (ATP) by Council and the TransLink Board in September 2000, implementation of the identified transit service improvements has been constrained by TransLink's lack of funding. The sections below identify the ATP improvements implemented to date or scheduled to be implemented by the end of 2003 and those improvements yet to be implemented.

3.1 Improvements Implemented (as of December 2003)

The table below lists the transit service improvements implemented. The majority of the Year 1 (2000) transit service improvements were implemented following the transit strike in August 2001. Since then, some Year 2 (2001) improvements will be implemented in December 2003.

Year of Implementation		Transit Service Improvement
ATP	Actual	
2000	Aug 2001	• New #98 B-Line service • Restructured and improved local services (increase frequency, combine routes to reduce transfers, extend service hours) • New high frequency Airport shuttle bus (#424) • Peak period express buses from West Richmond (#491 and #496) • Improved service to UBC (#480)
2000	Apr 2002	• Peak period express buses from West Richmond (#488 and #492)
2000-01	Dec 2003	• New peak period and all day express bus between Richmond City Centre and North Delta/Surrey (Newton)
2001	Dec 2003	• New Williams Road cross-town community shuttle service • Replacement of #424 standard bus with community shuttle bus

The above Richmond-related transit service improvements total approximately 83,500 and 16,600 additional annual service hours for standard and community shuttle buses respectively over the 2001-2003 period. The 2001 service improvements were implemented at a time when overall transit service was reduced by 160,000 annual service hours to address TransLink's funding shortfall following the failure to implement a vehicle levy as a new revenue source. The 2002 and 2003 service improvements represent approximately 17% and 22% respectively of the additional total annual service hours for the region.

3.2 Improvements Yet to be Implemented

The table below lists the remaining transit service improvements yet to be implemented, the majority of which are from the later years of the ATP.

ATP Year of Implementation	Transit Service Improvement
2001	• New peak period service between Richmond City Centre and Metrotown • Improved service to Crestwood Industrial Area via a community shuttle
2002	• New peak period express bus between the Airport, Richmond City Centre, Ladner and Tsawwassen Town Centre with a daytime service between Ladner Exchange and the City Centre • City Centre community shuttle service • Expand Richmond City Centre-Metrotown service to all day

ATP Year of Implementation	Transit Service Improvement
2003-04	• Improved connection between Richmond City Centre and South Surrey/White Rock • New Blundell Road cross-town community shuttle • New Bridgeport industrial area community shuttle

4. Prioritized List of Transit Service Improvements for 2004-2006

Staff have identified the following priorities for transit service improvements based on the outstanding projects in the Richmond ATP and other identified transit service needs.

4.1 Priorities for 2004

Staff propose the following transit service improvements for 2004 in descending order of priority:

Priority	Transit Service Improvements for 2004	Annual Bus Hours	
		Standard	Shuttle
1	New all-day service between Burnaby/Metrotown and Richmond City Centre with 20 minute peak period and 30 minute daytime frequencies	20,100	
2	Introduction of new City Centre community shuttle service		4,500
3	Introduction of reverse peak period service for the #488 and #492, which operate to downtown Vancouver via Oak Street	4,500	
4	Increase service on B-Line routes as needed to meet demand	3,500	
5	Increase service on routes serving UBC (including #480) as needed to meet demand from U-Pass Program to be implemented in Sept. 2003	18,000	
6	Introduce a new service between Airport Station and the Tsawwassen Ferry Terminal	1,000	
7	Provide peak hour service to Southeast Richmond Industrial Area (service hours to be determined as project is not part of the ATP)	TBD	
	Total	**47,100**	**4,500**

The priority of the transit service improvements generally reflects those projects that were deferred from 2003, respond to a need for better regional connections and provide more capacity on existing well-utilized routes. The City Centre community shuttle has been brought forward (switched with the Crestwood industrial area community shuttle) to help address concerns regarding traffic congestion along No. 3 Road.

Note that TransLink staff estimate that only approximately 20,000 additional service hours for standard buses will be available in 2004. Therefore, it is unlikely that all of the above listed projects will be implemented in 2004, particularly as the total number of standard bus service hours for all potential 2004 projects identified by TransLink is over 32,000. Staff are reasonably certain, however, that the Richmond-Metrotown service will be implemented as it was deferred from 2003 and therefore has a high priority with TransLink.

4.2 Priorities for 2005-2006

Staff propose the following transit service improvements for 2005-2006 in descending order of priority:

Priority	Transit Service Improvements for 2005-2006	Annual Bus Hours	
		Standard	Shuttle
1	Introduction of new Crestwood industrial area community shuttle	(7,000)	7,000
2	Introduction of a new Blundell Road community shuttle service between Seafair and the City Centre		3,000
3	New all-day express bus from White Rock City Centre to Richmond City Centre	21,000	
4	Introduction of a new Bridgeport community shuttle service that connects employment centres in the Bridgeport industrial area with the City Centre		3,000
5	New peak period service between Tsawwassen, Ladner, Richmond City Centre, and Airport Station with daytime and evening service between Ladner Exchange and Richmond City Centre	7,500	
6	Improve frequencies on the #98 B-Line as needed to meet demand	4,500	
7	Increase frequencies on the #410 if needed (the new #301 service between Richmond-Newton/Surrey may reduce the demand)	10,500	
8	Increase service on the #480 as needed to meet demand arising from the U-Pass Program	1,500	
9	Increase frequency of the Richmond-Newton/Surrey service to 15 minutes in the peak and 30 minutes during midday	18,600	
10	Increase frequency of the Richmond-Metrotown service to 15 minutes in the peak	3,000	
	Total	**59,600**	**13,000**

The priority of these transit improvements promotes the introduction of new local and regional services followed by enhancements to existing services, the majority of which would have already gained service improvements in 2004. Again, it is unlikely that all of the above projects will be implemented in 2005-06, as TransLink staff estimate that 60,000-100,000 annual service hours for both standard and shuttle buses will be available each year but the total number of service hours for all potential projects is nearly 500,000. The new Crestwood community shuttle service, however, has a high potential for implementation as it would replace an existing standard bus service with no additional service hours and free up the standard buses for deployment elsewhere.

5. Next Steps

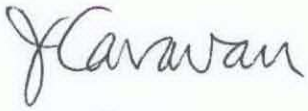
During September and October 2003, TransLink staff will evaluate the list of candidate projects using the criteria described in Section 1 and review the results with municipal staff. A draft Three-Year Transportation Plan including transit service components will be prepared in October 2003 and reviewed with municipal staff in November 2003. The Plan will then be finalized and presented for TransLink Board approval in December 2003.

Financial Impact

There is no financial impact at this time. New transit services that may require the provision of related infrastructure (e.g., bus stop landings) would be funded from the annual Transit Plan Infrastructure Program, which is subject to Council approval. Most capital projects related to transit passenger amenities (e.g., accessible bus stop installations) and other transit infrastructure improvements (e.g., minor road works to accommodate transit operations) are eligible for 50/50 cost-sharing between the City and TransLink.

Conclusion

TransLink is requesting submissions from member municipalities of prioritized lists of transit service improvements to facilitate development of a draft 2004-2006 Transit Program Plan. Staff are seeking Council endorsement of a prioritized list of local and regional transit improvements for submission to TransLink to be considered for inclusion in its draft 2004-2006 Transit Program Plan.



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