



Twinned tunnel part of Victoria's long-term plan

The provincial government's long-term road-building plans include a second mega-project on the scale of the \$3-billion Gateway Program, studies done for the Gateway plan show.

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The provincial government's long-term road-building plans include a second mega-project on the scale of the \$3-billion Gateway Program, studies done for the Gateway plan show.

The second project would include twinning the George Massey Tunnel under the south arm of the Fraser River between Richmond and Delta, expanding Highway 99 on both sides of the tunnel from four lanes to six, and building a new four-lane expressway to connect Highway 99 with the Trans-Canada Highway.

However, there are no immediate plans to build it.

The Gateway Program calls for the Port Mann Bridge over the Fraser to be twinned, widening of the Trans-Canada Highway on both sides of the bridge and building new truck routes on both shores of the river.

The longer-term plan -- dubbed "the H99 project" by British transportation consultants Steer Davies Gleave, who did the major studies for the Gateway plan -- "is still in the early stages of development for possible future long-term implementation," their report notes.

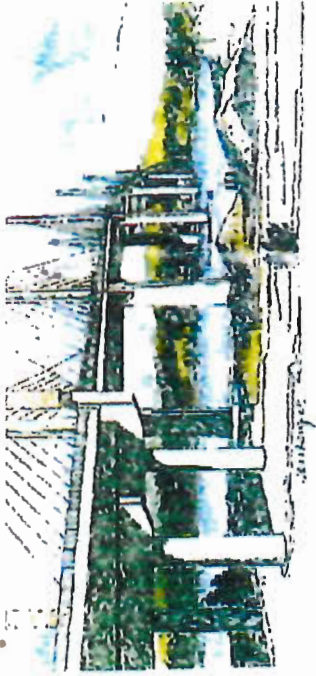
The report -- not yet public but obtained by The Vancouver Sun -- says the H99 project is similar to the Gateway plan "in that it assumes a widening of both the Fraser River crossing, in this case the new bore next to the existing George Massey (Deas) Tunnel, and widening of a length of the existing highway to both the north and south of the crossing."

The project is on the back burner in part because it would put pressure on traffic bottlenecks to the north, requiring expansion of the Oak Street and Knight Street bridges into Vancouver or a new bridge into Burnaby.

Gateway Program executive director Mike Proudfoot said Wednesday the Highway 99 plan is one of many proposals for the region.

"That would be part of our longer-term strategy," he said. "The Gateway Program corridors are the priority ones."

The Steer Davies Gleave report is one of several "companion documents" to the Gateway plan. It is the only major document not yet posted on the Gateway Program's website, Proudfoot said.



Golden Ears bridge

TransLink is building an \$800 million, six-lane toll bridge across the Fraser River between Maple Ridge-Pitt Meadows and Langley. The bridge will open in 2009, saving 20 to 30 minutes compared to a trip on Albion ferry — at a price approaching \$3 per crossing.



WARD PEKRIH/VANCOUVER SUN

Second Narrows expansion

District of North Vancouver has sought \$400 million in federal infrastructure funding towards upgrades on the jam-packed Ironworkers Memorial Bridge, seeking relief for transit users. Council envisioned a bridge widening project that would facilitate installation of priority lanes for buses.



IAN LUDLOW/VANCOUVER SUN FILES

Massey Tunnel improvements

Gateway council advocates \$700 million for Highway 99 corridor at Massey Tunnel crossing of Fraser River, a major choke point. Two extra lanes under river and extension of HOV lanes from King George Highway to Westminster Highway are sought.

nd...ffing worse, and the lack of freeway
pace seems like the obvious culprit.
For many of them, the Gateway program —
winning the Port Mann Bridge, widening the
Trans-Canada Highway, building a new truck
route along the south shore of the Fraser River
and picnicking together another truck route on the
river's north shore, complete with a new Pitt
River Bridge — is a gift from heaven.

Bob Wilds, for one, is pretty happy this week.
Wilds is the long-time director of the Greater
Vancouver Gateway Council, which represents
the ports and other major transportation indus-
tries.

For many years, the council has been pestering
governments for more infrastructure —
specially road, bridge and rail — to move the
goods that enter our ports to destinations all
over North America.

It is no longer a voice in the wilderness.
The provincial Liberal government has
embraced trade and transportation as the core
of its economic vision, the federal government
has jumped on board, and Wilds is pleased.

"The Gateway program that was just
announced is pretty much in line with the pro-
jects that we had identified," he said.

"Our list of projects included the RAV Line,
the Trans-Canada Highway, the Port Mann,
south and north Fraser perimeter roads, the Pitt
River Bridge, the Golden Ears Bridge. Those
are all key projects in our priority list that had
to be addressed for the goods-movement sector
and tourism."

There will be demands for more. The new
truck route south of the Fraser will have to
connect to Richmond and its fast-growing
industrial parks, and to Highway 99.

Once 99 is tied into the new truck route,
here will be pressure to expand or replace
another bottleneck: the Massey Tunnel. That
will encourage more traffic to and from Van-
couver and we'll need a bigger bridge at Oak
Street or Knight Street or both.

Wilds said we may also want to tie the high-
way network to "short sea-shipping" terminals,
so containers can be moved by barge from
deep-sea terminals to points along the Fraser
river, where they can be loaded on to trucks.
"We've got to think of this as multi-modal,"
he said. "It's not all road."

Things will change in the northwest corner
of Greater Vancouver too, where West Van-
couver has fought a losing battle against the
province's expansion of the northern portion
of Highway 99, the Sea to Sky Highway to
Whistler.

Former Vancouver councillor Gordon Price,
now a lecturer on urban planning, notes the
expanded corridor from West Van to Whistler

CN and CP announced a deal just a week ago
to handle train movement through the region
cooperatively, and that's one of the ways to
increase the volume of containers streaming
out of the ports.

But some new construction will be needed,
to keep the trains rolling and to aid road traf-
fic on either side of the tracks.

"There's additional sidings required if we are
to achieve the level of throughput ... to just
meet the tremendous growth to and from
Asia," Wilds said.

All along the rail line from Deltaport through
the Fraser Valley, there is pressure to build
overpasses and underpasses. North-south road
traffic stops dead when trains pass level cross-
ings, and the trains will be longer and more fre-
quent.

is about to experience a tourism and develop-
ment boom, generating more traffic — much
more, perhaps — through West Vancouver.

Much of it will head for the Lions Gate
Bridge and downtown Vancouver, which
means West Vancouverites will spend even
more time fighting for their share of the con-
gested road space on Taylor Way and Marine
Drive.

That may have implications for the three-
lane Lions Gate, which Vancouver planners
have deliberately used as a traffic management
tool to limit the number of vehicles entering
the downtown.

Look for another third-crossing debate to
break out before long.

Rail infrastructure also will need upgrading.

Overpass construction has begun at 2044
Street in Langley and there will be others.

"We are going to participate in a compre-
hensive study of that entire rail line out to
Deltaport from Mission," Wilds said, "that
going to look at all of the level-crossing issues
in

The Gateway Council now has much of what
it wanted, at least on paper.

"I think there is now general agreement
between ourselves, the regional transportation
authority, the province and the federal govern-
ment," Wilds said.

"The real question is funding, and getting the
public to understand the need to have this
done."

Review - News briefs July 15, 2004

Province to spend millions on seismic upgrade for the Massey Tunnel

Work will begin next month on ensuring the George Massey Tunnel doesn't collapse in the event of an earthquake.

Kenaidan Contracting has been awarded the \$22.2 million contract to improve the tunnel's safety, reinforcing the structure in order to avoid a collapse and reduce structural damage should the big one hit the West Coast. The project is expected to wrap up in March 2006.

"These improvements are designed to make the tunnel safer in the event of a major earthquake," Transportation Minister Kevin Falcon said.

The upgrading work will include the tunnel's pumping system, pipes and emergency power supply, which is designed to remove large volumes of water in the event of flooding inside the tunnel.

The scope of the work also includes Rice Mill Road Bridge, which will have its concrete surfaces repaired and cleaned, while deck joints will be retrofitted.

New lights will also be installed in the tunnel.

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Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure

BUS LANE WILL SPEED TRANSIT COMMUTE ALONG HIGHWAY 99

RICHMOND – Transportation and Infrastructure Minister Kevin Falcon, along with Richmond East MLA Linda Reid, officially broke ground today on the shoulder bus lane project along Highway 99 in Richmond, which will eventually carry transit commuters from White Rock to the Canada Line.

“This dedicated bus lane will move transit riders past rush-hour congestion on one of the busiest stretches of Highway 99 northbound,” said Falcon. “When we provide transit options like this that are quicker and more convenient than the single-occupant vehicle, we’ll get people out of their cars and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.”

“Transportation infrastructure projects like this bus-only lane will give commuters more reasons to take transit,” said Reid. “With this new bus lane, and the Canada Line’s estimated 100,000 riders daily, improved transit connections to and through Richmond will provide tremendous benefits to our local economy.”

The shoulder of Highway 99 northbound from Westminster Highway to Bridgeport Road, a distance of 2.8 km, will be widened to create a bus-only lane. Warning signals at on-ramps along the route will be automatically activated to provide priority for bus transit. The lane will be used by current northbound transit service, and will also be used by RapidBus BC service, once in operation, to carry commuters to the Canada Line’s Bridgeport Station.

“The new bus lane will offer superior travel time reliability for south of Fraser commuters connecting to the Canada Line and we appreciate the province’s initiative to move quickly on this project,” said Tom Prendergast, CEO of TransLink. “There’s no doubt that motorists will notice how well the bus-only lanes help our highway coaches avoid the heavy traffic line-ups and we expect this is going to entice quite a few more Vancouver-bound commuters onto transit.”

RapidBus BC is a key pillar of the Provincial Transit Plan. Commuters riding RapidBus BC will get high quality, point-to-point service with minimal stops along a number of high-profile corridors in the Lower Mainland, including Highway 99 in both directions between White Rock and Richmond.

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