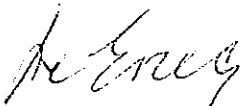


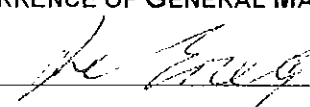
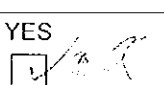
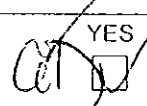


To: Planning Committee Date: March 7, 2008
 From: Joe Erceg, MCIP File:
 General Manager,
 Planning and Development
 Re: Comments From The Richmond Advisory Committee On The Environment (ACE) And
 The Richmond Agricultural Advisory Committee (AAC) Regarding Metro Vancouver's
 Discussion Paper For A New Regional Growth Management Strategy (GMS)

Staff Recommendation

That the report Richmond entitled: "Comments from the Richmond Advisory Committee on the Environment (ACE) and the Richmond Agricultural Committee (AAC) regarding Metro Vancouver's Discussion Paper for a New Regional Growth Management Strategy" be forwarded to Metro Vancouver staff for consideration in the preparation of a regional Growth Management Strategy.


 Joe Erceg, General Manager,
 Planning and Development

FOR ORIGINATING DEPARTMENT USE ONLY			
ROUTED TO:	CONCURRENCE	CONCURRENCE OF GENERAL MANAGER	
Policy Planning	Y <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/>		
REVIEWED BY TAG	YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>	REVIEWED BY CAO	YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>
			

Staff Report

Origin

The purpose of this report is to provide a summary of the comments and key messages provided by the Richmond Advisory Committee on the Environment (ACE) and Richmond Agricultural Advisory Committee (AAC) regarding their reviews of the Metro Vancouver (MV) booklet entitled "Choosing a Sustainable Future for Metro Vancouver: Options for Metro Vancouver's Growth Management Strategy".

Background Information

MV's Consultation Process On A New GMS

In November 2007, Metro Vancouver initiated a consultation process to obtain input on the issues and options for the new growth management strategy (GMS) to 2031. One of the consultation tools was a MV booklet entitled "Choosing a Sustainable Future for Metro Vancouver: Option for Metro Vancouver's Growth Management Strategy." The booklet does not propose a draft GMS, but rather invites municipalities and stakeholders to comment on what the GMS might contain. The booklet contains:

- An explanation of the MV regional planning background,
- An overview of the challenges facing the region over the next 25 years -- to 2031,
- A possible new GMS vision,
- 5 possible GMS goals,
- Generally, three strategies to achieve each goal. (There are 11 strategies.); and
- Generally, "three possible options to achieve each strategy. (There are 30 options).

MV staff will be using this input to prepare a draft regional "Growth Management Strategy". There will be additional consultation with municipalities and stakeholders regarding the draft GMS prior to finalization.

Richmond's Input on the Regional Growth Strategy Discussion Paper

On January 28, 2008, Council approved recommendations regarding the regional Growth Management Strategy" and forwarded them to the MV staff

ACE and AAC Input on the Regional Growth Strategy Discussion Paper

In making the January 28, 2008 recommendations, Council also resolved that:

"Staff advise Metro Vancouver that given the irregular schedule, comments from City advisory committees, namely the Advisory Committee on the Environment and the Agricultural Advisory Committee along with comments from City Council based on the advisory committee reviews, may follow once the advisory committees have had the opportunity to review and comment to Council, but not later than March 31, 2008."

Findings of Fact

Meetings with ACE and AAC

Meetings were held with ACE (February 20, 2008) and AAC (February 21, 2008) members at their regularly scheduled committee meetings to discuss the MV booklet. Copies of the booklet were sent to each member of both committees approximately a week in advance of the meetings. Copies of the January 16, 2008 staff report about the discussion paper, and a summary of Richmond's recommendations were also provided to members. The format for both meetings comprised a brief presentation by Terry Crowe, Manager of Policy Planning, on the MV regional planning background and the contents of the MV discussion paper.

For ACE, as six of thirteen members attended, there was no quorum. The ACE members in attendance were: Joanne Fisher, Saleh Haidar, Gordon Kibble, Jon Pillsbury, Eric Thorleifson, and Zhaoguo (William) Zie.

For AAC, as nine out of ten members attended, there was a quorum. The AAC members in attendance were: Bill Zylmans, Carol Southgate, Bruce May, Ken May, Todd May, Dave Sandhu, David Johnson, Jose Sarabia and Louis Zivot.

A. Advisory Committee of the Environment (ACE) Comments

General

Due to the time limitations, ACE members chose to provide some key messages and comments to Council rather than review all the strategies and options.

The issues that ACE think are most important are:

- A bolder and more far reaching vision statement than what is presented in the MV booklet is preferred.
- All the proposed GMS goals are important.
- Principles of sustainability need to be reflected in all aspects of the GMS;
- Protecting the environment, in particular, the protection and enhancement of critical habitat areas, riparian areas, and parkland,
- Compensating for green space which becomes developed, by adding more green space, so that the region's natural assets are not eroded over time and the region's residents will continue to have access to green space. Green space, especially "natural green" space, performs many other functions such as supporting biodiversity and providing habitat.
- Protecting farmland is important; and
- Cycling and walking as alternative transportation choices need to be reflected in the GMS, not just transit and the automobile sectors.

Proposed 2031 Region Growth Management Strategy Vision

ACE members felt that the proposed Vision statement is generally appropriate and worthy of support because of its focus on establishing a livable and sustainable region. However, members felt that the statement is relatively generic and needs to be bolder:

The Vision should be:

- More clear, inspirational and extend beyond Metro Vancouver's organizational responsibilities,
- Reflect Metro Vancouver's unique identity and concerns, and
- Provide a balance between environment, economy and society.

GMS to Emphasize Sustainability

ACE members felt that sustainability principles (economic, environmental and social) should be integrated into all GMS goals, strategies and options. Some ACE members felt that the social aspect of sustainability, though not dealt with in the discussion paper, should be referred to in the vision statement at the very minimum.

Preparing for and mitigating climate change impacts needs to be more strongly reflected in the GMS. It needs to be recognized that decisions on current actions need to consider the wider global effects over many generations and that there is a cause and effect to all actions. Such decisions need to address, for example, the impact of development on ecologically sensitive areas and species, and that such decisions needs to include ways to minimize negative impacts.

GMS Goals and Strategies

ACE members felt that the document lacks specific and clear information on how the implementation tools would work. The pros and cons of the different approaches to the various strategy options for each goal need to be provided if meaningful discussion on the options is to continue. Some members felt that in most cases, Option A (broad goals) and Option B (proposed guidelines), or a hybrid should be recommended. However, this observation was not discussed at length and there was no consensus about which approach was optimal.

There was discussion and general agreement by ACE members on the following:

- Provide achievable strategies and actions rather than adopting a solely visionary or a "guidance only" approach.
- Strategies should be as incentive-based as possible (e.g., buying green zone land).
- Concern was expressed that without penalties, municipalities will drag their feet on achieving goals, while others won't.
- Concern was expressed about whether Metro Vancouver has the capacity and resources for implementation of the GMS if more authority and responsibility is delegated them.
- The goals and strategies should be linked to the recent introduction of legislation from provincial and federal governments on greenhouse gas emissions targets.

Protect and Enhance the Region's Natural Assets

There was much discussion by ACE members about the importance of Goal 4 in the booklet:

ACE comments and messages are:

- Given that environment issues are so global, the goals and objectives are narrowly focussed. Goals and objectives need to chart a clear path to affect change.

- The GMS should recommend better ecological protection by providing more information on how the implementation tools would work and the pros and cons of different approaches.
- Municipalities and developers are not compensating for green space that is being taken out for development. If green space is lost, replace it with equally valuable green space habitat. The principle of compensation needs to be embedded in the GMS. Considerations such as what the original use of the land was before it was taken out for development need to be made.
- Replace lost green spaces. There should be no net loss of green space. Is newly created green space useful? Is it going to be an asset?

Protection of the Region's Farmlands

ACE members expressed concern that existing mechanisms to protect farmland are not strong enough, and from a Richmond perspective, there are too many loopholes to exploit under the present system. Ensure the long-term protection of farmland by creating clear region-wide designations. Region wide designations will help to prevent smaller holdings being frittered away over time by decision-making on a property-by-property basis.

- Create new designations for farmland such the designation used by FREMP ("red", "green" and "yellow" areas). These lands should be "no touch zones".
- Focus results on smaller properties being "frittered" away over time.
- Explore opportunities to include non-ALR farmland in the ALR, green zone or a new agricultural designation in the GMS.

A Sustainable Regional Transportation System

There was much discussion on the need for more alternative transportation choices for people in the region. ACE members felt that the options put forward to achieve a sustainable regional transportation system (goal five) do not place enough emphasis on providing transportation alternatives to the car. They felt that the current infrastructure is not conducive to walking and cycling, and the GMS needs to put more emphasis on providing better cycling networks and improved pedestrian environments. These two alternatives were missing in the booklet.

- The principle of providing for more alternatives forms of transportation needs to be embedded into the strategy along with the value of good urban design of the public realm.
- Coercing people into using public transit won't work unless it is greatly improved.
- Decrease the "transportation footprint" by considering more innovative ideas such as purchasing double decker busses as the City of Victoria did recently to add capacity
- Transportation choices – the Province's greenhouse gas reduction targets will have environmental, economic, and social implications for future regional decision-making. Appropriate plans for the pedestrian/cycle mode – while acknowledging that it is most appropriate for shorter trips, walking and cycling are two of the most sustainable forms of transportation.

Population Growth

ACE members discussed whether Richmond and other cities were growing too fast without commensurate plans for the provision of adequate amenities such as new parkland and green space and appropriate transportation improvements. Some members expressed concern about whether adequate land will be set aside for park and green space. Members discussed the need to create opportunities for connecting the population, particularly kids in dense compact communities, to the natural environment and if so, green space needs to be provided.

Additional Topics and Issues for Consideration in the GMS

Although ACE members felt that the issues identified in the MV booklet are priorities that should be addressed, they felt that the following issues should also be addressed somehow in the GMS:

- The Concept of “Complete Communities”: The complete community concept should be woven into the goal sections for a sustainable compact metropolitan structure or dealt with as a separate goal.
- Food Security: The ability of the population to have access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food, preferably food that is produced locally will be an increasingly important issue for regional sustainability over time.
- Promote and Adopt New Technologies: Explore and promote the use of new technologies and practices that will result in a less ecological footprint, higher efficiencies and less consumption.
- Promote Education and Awareness: Through public awareness campaigns, encourage the participation and innovation from residents and business owners about sustainable growth. Encourage and enforce efforts to recycle, re-use and reduce.
- Future Rise in Oil Prices: Members felt that the future rise in oil prices will have a significant impact on future development patterns and livability in the region.

B. Agricultural Advisory Committee (AAC) Comments

The AAC supports the recommendations to the MV Board approved by Council on January 28, 2008; but:

- Agricultural Land should be clearly identified in the 'Green Zone' in the Metro Vancouver Growth Management Strategy and in all accompanying maps and defined terms.
- The GMS needs to incorporate strong incentives to enhance agricultural viability and these incentives should be included in an effective implementation strategy.
- The GMS needs to recognize and account for the negative impacts that new transportation linkages may have through agricultural areas.
- Farmland should not be taken or negatively impacted by transportation initiatives, unless a direct benefit to agriculture is identified.
- The GMS should include statements identifying the importance of developing and implementing urban/rural edge planning guidelines to assist member municipalities in mitigating urban/rural conflicts in a flexible manner, specific to local conditions.

- That Richmond's Agricultural Viability Strategy should be included as a submission to the MV GMS for consideration as a local planning framework which contains recommendations on removing barriers to farming, limiting the negative impacts on agricultural land and enhancing the overall viability of farming.

Analysis

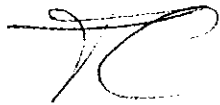
Staff have reviewed the comments from the Richmond ACE and AAC, and advise that their comments are consistent with Council's previous recommendations on the draft GMS goals and options which were approved on January 28, 2008.

Staff recommend that Council forward the ACE and AAC comments to Metro Vancouver staff.

Financial Impact – None.

Conclusion

On January 28, 2008, Council requested comments from the Richmond Advisory Committee on the Environment (ACE) and the Agricultural Advisory Committee (AAC) on the Regional Growth Strategy options. This report presents the findings.



June Christy, Senior Planner

JE:jc

