



# Corporate Report

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## REGULAR COUNCIL

TO: **Mayor & Council** DATE: **October 23, 2007**  
FROM: **General Manager, Engineering** FILE: **0620-20 (SOFA)**  
SUBJECT: **Status Update on the South of Fraser Area Transit Plan (Phase 1 – Vision)**

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## RECOMMENDATIONS

The Engineering Department recommends that Council:

1. Receive this report for information.
2. Endorse the progress made on the development of the draft Vision so far subject to:
  - confirmation of a robust, costed and funded implementation strategy;
  - an accelerated timeframe for expanded rapid transit/SkyTrain;
  - revision of the planned timescales identified for transit improvements.

## INTENT

To update Council on the progress of the South of Fraser Area Transit Plan (SoFA TP) and report on the development of Phase 1 – The draft Vision.

## BACKGROUND

TransLink has been undertaking a major update of the South of Fraser Area Transit Plan. This update is intended to be extensive and visionary, taking both a short and long term view of how and where transit for the South of Fraser Area will develop and expand. City staff have reiterated support for the process and the inclusion of, for the first time, a long term Vision to guide all other areas of activity and service provision. There are 3 phases to the Plan development. Phase 1 involves creation of a long-range transit vision for the SoF region. Phase 2 is a detailed examination of the current transit network including passenger boardings and alighting by bus stop. This provides a basis upon which existing services can be assessed against future proposed changes. Phase 2 also includes a review of all facilities (exchanges, depots, etc.) Phase 3 will be the creation of a 5-year implementation plan representing early enhancements to the network. This

phase will also include a more detailed cost summary of the plan. In Phase 4, the final plan will be presented to the GVTA Board.

The addition to the Plan of a long term vision has brought with it a raised expectation for big improvements in the SoF region in conjunction with an increased role by the City in helping support transit through our own strategic planning and year-on-year activities and responsibilities.

## **Outline of Draft Plan**

### The Vision

The Area Transit Plan has a number of key elements including a review of investment priorities, a Transit Issues paper, plus implementation, fleet and facilities plans. A draft transit strategy or Vision for the rapid transit, high frequency and local bus networks has been developed. The SoFA TP does not identify community rail service on the Southern Rail Corridor as a significant component of transit services for the area nor does it provide comment on the extension of SkyTrain as a potential part of future transit provision in the SoFA region.

### Structure and Timing

This Vision has 3 time horizons: 2011, 2021 and 2031. The 2011 plan envisages a core network of high frequency transit routes (i.e., 15-minute frequency, 15 hours/day, 7 days/week), supplemented by potential other transit routes (i.e., 30-minute frequency, 12 hours/day, 5 days/week), as shown on Figure 1. On some routes (King George Highway, 104 Avenue, Fraser Highway), they represent the first step towards the upgrades to Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Lines by 2021. These routes would have a 5-minute frequency supported by extensive transit priority measures and sections of dedicated bus lane. In addition, the 15 and 30-minute bus route network would expand. By 2031, the potential for the BRT on King George Highway and 104 Avenue to be further progressively upgraded to light rail is identified, together with a BRT Line on Highway 1 between Langley and Coquitlam and further expansion of 15 and 30-minute frequency bus routes. Since the draft plan was made available, recent Provincial Government announcements have confirmed the introduction of BRT on Highway 1 sooner, in conjunction with widening of Highway 1 and twinning of Port Mann Bridge.

### Infrastructure, Facilities and Staffing

A costed five-year implementation plan supplemented by facilities and fleet plans will also be produced in latter stages of the Plan. These will give more detailed attention to issues such as the number of service expansion buses needed, the nature and location of local bus exchanges, bus maintenance depots and a more comprehensive review of park and ride.

### Costs and Funding

Preliminary higher order costs for the 2031 Vision show a capital investment of approximately \$1.3 billion consisting of \$226 million on 376 new fleet vehicles,

\$803 million on almost 60 km of new bus lanes and dedicated busways, and \$235 million on new and upgraded facilities including exchanges, transit depots, park and rides, transit priority measures and bus stop upgrades. Annual operating costs are estimated to be \$139 million a year. An estimated 1690 new operators, maintenance, supervisory and office staff will be required. LRT and SkyTrain are not included within these estimates. \$30 million has recently been identified for new vehicles and facilities in support of the introduction of BRT on Highway 1.

## **DISCUSSION**

### **Staff Comments**

In the report to Council of January 11, 2007, staff highlighted the sustained and incremental building of network and service improvements and provided feedback on the draft Vision seeking confirmation that it was based on robust analysis, was responsive to the public and stakeholder input provided and seeking assurances that there was a commitment to local services and broad network coverage. TransLink have refined the draft Vision and provided stakeholders an opportunity to comment and provide feedback. Staff have taken the opportunity to look in detail at the draft Vision and provided TransLink with a comprehensive response. This report summarizes some of the main staff comments on the draft Phase 1 of the Plan and preliminary feedback from TransLink. Dialogue will continue between the City and TransLink as the latter phases of the Plan are developed.

Comments and feedback have been made under 7 broad categories as follows:

#### **1. Land use, population and transit**

The importance of service level guidelines based on development densities within walking distance of the transit corridors, transit travel speeds and reliability to allow municipalities to plan appropriate form and density of sustainable development for the desired level of transit service is reiterated. TransLink have confirmed that Transit Service Guidelines for the Frequent Transit Network (FTN) will be incorporated into the final draft.

#### **2. Standard of services in SoFA TP compared with the rest of Metro Vancouver and how the Plan responds to redressing inequalities**

It is difficult to determine whether the SoFA TP is sufficiently responsive to changing demographics and employment and changing travel patterns. Is it only sustaining a pattern of “just enough” improvements? Does it represent a significant improvement over and above the transit service changes historically made? It is also unclear as to how the SoFA compares with other parts of the region. Four broad benchmarks can be used to help assess the “value” of the changes being proposed and how these equate between the SoF area and the rest of the TransLink service area. These are examined in more detail in Appendix 1 and cover.

**Service orientation:** Almost 80% of all trips that take place within Surrey, White Rock and Delta remain within the area. To service these trips, transit needs to have

broad coverage and strong, direct and frequent connections to local destinations including the Surrey town centres, Willowbrook, and the industrial areas of Port Kells and Campbell Heights.

**Service frequencies:** Currently, only 10 out of 33 routes serving Surrey and South of Fraser have a 15-minute or better service. Only a handful of routes have benefited from improved frequencies since 2007. With the success of the increased service frequencies in Fraser Heights in attracting higher ridership as an example and one that TransLink themselves have promoted, staff would hope to see increased frequencies on a broad spectrum of routes within the Plan, not just on the FTN.

**Service hours and number of buses:** The transit service hours per capita in the SoF area are significantly lower than in other areas; some 3 times less than the average for the region. For the 2005-2008 period, the SoF area has received approximately 28% of the total bus service expansion hours and 23% of the service expansion buses allocated for the greater Vancouver region bus service (52 of 223 buses). The 2008 Service Plan does not appear to show a significant change in the level of service hours and number of buses being made available to this area. This does not match the stated intent of achieving a 2.5% modal share increase within the next 4 years particularly when considering that 36% of the regional population growth is occurring within the SoF area.

### Bus Service Hours and Transit Modal Share

	Hours per Capita per day	Transit Modal Share (%)
Vancouver	2.42	20.1
Burnaby/New Westminster	2.40	14.9
North Shore	2.08	6.2
North East Sector	1.31	5.7
<b>Surrey/Delta/White Rock/Langleys</b> (not including services from Richmond depot)	<b>0.60</b>	<b>4.4</b>
Regional Average	1.76	10.3
South of Fraser Area Plan Target		11.5

**Network coverage and connectivity** – The Plan, by means of the 2011, 2021 and 2031 maps, focuses attention on discrete phases. They present what appears to be only a modest network of routes, with the basic framework of Frequent Bus Network (FBN) established in 2011. Between 2011 and 2031, there are no additions to the candidate or identified routes leaving significant areas of the City with no identified service and only one upgrade from candidate to identified route. The maps show upgrades of FBN routes to BRT/LRT but the same network density and route coverage is seen throughout the life of the Plan. The incompleteness of the ultimate east-west City road network is acknowledged in this respect.

A significant proportion of the proposed network has “candidate” status. If these routes are removed from the vision, there appears to be a concentration of effort, investment and enhancement on a relatively sparse network with an absence of certainty over the significant remainder. TransLink have indicated that an increased proportion of the service expansion buses will be allocated to the SoF area in future years. Details are awaited.

### **3. Facilities and Infrastructure**

A fundamental part of the delivery of the Plan is the investment in, and availability of, supporting facilities, including new and expanded exchanges at Guildford, Newton, 156 St./Highway 1, and Semiahmoo, maintenance and bus storage depots, as well as future maintenance and storage facilities in support of SkyTrain enhancements. The location and timing of facilities is not just important in terms of supporting expansion of services but for ensuring strategic network expansions and linkages can be readily accommodated. For example, any transit exchange at 156 Street/Highway 1 will become integral to the planned BRT on the Highway 1 corridor with Guildford Town Centre, therefore, expected to increase in importance.

The City is working with TransLink on a number of key sites and the commitment from both sides is critical to the success of the Plan.

Park and Ride is considered an important part of any strategy and TransLink have confirmed that this will be a component of the final Plan.

### **4. Commitment to all levels of Transit**

The Plan does not provide assurances on whether there will be more buses, higher frequencies, longer hours or more routes for the full spectrum of services provided. Although implicit in the Plan, improvements are not obvious. The Plan should clearly articulate commitment to all levels of service. Extensive improvements in the level of bus services are considered an essential and early first step for the introduction of higher-level services such as BRT, LRT and SkyTrain. Providing a good transportation alternative establishes ridership as demonstrated in Fraser Heights and on 64 Avenue in Cloverdale. With the current level of transit service in the SoF area, there is an insufficient level of transportation choice to significantly alter modal share and provide the pre-requisite ridership upon which higher level transit can be developed.

Although identified within the 2031 Vision network plan, the draft Plan does not explain the benefits and challenges of expanding SkyTrain. The City believes in the role of an expanded bus system as the basis for modal share change upon which higher level services can be incrementally developed, but equally, rail-based transit is seen as an important component of the Vision. The City’s Official Community Plan reflects the presence of a future SkyTrain and the City will continue to lobby for SkyTrain, street level LRT and community rail. Without this, there is a concern that the Plan will not be considered truly visionary. There is increasing attention being given to an expansion of the rail network within Metro Vancouver. TransLink and the City of Vancouver have recently approved funding for a study of

the creation of a rail link to UBC. A more detailed assessment of rapid transit within the City is planned for 2008 that will include an assessment of SkyTrain, and other rail transportation. It is considered that there should be an early start to this study, so that there is a concurrent and equitable consideration of rail expansion South of the Fraser with the UBC line.

## **5. Opportunities, constraints and deliverability**

The Plan could usefully show the increasing year on year operational costs, how these will be funded and when, in the life of the Plan, key facilities will be needed so that these can be clearly understood and highlighted, not just from a capital cost viewpoint, but from a planning perspective in terms of securing, designing and constructing facilities, procuring new vehicles and retaining staff. Improvements should be identified in TransLink's yearly, 5 year and 10 year plans and preliminary indications are that this will be undertaken by TransLink.

The modal share targets being presented within the Vision are welcomed. TransLink should undertake to evaluate the success of the Plan, with the inclusion of targets and performance indicators with an explanation of how these will be updated and reported during the life of the Plan. Again, TransLink has confirmed its intent to incorporate SoFA targets into region wide service standard monitoring and reporting systems.

## **6. Timing, staging and funding**

Delivery of the SoFA plan is dependent on a critical path of enhancements and these should also be identified so that there is understanding of the key milestones that must be achieved before being able to move forward.

Using Guildford and Newton as examples, the importance of these exchanges to the success of the Plan should be properly stated. The Plan should be explaining that the Guildford site is near or at capacity now and expansion will be required in the next 2 to 5 years in order to accommodate even modest increases in service. Newton should be identified as being operational at a defined stage within the life of the Plan. Any service design changes within the City Centre in support of the Transit Village Plan are dependent on the Guildford and Newton exchanges being available to accommodate relocated bus layover. The introduction of BRT on Highway 1 will increase the importance of Guildford as a connection with the rest of Surrey. To improve the Guildford facility, there will be a need to partner with the development community and there would be an expected capital cost to implement it.

Presenting the program of improvements in this way would assist with understanding the need for year on year improvements, priorities, the part they play in the delivery of the Plan, and any opportunities and constraints. It would also clearly focus attention on where the key planning, investment and partnerships would need to be.

## **7. Partnership with the City of Surrey in delivery of the Plan**

The municipalities have a supporting role in making the Plan succeed in areas of transit priority, parking policies, transit supportive land use densities and urban design, securing major transit facilities, corridor protection, bus stop infrastructure and advocating transit. The Plan provides an opportunity to demonstrate the need for joint thinking and partnerships by different agencies to make change. TransLink have stated that the Plan will properly articulate the partnerships needed to help ensure delivery of the Vision.

More comprehensive details of staff comments to TransLink and some of the initial responses received can be viewed in Appendix 1.

## **CONCLUSION**

More detailed planning, assessments of costs and priorities and further consultation with stakeholders are still to come within the process. The City is seeking a large expansion of transit in the SoF area so that it can become a real choice for travel. The City would want to provide support in making this happen.

Staff have welcomed the level of involvement provided to the City through the process. Surrey has taken full advantage of this and has been able to clearly articulate its aspirations for transit, and effect changes in the draft Plan. Appendix 1 provides further detail on this. The dialogue associated with the SoFA TP has been in addition to other initiatives also underway such as the Transit Village Plan, planning for exchanges at Guildford, Newton, Highway 1/156 Street and Semiahmoo as well as on detailed design issues associated with the protection of road right-of-way for future BRT/LRT. Partnership will continue with the establishment of service level guidelines to provide a clear framework for the City to plan future development in support of transit.

While we support a staged and incremental improvement in service with growing ridership, we are concerned with the planned timescales for these to be delivered. None of the higher level services are shown within the Vision until 2021; it does not include community rail, and SkyTrain is given only passing reference. To effect the modal shift and help meet provincial emission targets, the rate of service improvements in the SoFA TP needs to be significantly increased.

An assessment of rapid transit including SkyTrain, and other rail transportation should be commenced soon so that there is a concurrent and equitable consideration of rail expansion South of the Fraser with other studies in the region such as the UBC line. Although there are indications that the SoF region will see improvements in transit, staff continue to have doubts as to whether the Plan adequately addresses the current regional inequity in the services being provided.

There is a need for significant increases, year on year, in the number of buses (and drivers and support staff), more routes, more service hours, increased frequencies and improved facilities (exchanges, depots and park and ride). Based on recent allocation of service expansion within the Vancouver region, it would appear that there is not the necessary

commitment to the expansions needed to deliver the Plan's modal share increases for transit from 4.4% to 11.5 %.

The draft plan identifies higher order costings of almost \$1.3 billion but does not include any LRT or SkyTrain estimates. Although TransLink has stated that funding will become evident in the upcoming 30 Year TransLink strategy, there is no confirmation at this time of secure funding commitments within shorter term financial and implementation plans.

In general terms, the plan appears reasonable and appropriate although there remain concerns over the timing and rate of improvements. However, we have yet to see the densities necessary for different levels of transit. Until we can review that, we cannot fully endorse the transit service and routing plans.

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PB/brb

Appendix 1 - Detailed comments on the Plan made by Staff and initial TransLink response



## **Detailed comments on the Plan made by Staff and initial TransLink response**

### **1. Land use, population and transit**

Given the importance of land use densities and the successful provision of transit, staff have emphasized the need to include The Neighbourhood Concept Plans within the estimations for populations. These often represent higher densities than those contained within the OCP and staff have once again asked for confirmation that the NCPs have formed a component of the population estimates.

The plan describes at a broad level, the relationship between the nature of land use, population and employment and the ability to service this with transit. The draft Plan starts to describe the density levels needed to support transit service identifying, for example, a density of 30-40 people/hectare for a basic transit service. Staff have suggested to TransLink that it would be valuable to illustrate what the different densities and land uses may look like for the different levels of service, using, for example some of the Surrey NCPs at build-out. East Newton – (30 people/ha, North Cloverdale – (45 people/ha) or East Clayton – (110 people/ha). By using tangible and recognizable examples, the public, planners and decision makers would be better informed as to what the character of communities will need to be in order to support different levels of transit.

Throughout the process, staff have emphasized the importance of service level indicators based on development densities, walking distances and transit travel speeds and reliability. Staff have again explained the fundamental importance of these and requested that they become part of the Plan to allow the municipalities to plan with certainty the appropriate form and density of development to encourage transit and identify corridors in need of transit priority. While this will provide City staff with the guidance to better plan transit supportive and transit accessible development, it will also offer more certainty as to the conditions necessary to see the “candidate” routes shown in the Vision maps to become actual services.

*Illustrating the difference between density and service levels will be looked at and TransLink staff will examine whether it is possible to include the illustrative examples suggested.*

*TransLink are currently developing Transit Service Guidelines for population and job densities and travel times for the Frequent Transit Network (FTN) and will incorporate these into the final draft. Once the draft guidelines are available, TransLink have confirmed that they will provide the City opportunity to comment.*

### **2. Standard of services in SoFA TP area compared with the rest of Metro Vancouver and how the Plan responds to redressing inequalities**

When assessing the Plan and the impact it will have on the South of Fraser area, it is difficult to know with a high level of certainty whether what is presented is truly responsive to the increases in population and employment, the changes in travel patterns

being described in the Plan, whether the Plan is only sustaining a pattern of “just enough” improvements or whether it represents a significant improvement over and above the changes historically made. One way of assessing this is by looking at the changes in Surrey and the SoF area within the regional context and comparing how Surrey and the SoF area would compare with other parts of the region. Staff have identified four broad benchmarks that can be used to partly demonstrate both the historical and current lack of equity between the SoF area and the rest of the TransLink service area. In turn, this can begin to uncover whether the plan is responding positively to this issue.

**Service orientation** – Staff believe that TransLink has successfully and clearly articulated the fundamental rethink in how it provides services within the SoF area to reflect the disparate and diverse journey patterns that dominate within the area. For example, almost 80% of all trips that take place within Surrey, White Rock and Delta remain within the area. To service these trips, transit needs to have strong, direct and frequent connections to local destinations. These would include for example, the Surrey town centres, Willowbrook in Langley and the industrial areas of Port Kells and Campbell Heights. In support of this staff have noted the additional services that are introduced during the life of the Plan, which importantly include new and continuous east-west routes and routes that serve the Surrey town centers. There are concerns however that these routes do not appear until 2031.

**Service frequencies** – Analysis of current services have shown that only 10 out of 33 routes serving Surrey and South of Fraser have a 15 minute or better service and then usually only during peak hours. Only a handful of routes have benefited from improved frequencies since 2007. TransLink have recently announced some additional frequencies of some routes in the City. These are included within Appendix 1. With the success of the increased service frequencies in Fraser Heights in attracting higher ridership as an example and one that TransLink themselves have promoted, staff would recommend that there should be increased frequencies on a broad spectrum of routes within the Plan. The Plan, as it stands, only appears to commit to service frequency improvements for the Frequent Bus Network where there would be a minimum 15 minute service. This, although an important component of the network, is only part of it and the City would want to have assurances that there was a robust strategy in place for improved frequencies on local and neighbourhood services as well.

It is also considered that for a good standard of transit provision, the 15 minute frequency should be a minimum and that for some routes, higher frequencies could be expected in the longer term. Ultimately, there should be an aspiration for “timetable free” services being provided in the future on important routes.

**Service hours and number of buses** – The transit service hours per capita in the SoF area are significantly lower than in other areas; some 3 times less than the average for the region. It is unclear within the Plan how this is addressed and whether there will be a commitment, year on year, to increasing the hours required to offer the traveling public in the SoF area an equitable level of service. For the 2005-2008 period, the SoF area, principally the City of Surrey, has received approximately 28% of the total bus service expansion hours and 23% of the service expansion buses allocated for the greater Vancouver region bus service (52 of 223 buses). Although this will help in increasing the service hours per capita in the SoF area, it will not bring the area up to even the regional

average for service hours. Based on preliminary review of the 2008 service plan, there does not appear to be a significant change in the level of service hours and number of buses being made available to this area which might be expected if TransLink was confident about achieving its stated commitment to a 2.5% modal share increase within the next 4 years.

**Network coverage and connectivity** – The Plan, by means of the 2011, 2021 and 2031 maps, focuses attention on the discrete phases of the Vision. These provide the clear, easy to understand statement of intent of the Plan. As such they will become a focus of attention for readers of the Plan and what they contain will be very important in how the Plan is received. They present what at first appears to be only a modest network of routes, with the basic framework of FBN established in 2011. Between 2011 and 2031, there are no additions to the candidate or identified FTN routes leaving significant areas of the City with no identified FTN service. During the same period there is only one upgrade from candidate to identified route with the introduction of FBN on 64 Avenue. The maps show upgrades of FBN routes to BRT/LRT but in essence the same network density and route coverage is seen throughout the life of the Plan. It would have been anticipated that more candidate routes would have been identified as others are upgraded, leading to an improved level of network coverage by the FBN. In making these observations it is recognized that the City of Surrey road network is incomplete, notably for east-west routes.

A significant proportion of the proposed network has “candidate” status. If these routes are removed from the vision, there appears to be a concentration of effort, investment and enhancement on a relatively sparse network with an absence of certainty over the significant remainder. Staff have asked TransLink for clarification on what the status of these routes are and what is required to move them from candidate to identified routes.

*TransLink will include further information within the draft Report regarding service levels and population to show the proposed improvements in the regional context. Although not clearly articulated, a basic objective of the SoFA Plan is to have all service meet the current Transit Service Guidelines for service. This means a minimum 15 minute peak service and a 30 minute base. FTN frequencies will be more clearly shown in the Phase 2 report but it is the intention of the rapid transit and Frequent Bus Network routes to have at least 15 minute peak service but more likely 5-10 minutes. In support of this, TransLink have indicated to staff that there will be an increased proportion of the service expansion buses allocated to the SoF area. Details are awaited.*

*The FTN has two components – identified and candidate corridors. The intent of the Plan is to keep the candidate corridors in that category but provide the TSGs that will allow the corridor to upgrade. It is the intention of TransLink to work with Metro Vancouver to create a memorandum of understanding around this issue that will state that if the municipality reaches the proposed thresholds along the corridor, TransLink will provide the stated level of service. It will be up to the municipalities to determine whether they pursue candidate corridors or not.*

### **3. Facilities and Infrastructure**

A core part of the delivery of the Plan is the availability of supporting facilities, namely, re-organization of transit operations in the City Centre, new and expanded exchanges at Guildford, Newton, 156 St/Highway 1, and Semiahmoo, maintenance and bus storage depots, as well as future maintenance and storage facilities in support of SkyTrain enhancements. It is understood that facilities will be examined in more detail within Phase 2 of the Plan development. It is increasingly evident that the expansion and redesign of services in the SoF area is heavily dependent on a successful facilities plan. Further, proposed changes to the operation of transit services within the City center, as part of the Showcase Project are dependent on the availability of other, expanded transit exchanges. Staff fully recognize that the planning and acquiring of the necessary facilities to permit the growth in services is a fundamental pre-requisite for the success of the Plan and that the City will have an important and on-going role. The City is working with TransLink on a number of key sites and the commitment from both sides is critical to the success of the Plan. However, it should be acknowledged that there is limited ability for the City to secure all the necessary infrastructure through the development process.

TransLink has confirmed its intention to undertake a study on BRT in 2008. However, the City is dealing with a number of enquiries and applications that are impactful on the planned BRT routes. Functional cross sections are needed in the shorter term to assist with road dedication requests.

The City believes that Park and Ride warrants the same level of commitment as other facilities whether as “stand alone” or as part of other transit exchange facilities. Staff have been advised that TransLink will be developing a strategy for Park and Ride and that this will be a component of the final plan.

*TransLink recognize that the infrastructure underpinning the system is key to making significant investment in the transit network in the future. It is also understood that TransLink will have a major investment to make in addition to the efforts of the City. The draft Plan shows an estimated cost of the 2031 Vision of \$1,146,200,000 of which an estimated \$106,750,000 (9.5%) is associated with facilities.*

*There will be a SoF rail/BRT study in 2008 to examine the corridors and provide more detailed cross sections for municipalities. This study will also try to determine whether an internal rail system is of greater long term potential than an extension of existing services.*

*Park and ride is included within the development of the Plan. TransLink believe that a regional park and ride strategy is required and will try and include this in the TransLink 2008 work program.*

### **4. Commitment to all levels of Transit**

The Plan, at least in graphical terms, as presented, appears to concentrate on just one layer of the Transit Services namely the FTN. This has been subdivided into the Frequent Bus Network (FBN) and the Rapid Transit Network (RTN). While it is

understood that there are other local services and neighbourhood buses and that these will be seeing improvements through the Plan, it is not clear as to what these will be and how they compare with the planned improvements to the FTN. At this time, the Plan does not provide assurances on whether there will be more buses, higher frequencies, longer hours, more routes and so on for the spectrum of services provided. Although improvements are implicit in the Plan, it is not obvious that these are at all levels. Staff would recommend a strongly articulated commitment to improvements to bus services at all levels so that the core services are not in any way neglected or undervalued and that the importance of local bus services is properly recognized.

Transit priority is only commented on in this draft plan in relation to its contribution to the FBN. Intuitively, the City recognizes the huge benefits that could be achieved through more transit priority and staff would welcome an assessment of the improved modal splits through more transit priority across the network, not just on the FBN, prior to implementing BRT/LRT. Transit priority is currently delivered through the TRIPPs program, administered by TransLink but the City has not benefited from this. There are significant opportunities for affordable, value-for-money improvements in the reliability and attractiveness of transit for choice riders through more widespread transit priority and we would support participation in expanded transit priority programs in advance of the introduction of higher level transit services.

It is noted that the draft Plan does not take the opportunity to more comprehensively explain both the benefits and challenges of further expanding SkyTrain. Although the City strongly believes in the role of an expanded bus system, there is also a commitment to supporting the expansion of rail-based transit. This is articulated within the Official Community Plan and the City will continue to rigorously lobby for SkyTrain, street level LRT and community rail. The Plan would benefit from a clear commentary on how and when a SkyTrain extension might be delivered. The SoFA study should properly articulate the contribution SkyTrain could make to the transit service in the SoF area but also some of the implications of extending SkyTrain, namely typical per kilometre construction costs and providing examples of what it would cost to promote an extension to perhaps Newton, Guildford or Langley. By doing so, this would provide some level of perspective (which was inherent in the transit planning game) of the cost of rail and how that compares to the \$658 million budget identified for delivery of the SoFA Plan. Without a clear reference to SkyTrain and the associated issues and opportunities surrounding it, there is a concern that the Plan will not be considered truly visionary. Staff are aware that in 2008 there will be a more detailed assessment of rail within the City which will include an assessment of SkyTrain, and other rail transportation. Given the increasing attention being given to an expansion of the rail network south of the Fraser, the City believes it is very important to make an early start to the planning process, at least for the higher level planning within the final SoFA Report.

*Phase 2 of the Plan will highlight the frequencies of all services and it is the intent of TransLink to create a complete network, not just a network with a good FTN. With respect to transit priority the intention of TransLink is to put priority on all FTN routes, plus those identified through the regional transit priority study.*

## **5. Opportunities, constraints and deliverability**

During the development of the Plan, the Technical Advisory Group made comment about the need to provide an assessment of the potential constraints in achieving the Vision. This was in no way an undervaluing of the Vision but would provide credibility and realism. Staff feel there would be advantages in including a commentary to accompany the Vision explaining issues such as funding mechanisms and security, the cost of BRT and SkyTrain compared with local services, the need to expand the fleet and provide new facilities to accommodate them and so on.

The Plan identifies some 375 new fleet vehicles by 2031 allied with a \$658 million capital investment and \$112 million/yr operational cost. These are not insignificant costs. It would be helpful if the Plan could demonstrate the increasing operational costs from year to year and how these will be funded and when, in the life of the Plan key facilities will be needed so that these can be clearly understood and highlighted, not just from a capital cost viewpoint, but from a planning perspective in terms of securing, designing and constructing facilities. As a Plan responding to the needs of the SoF region, it is difficult to judge how the capital and operational costs relate to the broader transit network and the ability of TransLink to fund the Plan year on year. To help provide some certainty, staff would wish to see SoFA commitments clearly identified in TransLink's yearly, 5 year and 10 year plans.

The ambitious modal share targets being presented within the Vision are welcomed. However, reaching the 2011 target of 7% appears difficult based on the improvements identified in the Plan and the contents of recent TransLink Service Plans. Given the higher levels of transit improvements in later stages of the plan, it may be expected that the larger modal share changes will accompany these. Targets for modal split would also benefit from a recognition that these will not be uniform across the network. For example, the contribution of improved ridership in the north Surrey area might be expected to be higher than for south Surrey towards the overall 2.5% increase shown in the first 5 years of the plan. As a demonstration of commitment to making change in the SoF area, TransLink should undertake to evaluate the success of the Plan, with the inclusion of targets and performance indicators with an explanation of how these will be updated and reported during the life of the Plan. Staff are anxious that the targets being set will not be achieved due to a lack of funding security and continuity.

*Funding and implementation of the Plan should be made evident through the upcoming 30 year strategy process as well as the 10 Year plan. The modal splits are targets at present and will likely be adjusted as the plan is further developed and fine tuned. TransLink will also include more detailed cost explanations. TransLink will be looking to put in place the appropriate protocols so that they will be able to report annually on the progress of the Plan (and other Area Transit Plans) to the TransLink Board and Councils.*

## **6. Timing, staging and funding**

The plan is broadly presented in terms of three discrete time scales, with 2011, 2021 and 2031. The Plan does not explain the activities and growth between these dates and how services will be improved year on year. In reality, there would be a continuum of improvements, with the 3 dates being considered targets. There is a perception, that

some of the important service improvements will not be delivered until, for example 2021, when in reality this could be several years earlier. To eliminate this perception, there would be advantages in providing within both this Plan and the forthcoming facilities plan, a provisional program, by year, of service changes and supporting improvements to infrastructure. Delivery of the SoFA plan is dependent on a critical path of enhancements and these should also be identified so that there is understanding of the key milestones that must be achieved before being able to move forward.

For example, it is important to highlight that the Guildford Exchange is near or at capacity now and expansion will be required in the next 2 to 5 years in order to accommodate even modest increases in service. Any service design changes within the City Centre are dependant on the Guildford (and Newton) Exchanges being available to accommodate relocated bus layover. To improve the Guildford facility, there will be a need to partner with the development community and there would be an expected capital cost to implement it. Presenting the program of improvements in this way would assist the readers understanding of the on-going, year on year improvements that will be necessary in order to reach the milestones described in the 3 network plans. Importantly also, it would clearly focus attention on where the key planning, investment and partnerships would need to be.

*The timescales shown in the draft plan are based on existing information horizons but a year by year implementation plan will be developed later this year to provide a finer grain of detail on plans to put the SoFA Plan into action. This implementation plan will include key milestones driven by facility changes.*

## **7. Partnership with the City of Surrey in delivery of the Plan**

A common principle throughout the comments the City has been making has been the supporting role of the municipalities in making the Plan succeed in areas of transit priority, parking policies, transit supportive land use densities and urban design, securing major transit facilities, corridor protection, bus stop infrastructure and advocating transit. The Plan provides an opportunity to demonstrate the need for joint thinking and partnerships by different agencies to make change. The Plan should be taking the opportunity to identify the important role of the municipalities in helping deliver the Vision. At this time, the Plan does not adequately do this.

*TransLink will ensure that future drafts of the Plan will properly articulate the partnerships needed to help ensure delivery of the Plan.*

## **8. Other issues for attention**

Although not critical considerations at this stage of the Plan development, staff have also raised a number of other issues which are considered of value to improving transit services.

In conjunction with improvements to services, the City would welcome a comprehensive review of the information and service routing information to make the network simpler to understand and easier to access thereby offering significant customer benefits. The plan describes changes and investment in the system in terms of routes, buses and facilities.

The City feels that there should be a commitment to improving the ease of use of the system, with re branding and simplified route numbering, the implementation of real time information for passengers and ensuring that the transit system is fully accessible to everyone.

The plan does not appear to make reference to U-Pass. With an expanding student population within Surrey at Kwantlen College (no U-pass program) and SFU we would have expected the role of the program to have been identified within the plan.

It is understood that there is much further to go in the SoFA TP process and that considerable detailed planning, assessments of costs and priorities and further consultation with stakeholders is still to come.

The City is wanting to see transit expanding in the SoF area and becoming a real choice for travel. The City would want to provide support in making this happen. Staff have welcomed the level of involvement provided by TransLink in the development of the Plan and there has been positive and constructive liaison between staff on matters such as the City Centre, planning for future exchanges, involvement in road improvement projects and discussions on more detailed design issues surrounding the protection of road right of way for future Bus Rapid Transit.

*Wayfinding is a major issue for TransLink and it is currently working on a wayfinding study. Further information will be shared with the municipalities as draft reports become available.*

*The Plan will also attempt to address U-Pass without pre-judging Kwantlen's desire to partake in the program.*