

Schedule 1 to the Minutes of the
General Purposes Committee
meeting of Richmond City
Council held on Tuesday, July 4,
2017.

To: Mayor and Councillors

From: Councillor Harold Steves

Re: George Massey Tunnel FOI Requests

Port Vancouver stated this summer that they have "No plans to dredge the river" However, that's not what the Port said when they asked the BC Government to remove the Massey Tunnel in 2012.

According to e-mails released under FOI, on Dec 12, 2012 the Port's dredging specialist Dave Hart said the tunnel should be "15.5m below Geodetic Datum for 50 year life expectancy and 18.5m below for a 100 year life expectancy." Clearly the desire to dredge the river was a deciding factor in deciding to build a \$3.5 billion bridge instead of adding to the existing 11.5m deep tunnel.

On July 16, 2014, Port of Vancouver CEO Robin Silvester asked his staff "What is the air draft of the largest LNG vessel we could imagine in the river?" "61m air draft would allow the larger part of the world's LNG fleet, under 300m to 320m, to enter into the Fraser River" was the reply.

As a result both Metro Vancouver and Richmond Council asked for a full Federal Environmental Review on the cumulative effects on fish habitat and the environment if the Fraser River is dredged to 15.5 m for 34km from Sandheads to New Westminster and the river is widened for 320m long ships to turn around. How would the incursion of salt water up the river affect irrigation for agriculture? The Federal Government declined to hold a review.

Then the City of Richmond asked the BC Government for information on the cost of the original plan to add a two lane tube and public transit to the tunnel. The NDP announced such a plan back in 1975 and Social Credit Premier Bill Van der Zalm provided details of the plan in 1989 with a \$1 billion commitment to rapid transit. The Transit plan included LRT to Richmond with spurs to Steveston and Ladner. A Super-Bus was to run from Richmond to White Rock with a tube added to the tunnel.

In 2004, Premier Gordon Campbell upgraded the tunnel seismically at a cost of \$22 million. In 2006 Highways Minister Kevin Falcon said the tunnel was good for another 50 years and announced that a two lane tube would be added. The BC Gateway Council, which was advising the Provincial Government, said the cost would be \$500 million. In 2008 Kevin Falcon spent \$4.7 million upgrading the highway from Richmond to White Rock for Rapid-Bus.

The response Richmond received to the first FOI request was somewhat baffling: "As there was no plan to add another tunnel to the George Massey Tunnel, no records were located" The plan developed by Kevin Falcon, the Gateway Council, and previous governments did not exist.

On March 3, 2017 Richmond tried again with three FOI requests:

Request #1 - Drill Tests

Request #2 - Stability of proposed new bridge

Request #3 – Public Transit and GMTR project

On March 27, 2017 Richmond received a reply that the records would be withheld until May 7, 2017 under Section 20 of FOIPPIA which relates to, "Information that will be published or released within 60 days." As May 7 was on a weekend, City staff subsequently received full documentation on May 8, 2017. Now that the May 9th election is over it is appropriate to request that the new government find and investigate proposals previously announced publicly for tunnel expansion rather than a bridge. Further information and action is needed on the recent FOI requests.

Requests # 1 & #2: Most of the documents provided were technical data and engineering studies totalling over 1,300 pages. They confirmed information Richmond already knew, that solid ground or "gravel till" is down over 1,000 ft. Some designs for bridge piles and footings were provided but little other information or any additional cost to the construction of a bridge.

Request #3: One document was provided: "George Massey Tunnel Replacement Project – Potential for Increased Transit" The report compared an elevated Canada Line LRT down No. 3 Rd. to increased bus service through the GMT corridor. It did not consider ground level LRT that could use the existing Shell Road railway corridor. The report concluded, "high frequency/high capacity transit services cannot be provided in a cost effective manner." The report did not answer the question as to whether ground level or elevated LRT can be accommodated on the bridge. It would appear that based on this study the bridge is not designed to accommodate LRT of any kind.

As Port Vancouver now claims a new study indicates they no longer need to dredge the river and \$27 million has already been spent upgrading the tunnel and preparing for Rapid-Bus it is not too late to return to the original plan to add a two lane tube to the existing tunnel and include Rapid-Bus. Also a third lane could be added at the same time for Rapid Bus and future LRT. The original tunnel was built in two years.

Recommendation: Referral to staff to prepare a report to the new BC Government asking for a tunnel addition for the George Massey Tunnel.