



City of Richmond

Report to Council

To: Richmond City Council
From: Councillor Rob Howard
Chair, Public Works & Transportation Committee
Date: November 20th, 2003
File: 0154-04
Re: **TRANSLINK 10-YEAR TRANSPORTATION OUTLOOK AND 3-YEAR (2005-2007) PLAN**

The Public Works & Transportation Committee, at its meeting held on Wednesday, November 19th, 2003, considered the attached report, and recommends as follows:

Committee Recommendation

- (1) *That the overall transportation objectives and initiatives of TransLink's 10-Year Outlook, including the specific transportation improvements and the financial strategy to fund those improvements identified in TransLink's 3-Year Plan for 2005-2007, (as described in the report dated November 5th, 2003, from the Director, Transportation), be endorsed.*
- (2) *That TransLink be requested to incorporate the following aspects into the 10-Year Outlook:*
 - (a) *recognition that the proposed Blundell Road/Highway 99 interchange and Blundell Road/Nelson Road corridor between Highway 99 and Westminster Highway is part of the Greater Vancouver Gateway Council's Major Commercial Transportation System (MCTS); and*
 - (b) *identification of all elements of the MCTS as candidate Major Road Capital Projects for implementation beyond 2007 to support goods movement and economic growth in the region.*
- (3) *That TransLink be requested to establish, as part of the 10-Year Outlook, a structured review and evaluation process to determine future Major Road Capital Projects that allows consideration of facilities outside of municipal jurisdictions in recognition of their importance to the regional road network, such as the Steveston Highway/Highway 99 Interchange Upgrade project.*
- (4) *That TransLink be requested to consider implementing the following initiatives as part of the 10-Year Outlook:*
 - (a) *the remaining transit service improvements identified in Richmond's Area Transit Plan by 2007 and the regular update of all Area Transit Plans to coincide with TransLink's three-year planning cycle;*
 - (b) *the testing of alternative fuels for transit vehicles include both conventional buses and community shuttles;*
 - (c) *expanded use of marine transportation for both passenger and goods movements to areas beyond the identified Burrard Inlet crossings;*

- (d) broadening the criteria for potential projects eligible for Major Road Network (MRN) Minor Capital Program funding to provide municipalities with greater flexibility in the allocation of funds to other capital program areas such as cycling and transit infrastructure;*
- (e) greater use of transportation demand management measures and encouragement of alternative transportation modes to mitigate the need for continued road capacity expansion for single occupant vehicles and to help Canada meet its Kyoto Accord targets of a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions;*
- (f) encourage increased travel by cycling via the initiation of promotional and educational programs, provision for cyclists on all new or upgraded TransLink facilities and establishment of a Major Capital Bicycle Program to support construction of regionally significant cycling infrastructure;*
- (g) (i) should a fare increase in April 2005 be approved, retention of the 1-zone cash fare at \$2.00 to encourage local travel by transit;*
(ii) carry out a review of zone structure as part of the implementation of the 10 Year Outlook strategy.
- (h) that any parking tax as a funding source be equitable across the region and that TransLink report back to Council on a public consultation plan to be conducted prior to any implementation of the measure;*
- (i) establishment of a sustainable long-term financial strategy to provide certainty as to the transportation improvements feasible beyond the end of the 3-Year Plan in 2007 and the end of the 10-Year Outlook in 2013.*
- (5) That TransLink be requested to report back to Council on the results of its public consultation activities for the 10-Year Outlook following their conclusion in December 2003.*
- (6) That the above recommendations be conveyed to TransLink Board of Directors for their consideration.*

Councillor Rob Howard, Chair
Public Works & Transportation Committee

Attach.

VARIANCE

Please note that staff recommended the following for clauses (g) and (h) of Recommendation No. 4:

- (j) should a fare increase in April 2005 be approved, retention of the 1-zone cash fare at \$2.00 to encourage local travel by transit;*
- (k) that any application of the proposed parking area/stall tax as a funding source be equitable across the region and that TransLink report back to Council on a public consultation plan to be conducted prior to any implementation of the measure;*

Staff Report

Origin

As TransLink's current 3-Year Transportation Plan expires at the end of 2004, agency staff have developed a *Discussion Paper*¹, released October 1, 2003, that identifies specific transportation improvements and the means of funding these improvements for the 2005-2007 period as well as a 10-Year Transportation Outlook that outlines a vision for the region's transportation system through to 2013. TransLink is now engaged in a public consultation process to gain feedback on the *Discussion Paper* and intends to present the Outlook vision and 3-year priorities to the GVTA Board at its December 2003 Board meeting. Should the direction of the 10-Year Outlook and 3-Year Plan be accepted, TransLink staff will prepare a specific and detailed 3-Year Transportation and Financing Plan for Board approval and formal adoption in Spring 2004.

This report provides staff comments on the *Discussion Paper* and recommends that TransLink consider revising some sections of and incorporating a number of additional elements into the 10-Year Outlook.

Analysis

The strategies and initiatives of the *Discussion Paper* focus on the following areas:

- increase transit ridership through service initiatives and system expansion;
- relieve road congestion by selective expansion of major road capacity, primarily to facilitate goods movement;
- maintain the safety and working order of the existing transportation system;
- improve transportation efficiency by providing priority for goods movement, the use of intelligent transportation systems (ITS) and the expanded use of existing assets; and
- manage demand on the transportation network via demand-side measures.

The following sections summarize the proposed strategies and projects within these areas and offer staff comments on and suggestions for enhancing these strategies.

1. Increase Transit Ridership through Service Initiatives

- *Expansion of U-Pass Program* – The existing U-Pass program, currently in place at UBC and SFU, would be expanded to “many” other public post-secondary educational institutions in the region by 2007. While expansion of the program will provide significant benefits for more students, who are often transit dependent, existing crowded conditions on routes serving UBC and SFU, such as the #480 from Richmond, need to be addressed before the program is expanded. Given that sufficient resources are available, Kwantlen University College should be included in the list of potential institutions.
- *Employer Bus Pass Program* – Efforts will be made to significantly increase the number of employers registered in the program by 2007. Consideration should be given to making the program rules more flexible for participants as the current requirements, such as a minimum

¹ TransLink, *Keeping Greater Vancouver Moving: Discussion Paper, A 10-Year Transportation Outlook & 3-Year Financial Strategy*, October 6, 2003.

commitment of 12 consecutive months and non-transferability of passes, discourage potential participants who are not daily transit users.

- TravelSmart Program – This specialized marketing program will encourage residents in specific neighbourhoods, including Richmond's City Centre area, to shift from automobile use to transit, cycling and walking. As this pilot program is part of TransLink's Urban Transportation Showcase application to Transport Canada, implementation of the program is awaiting a decision from that agency regarding the successful applicants.

2. Increase Transit Ridership through System Expansion

- Rapid Transit Expansion – By 2013, both the Richmond-Airport-Vancouver (RAV) line and the extension of the Millennium Line to Coquitlam City Centre (the Northeast Sector (NES) line) are anticipated to be completed as well as planning and design studies for the West Broadway-UBC line, which will connect with the Millennium Line at the new VCC station. The VCC station, and the extension of the Millennium Line to the station, will be completed in 2005 and SkyTrain peak period capacity will increase by 5% over the 2005-2007 period with the full deployment of the new Mark II cars. Bus-based rapid transit expansion in Surrey east and west of the existing SkyTrain terminus is proposed to be operational by 2013.

Extending the rapid transit network, including the construction of interconnecting links, is critical to the region's growth management strategy. In turn, senior government funding is equally critical to support the projects. TransLink should persist in efforts to secure a stable, long-term funding source from both the provincial and federal governments.

- Bus Service Expansion – Over the next 10 years, service expansion will be targeted at the metropolitan core, secondary and post-secondary school students, core bus riders who are transit dependent, and suburb-to-suburb travel. The fleet will grow from 1,200 vehicles in 2003 to 1,600 by 2013 with 130 new buses acquired during the 2005-2007 period. Transit operating centres in Vancouver and North Vancouver will be replaced and work will begin on a queue jumper lane northbound on Highway 99.

The remaining transit service improvements identified in Richmond's *Area Transit Plan* (ATP) should be implemented by 2007 and the ATP regularly updated so that local plans for future transit improvements, such as increased service on high-demand routes (e.g., #98 B-Line, #480) and new community shuttles to serve lower density areas, coincide with TransLink's three-year planning cycle. TransLink's proposal to test diesel-electric hybrid buses and investigate alternative fuels for transit and fleet vehicles should include both conventional buses and community shuttles.

- Marine Transportation Expansion – An expanded passenger-only ferry system is proposed via allowing private carriers to use Waterfront Station, implementing up to seven additional routes connecting to Vancouver and deploying a third SeaBus by 2009. The *Discussion Paper* identifies potential routes across Burrard Inlet only (e.g., between Vancouver and Deep Cove, Ambleside and Bowen Island). Consideration should be given to investigating other possible waterway routes in the region. Recent studies funded by the GVRD identified several potential services beyond Burrard Inlet, including Richmond-Ladner; TransLink should continue analysis of the feasibility of these routes.

- West Coast Express – Expansion plans include a new station in the Albion area of Maple Ridge in 2007 to capitalize on the new Fraser River Crossing, a new station in North Burnaby by 2013, expanded park and ride facilities, and a spare locomotive in 2006 to ensure reliable train service. The renegotiation of track usage fees in 2002 has generated savings to TransLink and made expansion of the service feasible. Cost recovery is expected to improve to 53% in 2003 from 30% in 1996-97, which is comparable to the 56% cost recovery rate in 2002 for the transit system overall.

3. Selective Road Capacity Expansion

- Major Capital Road Projects – The *Discussion Paper* proposes that TransLink fund 100% of approved projects within the \$230 million envelope available for the 2005-2007 period and accumulate a further \$210 million from 2008 to 2013, with these funds anticipated to leverage matching funding from senior governments.

The *Discussion Paper* states that the GVTA has been working with the Greater Vancouver Gateway Council (GVGC) to recognize roadways that support goods movements as outlined by GVGC's Major Commercial Transportation System (MCTS). As the GVGC recently identified the Blundell Road/Nelson Road corridor and a Blundell Road/Highway 99 Interchange as part of the MCTS, these links should be shown on the map of the MCTS in the *Discussion Paper* (page 27). Moreover, all elements of the MCTS should be included as candidate Major Road Capital Projects beyond 2007 to support improved goods movement and economic growth in the region.

The four road projects listed for 2005-2007 (i.e., Fraser River Crossing, North Fraser Perimeter Road, Fraser Highway Crossing, Dollarton Bridge Widening) are identified in TransLink's *Strategic Transportation Plan* (approved by the GVTA Board in April 2000) but there is no information as to how the candidate projects listed for 2008-2013 were selected and why they are deemed priorities. A structured review and evaluation process is required to identify candidate Major Capital Road Projects in the region for implementation beyond 2007 that allows consideration of facilities outside of municipal jurisdictions in recognition of their importance to the regional road network, such as the Steveston Highway/Highway 99 Interchange Upgrade project.

Past studies by TransLink and MoT² have recommended an upgrade of the Steveston Highway/Highway 99 Interchange and surrounding road network to address congestion and traffic deficiencies in the area. Staff are currently pursuing discussions with MoT regarding the completion of preliminary designs and the identification of an implementation strategy. Identification by TransLink of an upgraded Steveston Highway/Highway 99 Interchange as a separate initiative that will require senior government funding would greatly assist the timely implementation of a project that will enhance both passenger and goods movement.

- Minor Capital Road Improvements – TransLink proposes to allocate \$20 million annually through to 2013 for cost-sharing improvements to the MRN. Given that some municipalities may be unable to fully apply their allocated minor capital funds to MRN road improvement projects each year over the next 10 years, consideration should be given to broadening the

² BCTFA, MoT, TransLink, and City of Richmond, *South Richmond Sub-Area Transportation Study*, June 2001.

criteria for eligible projects to provide municipalities with more flexibility to apply the funds to other capital program areas such as cycling and transit infrastructure.

4. Maintain Existing Transportation Network

- Transit System – Over the next 10 years, 1,300 transit vehicles will need to be replaced. During the 2005-2007 period, 380 buses will be replaced (nearly 30% of the required replacements), including 245 trolley buses. The *Discussion Paper* also identifies investments to maintain SkyTrain, HandyDART, West Coast Express and SeaBus.
- Road Network – TransLink will allocate annual funding of \$12,000 per lane-km for the operation, maintenance and rehabilitation of the MRN as well as \$32.5 million over the 2005-2007 period for the rehabilitation and maintenance of the three bridges owned by TransLink (i.e., Knight Street Bridge, Patullo Bridge and Westham Island Bridge).

5. Improve Transportation Efficiency

- Priority for Goods Movement – In addition to providing expanded road capacity to support goods movement, the *Discussion Paper* proposes that TransLink could work with the province and municipalities to prioritize road space for trucks via a process that separates truck traffic from auto traffic at bridgeheads and on the MRN, where feasible and cost-effective, and allowing trucks to use HOV lanes in off-peak periods, provided the safety and performance of transit and other users is not compromised. The *Discussion Paper* also suggests that minimum service level standards be developed for major truck routes, which would trigger remedial actions if service falls below accepted levels. The identification of specific strategies to enhance goods movement is encouraging. Implementing the proposals will require a collective will and strong co-operation among all agencies.
- Intelligent Transportation Systems – The *Discussion Paper* identifies several transportation-related technologies that have the potential to improve the performance and efficiency of the regional network, such as traffic management systems to optimize signal timings and control traffic flows on arterials and, by 2009, the use of a Travel SmartCard that will comprise an integrated stored value card that allows users to ride transit and pay for tolls and parking. ITS applications are cost-effective tools to help address congestion and improve customer service. TransLink should be encouraged to seek sponsorship opportunities within the private sector to defray their costs (e.g., the Travel SmartCard could have a sponsor, similar to the existing VanCity Credit Union sponsorship of the U-Pass).

6. Manage Demand on the Transportation Network

- Demand-Side Measures – The use of funding sources (e.g., taxes and user fees) and road user priorities (e.g., transit and HOV lanes) are identified as potential transportation demand management (TDM) measures. Consideration should be given to other TDM measures, such as encouraging alternative modes (walking, cycling) and pay-as-you-go auto insurance, as well as the applicability of TDM measures (e.g., any new transportation facility, particularly if it comprises expanded road capacity for single occupant vehicles, should have an accompanying TDM package).
- Cycling Initiatives – Capital funding for cost-sharing the construction of cycling infrastructure with regional municipalities will increase from \$3 million in 2004 to \$6 million

in 2007. To further encourage cycling, TransLink should consider complementary measures such as improving cycling facilities on its own structures (e.g., TransLink-owned bridges), establishing a major capital program for cycling, similar to that for the roads program, to fund facilities of regional significance (e.g., water and highway crossings), education and promotion programs, and data collection to better understand travel patterns and the future needs of cyclists.

- *Air Quality Objectives* – Greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions for the transportation sector in Greater Vancouver need to be 35% lower than current trends by 2010 in order to meet Kyoto targets of a 6% reduction over 1990 levels. While the *Discussion Paper* estimates the benefits to the environment of the proposed strategies, it does not relate to what extent these benefits (i.e., reduction in kilograms of GHGs) will help Greater Vancouver achieve its Kyoto Accord targets. TransLink should consider framing the environmental benefits of the Outlook strategies in terms of the region's Kyoto Accord targets to more readily identify their impacts.

7. Financial Strategy

The *Discussion Paper* identifies a package of funding sources, primarily drawn from existing measures, to support the specific improvements proposed for 2005-2007 only. These revenue sources are discussed below.

- *Transit Fares* – A fare increase is proposed for April 2005 that will generate the equivalent of a 6% increase to all fare media types, which represents the cumulative effect of three years' inflation as fares were last increased in 2002. Over the remaining 10-year period, fares would only increase with inflation. While there may be room to raise 2- and 3-zone cash fares, the 1-zone cash fare should remain at \$2.00 as a higher fare for purely local travel (e.g., Steveston to Richmond Centre) may precipitate a reversion to greater vehicle use. The cost of monthly bus passes could also be increased, as these fare media were exempt from the 2002 fare increase based on public feedback received during TransLink's Fall 2001 consultation process on funding options.
- *Fuel Taxes* – No increase in provincial fuel taxes is proposed as TransLink's fuel tax allocation will increase by 0.5¢/litre to 12¢/litre in April 2005 (with no impact to consumers) per Provincial Government commitments made in Fall 2001. Future increases in provincial fuel taxes beyond 2007 are a feasible funding source as fuel taxes are a clear transportation-related revenue source. TransLink should also continue to lobby the Federal Government to return to the region a portion of the federal fuel taxes collected in the GVRD.
- *Property Taxes* – An increase of 2.5% to the average property tax bill (\$19.75 per \$100,000 of assessed value) is proposed based on the rationale that an effective transportation system benefits all residents and that some form of general taxation is an appropriate funding source. While property taxes do not reflect a "user pay" principle, the GVRD is one of the few urban areas in Canada that does not rely on property taxes as a significant source of transit funding.
- *Parking Taxes* – Parking sources would generate net additional revenues of \$25 million annually over the 2005-2007 period through a mix of an "ad valorem" tax increase (i.e., raising the tax rate on fee-paid parking) and implementing a new parking area/stall tax, which will require establishing a parking assessment roll and incurring on-going

administration costs. As most fee-paid parking is located in downtown Vancouver, the parking stall tax is potentially more equitable as TransLink can define which areas should be assessed and can vary the tax based on location, accessibility and other factors. The *Discussion Paper* does not define the structure and mix of the parking revenues; TransLink staff propose to make a recommendation by December 2003 based on feasibility and equity concerns. Any application of a parking stall tax must be equitable across the region and TransLink should undertake a public consultation process prior to its implementation to identify and discuss the potential business and economic impacts of the parking revenue sources, particularly for existing free parking lots.

- Long-Term Financial Strategy – The Discussion Paper identifies a financial strategy for 2005-2007 only; no detailed financing package for 2008-2013 is provided although it is acknowledged that at least one new revenue source, such as a sales tax or vehicle-related charge, will be required to fund the remaining elements of the 10-Year Outlook through to 2013. Given the current environment, the proposed incremental approach to funding the 10-Year Outlook over successive 3-year periods is understandable. However, this strategy may instil a perpetual short-term planning horizon that may hamper long-term planning efforts. A stable and sustainable long-term funding strategy that provides certainty as to the extent of feasible and affordable transportation improvements through to 2013 is essential.

8. Public Consultation / Communications Strategy

- Benefits and Costs of the Outlook Package – Benefits of the proposed transportation improvements are described for transit users (a minimum 10-minute peak period transit service being available within 400-m to 50% of all residents, which is an increase of nearly 400,000 residents from 1.06 million in 2003 to 1.40 million in 2013), road users (travel time savings due to road projects and greater transit use), the economy (construction and maintenance impacts as well as increased economic development and investment), the environment (reduced GHG emissions), and society (increased availability of transit to more residents and expansion of HandyDART and introduction of low-floor trolley buses for disabled users). Consideration should be given to ensuring that the benefits and costs are described in terms that are readily understandable to the public. For example, the increase in property taxes could be described as a dollar cost per \$100,000 of assessed value (rather than a specific dollar increase for the average household) and travel time savings could be presented for incremental time periods across the 10-year horizon.
- Public Consultation Activities – A comprehensive public consultation process has been initiated to gather comments on the 10-Year Outlook and 3-Year Plan. An interactive website model “*Build Your Transportation Future*,” was launched in August 2003 that records public input on regional transportation priorities and preferred funding options. Seven public meetings will be held throughout the region in October and November 2003 including one in Richmond on November 12, 2003 at the Richmond Cultural Centre from 7:00 pm to 9:00 pm. Presentations will be made to municipal councils, GVRD Committees and the GVRD/GVTA Council of Councils and consultation with various stakeholder groups, including employees, will occur through November 2003. The activities will culminate with the release of a public consultation report in December 2003 that will include the input received via all meetings and open houses, public opinion survey results and the results of the Outlook Roundtable, at which stakeholder groups will develop a consensus-based position on the *Discussion Paper*. It may be beneficial to request that TransLink report back to Council

on the results of these consultation activities in order to gain a greater understanding of public support for the proposed improvements.

Financial Impact

None to the City at this time. Any future capital improvements required to support the transportation improvements identified in the *Discussion Paper* will be presented for Council approval as part of the annual Capital Works Program process.

Conclusion

TransLink has released, and is seeking input on, a *Discussion Paper* that outlines a 10-year vision for the region's transportation system through to 2013 and identifies specific transportation improvements and the means of funding these improvements for the 2005-2007 period. The Outlook vision and 3-year priorities will be presented to the GVTA Board at its December 2003 Board meeting and, should they be accepted, TransLink will prepare a specific and detailed 3-Year Transportation and Financing Plan for Board approval and formal adoption in Spring 2004.

The *Discussion Paper* outlines a comprehensive range of transportation improvements that will significantly enhance passenger and goods movement in the region while generating positive economic, environmental and societal impacts. Staff recommend that the overall objectives and initiatives of the 10-Year Outlook and 3-Year Plan for 2005-2007 be endorsed and that TransLink be requested to revise sections of and incorporate additional aspects into the Outlook. In particular, the 10-Year Outlook should:

- recognize that the proposed Blundell Road/Highway 99 interchange and Blundell Road/Nelson Road corridor between Highway 99 and Westminster Highway is part of the Greater Vancouver Gateway Council's Major Commercial Transportation System (MCTS);
- identify that all elements of the MCTS will be considered as candidate Major Road Capital Projects for implementation beyond 2007 to support goods movement in the region; and
- establish a structured evaluation process to identify future Major Road Capital Projects that allows consideration of facilities outside of municipal jurisdictions, such as the Steveston Highway/Highway 99 Interchange.



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