



Corporate Report

NO: C004

COUNCIL DATE: April 20, 2009

COUNCIL-IN-COMMITTEE

TO: Mayor & Council DATE: April 20, 2009
FROM: General Manager, Planning and Development FILE: 0450 - 01
SUBJECT: Comments on the "Metro Vancouver 2040 – Shaping our Future" –
February 2009 Draft of the Proposed Metro Vancouver Regional Growth
Strategy

RECOMMENDATION

The Planning and Development Department recommends that Council:

1. Receive this report as information; and
2. Direct staff to forward a copy of this report and the related Council resolution to Metro Vancouver as Surrey's comments regarding the document entitled "Metro Vancouver 2040 – Shaping our Future" and request that these comments be taken into account in preparing the final draft of the Regional Growth Strategy.

INTENT

The purpose of this report is to:

- Provide an overview of the most recent draft of the proposed Metro Vancouver Regional Growth Strategy (RGS), which the Metro Vancouver Planning Committee has referred to member municipalities and to the public for consultation; and
- Identify key concerns with respect to the RGS from the perspective of the City of Surrey, to be forwarded to Metro Vancouver staff for consideration in preparing the final draft of the RGS for review by the Metro Vancouver Board.

POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

Under the provisions of the *Local Government Act*, Regional Districts are required to prepare a 20 year RGS to "promote human settlement that is socially, economically and environmentally healthy and that makes efficient use of public facilities and services,

land and resources". It must include a comprehensive statement on the future of the region and include population and employment projections as well as actions proposed with respect to housing, transportation, regional services, parks and natural areas and economic development.

The current RGS for Metro Vancouver, the Livable Region Strategic Plan (LRSP), was adopted in 1996 and is one of a number of plans under the umbrella of the Region's "Sustainable Region Initiative" (SRI). The LRSP is based on four fundamental strategies being to:

- Protect the Green Zone;
- Build Complete Communities;
- Achieve a Compact Metropolitan Region; and
- Increase Transportation Choice.

Municipalities are required to prepare and adopt Regional Context Statements (RCS) as a part of their Official Community Plans (OCP). The RCS must explain the relationship between the OCP and the RGS, and be adopted within two years of the adoption of the new RGS.

BACKGROUND

In late 2007, the document entitled "Options for Metro Vancouver's Growth Management Strategy" was released for public consultation. The "Options" document contained optional approaches for addressing key components of a new growth management for the Region. On February 25, 2008 Council considered Corporate Report No. R028 (copy attached as Appendix "I"), and approved the recommendations of the report, which included forwarding a copy of that report and related Council resolution to Metro Vancouver as Surrey's comments in response to the "Options" document.

On March 31, 2008 Council held a workshop session with senior staff from Metro Vancouver to discuss Surrey's concerns, comments and other matters of importance to Surrey in the preparation of a revised RGS.

Metro Vancouver staff prepared a further "incomplete" draft of the RGS, "Our Livable Region 2040 – Metro Vancouver's Growth Strategy – Preliminary Draft" dated September 30, 2008, which was referred to the staff of member municipalities for their comment and review, but which was not a public document.

On February 25, 2009 Chief Administrative Officer of Metro Vancouver forwarded a letter to member municipalities advising that at its meeting of February 13, 2009, the Regional Planning Committee referred the most recent draft of the new RGS, "Metro Vancouver 2040 – Shaping Our Future" to member municipalities for *initial comment on key issues*, prior to public consultation. Public consultation was set to begin on April 15, 2009. Any municipal responses received prior to April 8, 2009 were to be incorporated into the consultation process, in a form "suitable for public consultation". More detailed comments from municipalities will be accepted up until May 22, 2009.

As it was not possible to schedule a report for Council's consideration prior to the April 8, 2009 deadline, a letter outlining preliminary comments on key issues, dated April 3, 2009, was forwarded by the General Manager, Planning and Development to Metro Vancouver staff. The issues identified in that letter are also discussed in this report.

DISCUSSION

A copy of the document, "Metro Vancouver 2040 – Shaping our future" has been distributed to Council along with this report.

This report outlines the major themes and directions of the proposed RGS, identifies areas where Surrey is in agreement with the draft document, and highlights areas where Surrey has issues, concerns or is in disagreement with the direction of the document.

This draft of the proposed RGS has incorporated many of the changes and resolved a number of the concerns raised by Surrey and other member municipalities after the review of previous drafts.

The following elements of the most recent draft of the RGS are fully supportable:

- The Vision for a sustainable region, and the overall intent of the Goals and Strategic directions of the proposed RGS;
- The recognition of Surrey's City Centre as the Region's second Metro Centre and the inclusion of the five Surrey Municipal Town Centres;
- The Urban Containment Boundary and policies to support the protection and enhancement of natural areas and the Region's agricultural lands and economy through new Conservation/Recreation and strengthened Agricultural Area designations;
- Inclusion of new Conservation/Recreation areas; and
- The focus on a sustainable region that links land use patterns and the transportation network.

However, staff still has a number of concerns with the document in its current form. These are discussed below:

1. Level of Regional Oversight over Municipal Plans and Required Content of Regional Context Statements

The proposed new RGS would significantly change the relationship between Metro Vancouver and the member municipalities in terms of the required content of RCS and the amount of Regional oversight of local land use decision-making. Surrey has expressed concern with the Region taking on a significantly larger regulatory role in areas of local government authority or responsibility. The RGS should provide a sufficient level of detail to be useful to local governments,

citizens and the development industry in directing growth to centres and corridors, without taking on the regulatory role of local governments which are best positioned to understand the local context in relation to land use decisions.

As noted in the draft, the *Local Government Act* requires local governments to include a RCS in their OCP that "identifies the relationship" between matters in the OCP and the RGS. The draft RGS requires that the content of the RCS go far beyond the requirements of the legislation. The RGS as currently drafted would require the preparation of an RCS that would constitute a substantial component of municipal OCP. While much of the recommended content may be desirable content for the OCP, the requirement to include this content in the RCS substantially increases the amount of Regional oversight related to the preparation of the OCP and increases the need for Regional approval for local land use decisions. This would appear to set the context for a lengthy and cumbersome Metro Vancouver approval process for many more items.

The draft RGS creates additional designations within and outside of the Urban Containment Boundary, as described below. These designations are proposed to be determined through parcel-based mapping. The appropriateness of using detailed, parcel-based mapping for a Regional scale plan goes beyond the level of oversight appropriate at the Regional level of planning. Municipalities would be required to interpret the RGS through precise boundaries in their RCS. A change in designation would require an application to Metro Vancouver, where the Board would respond by resolution within 120 days indicating whether it accepts the amendment by a simple majority (weighted) vote. All amendments to the local OCP that may affect the RCS would require consultation with Metro Vancouver before proceeding with such an OCP amendment.

Similarly, the draft RGS requires municipalities to refer to TransLink for review, all OCP amendments for "major development proposals" for the purpose of determining whether there is a need to revise the RCS. There is no definition of what would constitute a "major development proposal", the role and authority associated with such a review process or how the TransLink's review would be coordinated with Metro Vancouver's review.

Surrey Comments

Surrey has significant concerns with the increased level of Regional oversight proposed by the draft RGS, the required level of content of the Regional Context Statements, the need for parcel based mapping for review at a Regional scale and the degree of Regional involvement in local land use planning and decision making. The approval process as set out in the draft would be cumbersome, time intensive and overly regulatory. Metro Vancouver is encouraged to use its resources to advance research and support on matters of concern to its member municipalities, rather than on exerting a high level of oversight and control over municipal plans.

2. **Vision of the Regional Growth Strategy**

The RGS is the land use component of Metro Vancouver Sustainable Region Initiative. The RGS identifies the need to accommodate an increase of 1.2 million people in the Region from its current population of 2.2 million to 3.4 million by 2040, requiring 550,000 new homes and 600,000 new jobs.

The Vision for the region includes diverse communities, based on community well-being, economic prosperity and environmental health, liveability and sustainability, serviced by affordable and efficient transportation services and infrastructure.

This Vision is supported by five Goals and 13 associated Strategies. The Goals are to:

- Create a Compact Urban Area
- Support a Sustainable Economy
- Protect the Region's Natural Assets
- Develop Complete and Resilient Communities
- Support Sustainable Transportation Choices

The overall vision is similar to the current RGS, with the addition of policies relating to the economy, and policies relating to reducing fossil fuel use and Greenhouse Gas emissions.

Surrey Comments

The overall vision of a sustainable region and the direction of the five Goals are supportable and consistent with Surrey's vision for a sustainable city.

3. **Structure**

The structure of the proposed RGS has changed substantially from the previous Livable Region Strategic Plan, as summarized below.

- **The Urban Containment Boundary**

The Urban Containment Boundary is the area, which will contain urban development in the region to the year 2040. It will contain new land use categories that include Urban Centres, Frequent Transit Development Corridors, a new Industrial designation, a new Industrial/Commercial designation and a General Urban designation.

- **Urban Centres**

Urban are intended to be the focus of commercial, institutional and higher density development to achieve a transit-oriented future.

Surrey Comments

Surrey supports the identification of Surrey's City Centre as the second Metro Centre in the Region after the Vancouver Metro Centre. The current document responds to Surrey's requests to identify centres according to their population, employment and relative scale and to recognize Surrey's City Centre as the second metropolitan centre in the Region. The draft RGS refers to Surrey's Metro Centre as the "Centre of Activity South of the Fraser", and as a location for business, cultural, institutional and entertainment uses for the southern and eastern parts of the region, as well as being a major employment location, and a home for large-scale, high density commercial office and retail uses, medium and high density housing and region-serving institutional uses.

Surrey also supports the identification in the RGS of the five Surrey Municipal Town Centres of Cloverdale, Fleetwood, Guildford, Newton and Semiahmoo.

Staff is concerned, however, with the need identified in the RGS for parcel-based mapping of Centres, and requires further clarification on how the boundaries will be determined.

- **Frequent Transit Development Corridors**

These areas are intended to support the Frequent Transit Network Concept of the RGS by concentrating higher density residential and other forms of compact growth within 400 to 800 metres of transit routes and at transit stations. The Frequent Transit Development Corridors are to be "generally consistent" with the Frequent Transit Network Concept Map, and are to be identified by municipalities in their RCS, over time. The RCS are to identify higher density residential development, contain policies for reduced parking requirements, and ensure that development in the Corridors do not detract from the viability of Centres and Industrial areas.

Surrey Comments

While the concept of Frequent Transit Development Corridors is supported, it is noted that many of these Corridors now traverse stable residential neighbourhoods. The implementation of these Corridors will need to be carried out over time with substantial local consultation, through detailed local planning processes. This will require considerable local resources. As well, the RGS should recognize and support variations in use, mixes of use and densities to reflect local context and diversity throughout the Region. Surrey's "Employment Land Strategy" notes the need to provide for employment as well as residential uses along major corridors to meet the City's objective of balanced assessment and employment ratios. Successful transit nodes/corridors benefit from a mix of residential, commercial and employment land uses.

Actions to reduce residential and commercial parking requirements in Urban Centres and along Frequent Transit Development Corridors must be accompanied by a commitment to the timely provision of high frequency transit service.

- **New Industrial and Industrial/Commercial Designations**

The RGS proposes to maintain and protect an industrial land base and to retain "industrial areas for industrial uses". Two new designations have been developed:

Industrial Areas: are intended for manufacturing, processing, repair, warehousing, distribution, transportation, utilities, biomedical facilities and other laboratories for scientific and medical research. Office and retail uses ancillary to industrial activities and a small amount of accessory commercial uses are allowed.

Industrial/Commercial: allows stand-alone office and retail uses other than those ancillary to industry. The RGS notes, however, that these uses are not appropriate in industrial areas as they reduce the efficiency of industrial uses, reduce transit and walking accessibility for workers and customers, and undermine the prosperity and development of Urban Centres. The strategy does not encourage additional Industrial/Commercial centres.

Municipalities have been directed to map all of their existing Industrial designated land in current OCPs for inclusion in the Industrial designation, and to also identify areas that are or will be developed for Industrial/Commercial use, meaning any freestanding office or retail use. The boundaries are shown generally in the RGS, but municipalities are asked to determine specific boundaries through their individual RCS. Any subsequent amendments to the boundaries would require an amendment to the municipal OCP's RCS, which would require Metro Board approval by a weighted majority vote, and would add significantly (estimated at four to six months) to any development application approval process.

It is noted that the application of these designations would not affect current municipal zoning, but it would significantly impact municipalities such as Surrey where zoning for significant areas of vacant or redevelopable industrial land has not yet been implemented.

Surrey Comments

While Surrey has supported the objective of ensuring an adequate supply of industrial and commercial land throughout the region to support a flourishing and sustainable economy, the current designations and the policy direction of the current draft RGS do not appear to identify any new supply of industrial land or to adequately protect industrial land in all parts of the region.

Surrey has supported the concept of an Industrial designation to protect a region-wide supply of employment lands. However Staff recommend against distinguishing between Industrial and Industrial/Commercial lands at a regional planning level, understanding that any addition or deletion of these designations or change from Industrial to Industrial/Commercial would require a RCS amendment needing Metro Vancouver Board approval.

Surrey has previously expressed concern that municipalities such as Surrey are expected to provide for the storage, distribution and truck storage needs of the region, due in part to the previous conversion by the region's core municipalities of their industrial lands to residential, commercial and other higher order uses.

The proposed Industrial designation would impose a level of control beyond that which should be exercised by a Regional document, and is usurping the authority of local governments in relation to land use planning and decision-making. For example, it is questionable whether Surrey would be able to continue to implement its IB zones, which provide for certain categories of office uses within the Industrial designation. To provide flexibility, Surrey could show all lands as Industrial/Commercial. However the introduction of an Industrial/Commercial, while allowing more flexibility, could well be interpreted by the market as support for large-scale retail such as big box development. On the other hand, broad application of the Industrial designation would mean that Surrey would accept the lion's share of lower order uses, and be the primary focus for warehousing and distribution uses, which have a very low number of employees per acre, are land intensive uses and do less for the quality of life or tax base of the City than other uses.

To avoid either scenario, staff recommends the development of an Industrial/Employment designation in the RGS that meets the needs of the entire region.

Surrey's recently adopted "Employment Land Strategy" confirms that if Surrey is to achieve its objectives of a more balanced jobs to workforce ratio and property assessment, it must not only protect its existing employment lands, but it must also reflect the principles of sustainability including increased land use efficiency and intensity. Surrey supports vibrant urban centres (City and Town Centres) and corridors, and has taken steps to encourage employment in these centres. But Surrey also recognizes the need to remain competitive by supporting higher density and quality business parks at key locations.

The draft RGS does not appear to contain policies promoting eco-industrial opportunities and the extension of sustainability principles to the Industrial designations.

- **A General Urban Area**

The RGS contains a new General Urban area, which contains the portion of the Urban Containment Boundary, which is not identified as Centre, Frequent Transit Development Corridor, Industrial, Industrial/Commercial, or Conservation/Recreation. The General Urban area contains the region's local neighbourhoods and shopping areas, schools and recreational areas. Densities are generally lower than other development areas and would not include industries or major employers. Municipalities' RCS are to "identify policies that discourage higher density development and support lower density, ground oriented residential development and local serving commercial uses" in this designation.

Surrey Comments

Rather than providing a compelling vision of the Region, the draft RGS provides a regulatory approach, which does not reflect the diversity of the Region.

- **Areas Outside of the Urban Containment Boundary**

The Green Zone is no longer a component of the draft RGS. Instead, all land outside of the Urban Containment boundary is divided into three new land use categories: Rural, Conservation/Recreation and Agricultural.

Rural

The "Rural" area of the RGS provides for very low-density residential development, and agricultural and small scale commercial uses that are rural in character and not serviced by the Regional sewer system. Municipal OCP RCS are to map these areas and include policies to maintain their low density and rural character discourage subdivision and support agricultural uses.

In Surrey, the Rural area would consist of the Hazelmere uplands, and land south of the Campbell Heights area, and also include slopes to the north and west of Campbell Heights.

Surrey's Comments

Staff has not had the opportunity to fully evaluate the redesignation of lands now designated Agricultural in Surrey's Official Community Plan to Rural in the draft RGS, which includes the Hazelmere uplands and lands south of Campbell Heights. Specifically, this new designation may limit the reasonable development of these lands.

As well, it would appear that the Hazelmere Golf Course lands that were previously shown as Rural are undesignated in this draft.

Conservation/Recreation

The "Conservation/Recreation" area is intended to protect areas of ecological and outdoor recreation significance including major parks and recreation areas. It includes major regional and city parks, and includes the six areas recently recommended by Surrey to add to this designation, including Kwomais Park, Latimer Park, Redwood Park, Bothwell Park and lands in the northwest Campbell Heights area.

It is noted that the new Conservation/Recreation designation as written would not provide for major institutional uses such as the new Outpatient Facility, the RCMP Headquarters, School District Headquarters and other institutional uses in the Green Timbers area. As well, staff is nominating some additional sites to be added to the Conservation/Recreation area as generally shown on the map attached as Appendix II to this report, which include Elgin Heritage Park, Joe Brown Park, Fleetwood Park, Bear Creek Park and its ravines and the Victoria-Invergarry-Hawthorne Park system that is linked on the Bon Accord Creek ravine system. These changes will be forwarded to Metro Vancouver for consideration.

Surrey Comments

Surrey supports this designation but recommends that the policy be clarified to specify that appropriate outdoor and indoor recreation activities and facilities be allowed, to ensure that major parks which may have some recreation facilities as a component of the area remain within this designation. Map changes further refining and adding lands to this designation in Surrey will be forwarded to Metro Vancouver.

It is noted that the Regional Greenways Network has been removed from this draft of the RGS. While conceptual, this provided a useful indication of links connecting the major regional parks and open spaces and an indication of inter-municipal linkages. This Network should be re-instated in the RGS.

Agricultural Area

The area intended for Agriculture and supporting services, generally consistent with the boundaries of the Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR) is no longer part of the Green Zone but is now proposed to be included under the section "Support a Sustainable Economy". Consistent with Surrey's recently adopted Economic Development Strategy, this change reflects the importance of the agricultural land base to the regional economy.

Surrey Comments

Surrey supports the Agricultural designation in the RGS and policies related to enhancing productivity of these lands to recognize the economic value of ALR land. Surrey is already undertaking many of the actions suggested in the RGS.

4. **Population and Employment Projections and Housing Demand Estimates**

The population and employment projections in the draft RGS are generally consistent with Surrey's projections. While Surrey's projections are no longer combined with Delta, the population and employment projects still include totals for Surrey/White Rock. They show:

- A population of 602,000 by 2021 and a population of 767,000 by 2041 (eclipsing that of Vancouver and Electoral Area A); and
- A growth in jobs from the current 151,000 to 227,000 in 2021 and up to 300,000 by 2041.

Housing Demand Estimates are included by Municipality in the draft RGS. While these estimates are not referred to as "targets", municipalities are required to develop RCS and Housing Action Plans which specify strategies to meet the estimated future demand as set out in Table 1.3 for rental and ownership units. Surrey is now working on the development of a Housing Action Plan.

As Surrey's anticipated growth has increased, the RGS's estimated demand for rental units to be developed in Surrey has substantially increased. It is noted that while the Regional average for ownership is 65% ownership to 35% rental, Surrey has traditionally been the supplier of more affordable home ownership options, with a ratio of 75% ownership to 25% rental. The demand identified in Table 1.6 has been applied consistently across the Region and imposes an unrealistically high number of affordable rental units to be provided in the 10-year demand estimate. These numbers are only achievable with the support of the Federal and Provincial levels of government as set out in Strategy 4.1.4.

Surrey Comments

Surrey appreciates that the sub-regional demand estimates have been revised to include Surrey/White Rock as a sub-region.

Further work is required with regard to the housing demand estimates, which appear to impose extremely high expectations with regard to the ability of municipalities to affect the provision of affordable rental housing.

5. **Transit/Transportation**

The Frequent Transit Network Concept is shown on Map 6 and the Regional Roads Concept is shown on Map 7 of the draft RGS. Much of the Frequent Transit Network was promoted through the South of Fraser Transportation Area Plan (SoFA) process. The Plan represents a minimum level, and SoFA municipalities are seeking more routes and service within a shorter timeframe.

Studies on proposed rapid transit lines are just being initiated, and the current mapping may need to be changed over time.

Strategy 5.2 notes that goods movement capacity on Regional roads cannot be the only consideration when developing vibrant/liveable communities. In Centres, additional road development may be appropriate to balance the needs of pedestrians. Similarly, giving priority to transit and where appropriate goods movement with any expansion of road capacity may not always be appropriate as there is a need to consider each project on its merits and its role in the network.

The maps are difficult to read and to reconcile with the legends.

Surrey Comments

Surrey supports the Frequent Transit Network, and its relationship to increased densities, but this does not imply endorsement of the Network as currently shown on Map 6. Surrey will continue to seek more routes, a finer transit service grid and increased transit equity south of the Fraser in comparison to the remainder of the Region. A commitment to higher densities along these routes and to reduce parking requirements must be accompanied by a commitment to, and implementation of improved transit service levels.

Rather than review of land development proposals as is currently proposed, TransLink should provide service level indicators that link land use and density with the level of transit service that will be provided.

A number of map changes are needed in the draft RGS along with clarification, as they are difficult to read in the current draft RGS. Specifically, Map 7 should distinguish between provincial and MRN roads. The Golden Ears Bridge Connector should stop at 176 Street, continuing as 96 Avenue, which is an MRN road.

It is noted that the strategy providing for annual RGS housekeeping updates to incorporate Map changes over time has been removed from this draft. This provision should be re-introduced in the RGS.

6. What is Missing?

The significant issue of municipal finances has still not been adequately addressed in the draft RGS. Pressures from a land assessment perspective have at times led municipalities to consider land use decisions from the perspective of the potential revenue stream, as opposed to planning principles. This, for example, has led some municipalities to permit the conversion of industrial lands to higher value, high density residential and commercial uses and placed pressure on others to support the removal of land from the Agricultural Land Reserve.

Surrey Comments

Creative reform of municipal finances and revenue sources available to municipalities and how this could influence effective land use planning and development decisions has not been adequately addressed in the draft RGS.

The draft RGS does not contain policy direction in relation to creating a more balanced assessment base at the municipal level and a more equitable distribution of jobs to population by sub-region.

7. **Process**

Staff is concerned that the proposed RGS review and approval process does not allow review of a further draft of the document once Metro staff have had the opportunity to review and incorporate input from municipalities and the public. Metro Vancouver is proposing to go directly to a final draft for Public Hearing in June of this year. This is a tight timeframe for Regional staff to incorporate municipal and public input, and does not provide time for municipalities to discuss and attempt to reach consensus on key issues prior to the draft RGS being considered in a formal, Public Hearing process.

Surrey Comments

Given the concerns identified in this report, the opportunity for review of a further draft RGS appears reasonable to assist in building agreement around several key issues, prior to embarking on by-law readings and a Public Hearing.

CONCLUSION

Based on the above, it is recommended that Council direct staff to forward a copy of this report and the related Council resolution to Metro Vancouver as Surrey's comments regarding the document entitled "Metro Vancouver 2040 – Shaping our Future" and request that these comments be taken into account in preparing the final draft of the RGS.

Original signed by
Jean Lamontagne
General Manager
Planning and Development

JMcL:saw

Attachments:

Appendix I Corporate Report No. R028

Appendix II Recommended Map Changes

A copy of the draft Regional Growth Strategy entitled "Metro Vancouver 2040 – Shaping Our Future" has been distributed separately.



Corporate Report

NO: R028

COUNCIL DATE: Feb 25/08

REGULAR COUNCIL

TO: Mayor & Council DATE: February 25, 2008
FROM: General Manager, Planning and Development FILE: 0450-01
SUBJECT: Choosing a Sustainable Future for Metro Vancouver -
Surrey Comments on the November 2007 Report -
"Options for Metro Vancouver's Growth Management Strategy"

RECOMMENDATION

The Planning and Development Department recommends that Council:

1. Receive this report as information;
2. Endorse the comments contained within this report as the City of Surrey's response to the document entitled "Choosing a Sustainable Future for Metro Vancouver – Options for Metro Vancouver's Growth Management Strategy";
3. Authorize staff to forward a copy of this report and the related Council resolution to Metro Vancouver; and
4. Request that staff arrange a workshop session involving City Council and appropriate senior staff from both Surrey and Metro Vancouver to discuss the concerns and comments contained in this report and other matters important to the City of Surrey, in the preparation of a revised Regional Growth Strategy and that such a session be organized as soon as possible.

INTENT

The purpose of this report is to review and provide comments on the document entitled "Choosing a Sustainable Future for Metro Vancouver – Options for Metro Vancouver's Growth Management Strategy" (the "Options Report") for Council's consideration and response to Metro Vancouver. The Options Report is part of the public consultation process in the development of a new Regional Growth Strategy for Metropolitan Vancouver to replace the current Liveable Region Strategic Plan (the "LRSP").

Overall Response

The City of Surrey sees the function of the Metro Vancouver Growth Management Strategy as a tool to encourage the cooperation of local governments in achieving **both** local and regional goals with respect to sustainability and liveability. In this regard, it is Surrey's view that Metro Vancouver's general role in relation to growth management should be to provide a high-level vision of the growth and development of the region and to monitor, undertake research and analysis, and share information among local governments on such topics as land use, economic development, transportation, housing, infrastructure and the environment with a view to assisting local governments in making effective decisions that allow for the development of a strong region through the development of strong individual municipalities. One of the fundamental problems with the LRSP (i.e., the current Regional Growth Strategy) is that it does not properly recognize the needs of individual local governments in relation to the business of local government. Surrey is opposed to the region taking on a regulator role in areas of local government authority or responsibility, such as local land use or density decisions. The statements made within this paragraph are the underpinnings to the more specific comments and suggestions contained in the remainder of this report.

General Comment

Vision

The draft Options Report lacks a strong planning vision. There is little more than a continuation of current trends and policies. As a result, the document is focused more on governance and oversight issues than on articulating a strong and compelling vision for the region.

Financial Reform Necessary

The range of issues addressed in a document such as "Choosing a Sustainable Future for Metro Vancouver," while broad, does not capture one of the significant issues driving land use decision-making in the region; that issue being municipal finances. Currently, land use decisions by local governments are being "pushed" by the business needs of local governments, which, in some circumstances, are contrary to good land use planning principles. Property taxes are the primary source of discretionary revenue for local governments. With the financial pressures that all local governments are experiencing, there is significant pressure from an assessment perspective to consider land use decisions from the perspective of revenue stream considerations, as opposed to planning principles. This economic reality has, for example, led the region's core municipalities to permit the conversion of industrial lands to higher-value, high-density residential and commercial uses. It has also placed significant pressure on the Agricultural Land Reserve ("ALR"), particularly for "back-up" industrial and trans-shipment uses near the Port lands in Richmond and Delta. As a City with a significant proportion of its land base in the ALR and with the largest area of industrial-designated land in the region, the current draft Options Report is penalizing, for its vigilance in preserving these lands for uses that have been "squeezed out" of Metro Vancouver's core municipalities. In

essence, Surrey appears to be called upon to "fix" the problems, other more fully developed local governments in the region have created over time.

It is clear that creative reform of municipal finances, such as expanding/replacing the revenue sources that are available to local governments, is fundamental to resolving this basic dilemma facing local governments in making land use decisions, which will continue to stand in the way of the region achieving its full potential.

POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

Under the provisions of the *Local Government Act*, regional districts are required to prepare a Regional Growth Strategy in order to "promote human settlement that is socially, economically and environmentally healthy and that makes efficient use of public facilities and services, land and other resources". It must cover a period of at least 20 years and include a comprehensive statement on the future of the region, including social, economic and environmental objectives of the board, population and employment projections, and actions proposed with regard to housing, transportation, regional district services, parks and natural areas and economic development.

The current Regional Growth Strategy for Metro Vancouver is the LRSP, which was adopted by the then GVRD board in January of 1996. The LRSP rests on four fundamental strategies:

- Protect the Green Zone;
- Build Complete Communities;
- Achieve a Compact Metropolitan Region; and
- Increase Transportation Choice.

The Regional Context Statement is one of a number of plans under the umbrella of the region's "Sustainable Region Initiative" ("SRI"), which also includes documents such as Liquid and Solid Waste Management Plans, the Air Quality Management Plan, Regional Parks Plan and Regional Affordable Housing Strategy.

Municipalities are required to prepare and adopt Regional Context Statements as an element of their Official Community Plan ("OCP"). The Regional Context Statement must explain the relationship between the OCP and the Regional Growth Strategy. Surrey's Regional Context Statement is contained in Appendix B of Surrey Official Community Plan By-law, 1983, No. 12900, as amended. It specifies how Surrey's OCP reflects the interests and strategies of the current Regional Growth Strategy, the LRSP. It is anticipated that Surrey will be required to update its Regional Context Statement subsequent to the adoption of a new Regional Growth Strategy by Metro Vancouver. This will be part of the pending major review of Surrey's OCP.

BACKGROUND

Over the past several years, Metro Vancouver has been undertaking background studies, workshops and public forums leading to the preparation of a revised Regional Growth Strategies. The revisited Regional Growth Strategy is intended to address the new

challenges of climate change, a growing and aging population, traffic congestion, housing affordability and the region's ties to a global economy.

In September of 2007, the GVRD Board, authorized staff to begin public discussions for the Regional Growth Strategy, based on an identified set of issues and strategies presented to the Board at that time. The Options Report was produced in November of 2007. Regional staff held a series of community meetings throughout the region, including two meetings in Surrey, on December 6, 2007, at the Newton Recreation Centre and January 17, 2008, at the Newton Seniors' Centre.

The City received correspondence in November 2007, from Metro Vancouver staff, advising of this public consultation process. On December 17, 2007, the Manager of the Policy and Planning Department for Metro Vancouver attended Council-in-Committee and provided a presentation on the Options Report.

It is noted that this round of consultation was intended to "initiate dialogue on the directions for the new Regional Growth Strategy". Following this preliminary consultation a Draft Regional Growth Strategy will be prepared for public and municipal review. Comments will be taken into account in the preparation of the actual draft Regional Growth Strategy document.

On February 11, 2008 Council met to discuss in detail the contents of the Options Report and to provide comments on its contents.

DISCUSSION

Overview

As the Options Report notes, a new plan for Metropolitan Vancouver (a 25 year plan to the year 2031) will need to address issues of climate change, a growing and aging population, traffic congestion, housing affordability and the region's ties to a global economy. Land use concepts in the new Regional Growth Strategy will be linked to TransLink's *Transport 2040* vision.

The Options Report anticipates the need to accommodate 820,000 more people in the region, or a population of 3 million by 2031, 420,000 new dwellings and 400,000 additional jobs, while maintaining natural, cultural and heritage assets. Of this, Surrey/Delta/White Rock is predicted to have:

- A population of 766,000 or 25.2% of the regional population; and
- Employment of 324,000 or 20.8% of the regional jobs.

The Options Report notes that to maintain a healthy economy, economic activities such as port, airport and rail activities supporting the region's gateway role, and city serving businesses, will require sufficient land. The paper notes that the regional supply of industrial land has decreased as a result of lands being rezoned to higher value market uses. The challenges are to ensure effective use of space to support economic activity, while protecting communities and the region's thriving agricultural sector. A further

challenge is to build an urban area that does not undermine the biodiversity and natural assets of the region.

Proposed Vision and Goals

The proposed Vision as set out in the Options Report is:

Metro Vancouver will be a liveable and sustainable region. It will be a region of well-designed, connected and diverse communities where people of all ages, incomes and origins can live, work and play in safety and comfort. The conservation of land, water and energy resources will drive regional decision-making. Valuable farmland and natural areas will be protected and enhanced. An affordable and efficient transportation system will support economic prosperity, healthy living and community well being.

The Options Report puts forward five goals and 12 strategies within these goals. The goals are similar to those of the four fundamental strategies currently in the LRSP, but add reference to housing and the regional economy.

A Choice of Strategies

A key theme throughout the Options Report is the question of governance and the role of Metropolitan Vancouver versus the role of the local municipalities within the region. For each of the 12 strategies put forward in the Options Report, the public is asked to choose whether the Regional Growth Strategy and, therefore, Metropolitan Vancouver, should:

- (a) State general, high level goals and policies; or
- (b) State general goals and provide targets and general guidelines; or
- (c) Set regulations and establish specific targets.

Following is a description of the goals and strategies and of the choices set out in the Options Report. These are accompanied by commentary with regard to the City of Surrey's preferences, issues and concerns:

GOAL 1: A sustainable, compact metropolitan structure

Strategy 1: Focus growth in centres and along transit corridors

This strategy retains the concept of a strong Metropolitan Core, Regional Town Centres (including Surrey City Centre and Langley City, south of the Fraser) and Municipal Town Centres (including Guildford, Fleetwood, Newton, Cloverdale and Semiahmoo/White Rock). It is a strategy of concentrating growth in centres and transit corridors. The Options Report notes that a practical transit option is needed in newer areas, and that additional transit corridors are needed that link centres and that link neighbourhoods to centres. The Options Report asks whether this structure should be expressed:

- (a) as a statement of general goals that centres and corridors should be the primary location for jobs, shops, services and housing;
- (b) as a map of centres and corridors, but with general guidelines on the types of uses to be encouraged in the centres and corridors; or
- (c) with centres, transit stations and corridors designated, and providing housing and job targets, transit service expectations, minimum density guidelines and maximum parking guidelines established for centres and station areas.

Response: *This Strategy should be rewritten to read "Focus regional growth in mixed-use centres with sufficient densities to support the provision of high quality public transit." This reflects the importance of developing housing and employment in close proximity to one another, and does not pre-suppose that linear development along transit corridors is the only way of achieving this objective.*

Of the options presented, Option (b) is preferred as it provides a sufficient level of detail in the regional plan to be useful to local governments, citizens and the development industry in directing growth to centres and corridors, without taking on the role of local government. Local municipalities are best placed to understand the local context and economic realities, and to set specific and realistic densities and targets rather than having them determined at a regional level. The region can and should provide a valuable role in assisting with research and analysis and in providing information about densities and land use mixes that will allow for the provision of quality transit services.

Strategy 2: Establish defined areas for urban growth

This strategy provides for the continued growth in newly developing areas, (including Grandview, north and west Cloverdale, South Port Kells and Douglas), but emphasizes the proportion of growth in established areas versus newly developing areas. It notes that municipal OCPs have designated sufficient land to accommodate residential growth beyond 2031. The Options Report asks whether the strategy should:

- (a) state general goals for developing a compact region; or
- (b) designate an urban area and a green zone similar to the current plan to act as a boundary for urban growth; or
- (c) designate Urban, Rural and Green Zone land uses. The Rural designation would include areas "not conducive to urban development". The Hazelmere area and lands outside of the ALR, south of Campbell Heights, are included in this designation in the Options Report. The Green Zone would protect the region's natural assets.

Response: *Option (b) is preferred. This option retains the existing urban containment boundaries and protects the ALR and Green Zone from urban encroachment. Municipalities are best placed to determine the staging of urban development through their local OCPs and guidelines provided in the Regional Growth Strategy. Surrey already provides for a rural designation in its OCP, and Council has recently not*

approved applications for urban development in more remote areas, based on the need to ensure the efficient and sustainable phasing of development. As well, local municipalities should be hesitant to accept further designations in the plan, prior to clearly understanding the details of the amendment process that will be associated with the new Regional Growth Strategy.

*While the Options Report notes that there is sufficient land available for residential development, this section does **not** speak to the shortage of industrial/employment land in the region. The City should not agree to a rural designation in advance of understanding more about the regional supply and protection of industrial land and the Options Report amendment process.*

GOAL 2: Diverse and affordable housing choices

Strategy 3: Increase housing supply and diversity, including the supply of housing for low and moderate-income households

This strategy notes that all municipalities across the region should have an adequate stock of affordable housing, including a healthy supply of market and non-profit rental housing. It notes that senior levels of government have a critical role, while local governments can "use the land development approval process to provide additional opportunities for affordable housing". The Options Report asks whether the Regional Growth Strategy would:

- (a) retain the current approach of stating general goals to promote increased housing supply; or
- (b) establish targets by sub region and require municipalities to prepare Housing Action Plans to identify specific objectives and actions for housing supply, diversity and affordability; or
- (c) establish region-wide requirements to provide a uniform approach to matters such as reduced parking regulations, DCCs, and exclusionary zoning.

Response: *Although, Option (b) is preferred, there is a question regarding the use of the word "diversity" in this strategy. There needs to be more definition around what this work means in the context of Regional housing. Sub-regional targets will ensure that all municipalities address sub-regional housing targets. The requirement for Housing Action Plans means that all municipalities will be required to assess a range of housing options that is consistent with their local context. Surrey intends to undertake the development of a Housing Action Plan this year.*

Surrey's housing is among the most affordable in the region, and Surrey is already providing relatively affordable housing for a significant proportion of employees in municipalities that have less affordable housing.

Option (c) is far too prescriptive a role for the region and does not recognize local context and circumstances. The region should not be involved in setting local parking

regulations or in the establishment of municipal DCCs required to finance the infrastructure necessary to provide for new development.

GOAL 3: A strong diverse regional economy

Strategy 4: Maintain an adequate supply of industrial lands to meet the needs of the regional economy

This strategy recognized that the regional economy needs industrial land, including land for storage, distribution, and truck parking, yet the supply of industrial land is declining. The options include:

- (a) stating general goals for industrial protection; or
- (b) identifying significant industrial lands on a map and stating their importance; or
- (c) designating industrial land as a regional land use category with specific guidelines on permitted uses. The regional industrial land use designation would include manufacturing, warehousing, distribution, and supporting office and retail uses, but would not allow stand-alone office or retail uses.

Response: *It is clear that there is not a sufficient supply of industrial land to serve the region's long-term needs. The Options Report does not address where a sustainable supply of industrial land will be found in the region. It is also clear that many municipalities have converted large areas of industrial land to "higher order" uses such as residential. Municipalities such as Surrey, with the largest amount of available industrial land, are expected to provide for the storage, distribution and truck storage needs of the region. This is clearly not acceptable as they are land intensive uses and do little for the quality of life or the tax base of the City. The City of Surrey is now being expected to make for the shortcomings of the prior more historic decisions made by others in Region.*

Option (b) provides for identification of industrial land in the region, but may not be sufficient to stem the tide of conversion of employment lands to other uses.

Option (c), the designation of industrial land, could be considered as a viable option. It would put all municipalities on a level playing field in not converting their industrial lands to residential uses. Surrey is now undertaking an Employment Land Strategy to consider how to protect employment land to ensure that there is a balance of assessment and of jobs to the employed work force. However any consideration of designating industrial or employment land must be based on:

- *clearly understanding the process for amending the Regional Growth Strategy; and*
- *deleting any provision under which the Regional Growth Strategy would regulate the nature and type of employment uses that could go into local employment areas. The Report notes that the only reason that higher density employment uses go into business parks is for economic reasons. Indeed, many office type users require space that is outside of city centres. Other municipalities have attained high job to*

workforce ratios through high-end business parks. Surrey is seeking higher employment densities in its employment areas to provide for jobs close to Surrey residents that will have the effect of shortening average commuting distances and, therefore, will have positive effects on the environment and overall quality of life. It is not appropriate for the region to dictate the nature of employment uses, which may direct that some municipalities, such as Surrey, accept the lion's share of "lower order" uses.

Strategy 5: Facilitate the location of major commercial (retail, office and entertainment) activities in centre locations to enhance access for workers and customers and build prosperous, attractive centres in every sub region

This strategy maximizes the use of infrastructure and transit by concentrating mixed-use development in existing urban centres. It notes that regional town centres and the metropolitan core need to capture new office growth. To do this, the options are for the Regional Growth Strategy to:

- (a) identify the major centres and encourage the establishment of jobs and activities;
or
- (b) designate centres and other strategic economic growth centres and develop policies and guidelines to set out development expectations including commercial and residential density objectives; or
- (c) establish polices and incentives to encourage commercial development in centres and discourage commercial development outside of centres.

Response: *This Strategy should be rewritten by replacing the word "centre locations" with "mixed-use centres."*

A key correction is needed to the map that accompanies this Strategy. Surrey's City Centre has long been recognized as being the second metropolitan centre in the Region, serving as a "downtown" for the areas south of the Fraser River. The relative scale of Town Centres illustrated on this map should be more accurately reflected. For example, Guildford Town Centre, which serves as the town centre for a population of 70,000, as a regional shopping destination, and which is slated for significant density increases is currently shown to be the same as the town centres associated with Pitt Meadows (15,000) or Tsawwassen (25,000). Other significant emerging centres, such as Grandview in South Surrey, which includes over 1.5 million square feet of commercial space and will serve a population of at least 40,000 by 2031 should be recognized on the map.

In addition, it is noted that the Major Centre map ignores educational facilities south of the Fraser. Significant educational institutions, such as Kwantlen University College and SFU Surrey should be added to the map.

Of the options presented, Option (b) is preferred. Surrey is in the process of undertaking a major review of its City Centre Plan, and is attempting to find ways to attract new

business and high-density office development to its City Centre. While all regional town centres are attempting to attract major office development, the lack of a "head office" economy has created a circumstance where all municipalities are competing for the same market. Neither the metropolitan core nor the town centres are seeing significant office growth unless it is supported by the public sector. Consultants have advised that many more industrially oriented office uses, which require road accessibility, will gravitate to business park and many are not suited to downtown locations. If they are deterred from locating in suitable locations, they will more likely move elsewhere than to town centre locations.

Density targets and objectives are best left in the hands of municipalities that understand the local context. Option (c) is not recommended, as it is too prescriptive. The Region should not be involved in evaluating local land use decisions. Any policy to promote the concentration of commercial uses in town centres should focus on incentives as opposed to regulatory restrictions. Incentives could include such things as high quality transit service.

Strategy 6: Maintain the agricultural land base for food production through supportive land use and development policies

This strategy recognizes the importance of the agricultural sector to the local economy, and the value of the ALR, but notes that with continued population growth there will be continue pressure to convert agricultural land to other uses. To protect agricultural land, the Regional Growth Strategy could:

- (a) make general goal statements to protect agricultural land; or
- (b) provide a regional agricultural land designation to reinforce the ALR; or
- (c) provide an agricultural land designation and require municipalities to provide urban/agricultural interface polices in their OCPs.

Response: *This Strategy should expand its focus to food production, and not merely the preservation of the agricultural land base. There is no recognition of the potential role of urban agriculture (Industrial agriculture), or of the fact that significant areas in the ALR are not currently in food production. The strategy should be extended to look at means by which to enhance the production of food in the Region and on agricultural lands. It may be appropriate to identify "food production lands" as opposed to "agricultural lands".*

Surrey strongly supports the retention of the ALR and Surrey's OCP already contains polices with regard to setbacks and buffering adjacent to the ALR, as recommended by Option (c). As part of the pending major review of Surrey's OCP, staff will be reviewing the setback and buffering requirements in consultation with the local stakeholders. In addition, Surrey has Council-adopted policies containing stringent criteria for considering ALR exclusion applications.

There is concern that the agricultural designation would be redundant with the protection provided by the ALR, however the agricultural designation would be virtually

the same as the current Green Zone designation in requiring an amendment to the LRSP before land can be taken out of the Green Zone for urban uses. Understanding the amending formula for the new Regional Growth Strategy would, again, be important in determining support for this option.

An agricultural designation in the Regional Growth Strategy and policies related to enhancing productivity of these lands would recognize the function of and economic value of ALR land, as opposed to the current situation where all ALR land is combined as "Green Zone" with other land that has environmental or recreational value. There is concern that an agricultural designation may simply be duplication at the Regional level of the role and operation of the ALR/ALC.

GOAL 4: Protect and enhance the region's natural assets

Strategy 7: Ensure the long-term protection of critical habitat areas, drinking watersheds, riparian areas, parks, recreation corridors, forests and agricultural lands

The Green Zone is intended to protect the region's natural assets, such as environmentally sensitive areas, major parks, recreational areas, some golf courses and riparian areas. Two options for the future of the Green Zone are to:

- (a) designate a Green Zone in the Regional Growth Strategy and provide general guidance to municipalities on what areas should be included: or
- (b) designate the Green Zone and identify the permitted uses, taking a more direct regional role to ensure consistency for the protection of natural areas.

Response: *The Green Zone as shown on the map accompanying this Strategy should be amended to not include lands in the ALR, since this leads to the misperception that agricultural lands are conservation areas, and not productive, working areas.*

Of the options presented, Option (a) is preferred with the proviso noted above. At this time, there is inconsistency among municipalities in the areas included in the Green Zone, and the region could provide better guidance as to the types of areas to be included and general guidance as to the permitted uses. Option (b) is too prescriptive and does not recognize distinctions and diversity among the types of landscapes included in the Green Zone.

Similar to industrial land, the natural assets map in the Options Report shows that many municipalities, and especially the Burrard Peninsula communities, have long since converted most of their natural areas to urban areas. The proposals suggest that the region should intervene to preserve remaining natural areas to balance this historic fact. The City of Surrey has policies and programs to address environmentally sensitive areas, maintain natural areas and promote biodiversity. The most complete knowledge of natural areas is at the local level and Surrey is undertaking further work in updating its ESA mapping and developing a biodiversity plan. Surrey does not support a regional function in this area beyond the general principle of supporting and providing general

policies for the Green Zone, and coordinating the provision of important linkages between municipalities.

It is also noted that critical habitat is most often not at a regional scale and needs to be addressed in the more refined plans prepared by local governments. This should be acknowledged in the Regional GMS.

Strategy 8: Ensure the protection and enhancement of ecological and recreational connectivity across the region

The Options Report notes that natural assets are located throughout the region, not just in the Green Zone. The Strategy explores two options:

- (a) the Regional Growth Strategy would continue to state general goals and provide high level guidance for integrating ecological values into land development processes and for the provision of regional ecological and recreational corridors; or
- (b) the Strategy would provide regional guidelines for integrating ecological values into the development process and identify regional ecological and recreational greenways on a reference map. It would be specific about the location of corridors and would provide guidelines for protecting natural assets.

Response: *This Strategy, and the map that accompanies it, should be restricted to those ecosystems and critical habitats that are regionally significant, and at a regional scale. It is noted that the terms used in Option (a) are different than the terms used in Option (b) (i.e., "corridors" in comparison to "greenways"). Is this different terminology significant to the intent of the two options?*

Of the options presented, Option (a) is preferred. Ecological and recreational corridors are defined and managed by the City, with input by agencies such as DFO, where there is more complete local knowledge of environmental values. There would be little value in the region becoming involved in the local development approval processes.

A general map of biodiversity values would be useful, as well as a map showing regionally owned assets, links and corridors. The current plan does not show the links between key assets, or contain policies to address biodiversity in these areas. Maps and plans for linking key regional assets with municipal assets, and showing links between municipalities would be of value.

The map currently in the Options Report combines a number of objectives, and should be broken out to more accurately reflect regional objectives with the understanding that fish corridors, wildlife corridors and green pedestrian corridors are distinct from one another and should be considered separately.

GOAL 5: A sustainable regional transportation system

Strategy 9: Increase transit supply through the region and promote walking and cycling

This Strategy promotes increased transit and the link between land use decisions and the provision of transit. Options outlined for the Regional Growth Strategy are:

- (a) to state general goals of increasing transit use; or
- (b) to identify a frequent transit network for the region and set targets for increased transit trips in the Strategy; or
- (c) to identify a frequent transit network, set targets for transit ridership in each sub region, set density guidelines and establish targets for cycling and walking. Guidelines would set minimum densities in transit corridors.

***Response:** The provision of transit services in the Region is the mandate of TransLink. This Strategy should be reworded to read, "Work in cooperation with TransLink to increase transit supply throughout the region and to promote walking and cycling." This more accurately reflects the roles of Metro Vancouver and TransLink in the planning and provision of transit and transportation.*

Of the options presented, the City could support Option (b). While it is noted that TransLink, not Metro Vancouver, provides the frequent transit network, it is important to show this network in the regional plan and link land use and density decisions to this network.

A concern has been raised at a number of the public meetings held by Metro Vancouver, that the Regional Growth Strategy may not coordinate with the decisions and actions of the Province and TransLink in making major transportation decisions. While Surrey will strive to increase densities in its centres and along corridors, Option (c), as set out, is too prescriptive, especially without the guarantee of major investments in transit infrastructure. It is appropriate for the region and TransLink, working in cooperation with municipalities, to identify transit corridors and service design guidelines that provide incentives for compact more dense land use patterns. Any establishment of density and transit trip targets in the plan should be done by agreement with municipalities and should recognize historic development patterns, and realities such as the presence of the ALR along major corridors over which municipalities have no control.

Strategy 10: Advance a regional network of roads and highways that prioritize goods movement, transit operations and high-occupancy vehicles

This strategy recognizes the importance of goods movement in the region's economy and notes the need to allocate road capacity in a way that prioritizes users and manages demand. Options for the Regional Growth Strategy are to:

- (a) state general goals for a regional roads and highways network; or

- (b) map regional roads and highways and continue to state general principles for implementation, noting that TransLink and the Province implement major roads and highways; or
- (c) map the network and have specific lane/corridor road management and transit priority guidelines.

Response: *The responsibility for regional transportation other than transit is shared between TransLink, the Provincial government and local governments. This Strategy should be reworded to read "Work in cooperation with TransLink, the Ministry of Highways and local governments goods movement, transit operations and high-occupancy vehicles.*

Option (c) can be supported. The Regional Growth Strategy should contain updated maps of the major road network and policies for implementation, and Metro Vancouver should clearly link land use and transportation to the extent possible through the maintenance and management of the network and transportation demand management measures. If major transportation infrastructure is indeed the role of other agencies and levels of government, the Regional Growth Strategy should set a clear transit strategy and clear expectations as to what is needed from these other levels of government in order to meet the goals set out in the document.

Strategy 11: Manage Transportation demand

This strategy notes that the current pricing structure of transportation options hides the true cost of car travel. Pricing mechanisms include such items as U-Pass, transit passes, parking fees, fuel taxes, and vehicle levies. Options for the Regional Growth Strategy are:

- (a) to state general goals on managing transportation demand. TransLink would design DTM programs to achieve regional goals; or
- (b) to identify demand management strategies at the local level such as bus lanes and parking supply measures, or road pricing mechanisms at the regional level.

Response: *This is fundamentally outside the realm of Metro Vancouver. This strategy needs to be reworded in a manner similar to that suggested for Strategy 10 above. Road pricing will be managed by TransLink and the Province. Coordination/Alignment between the Regional Growth Strategy and the TransLink Plans is important. Option (a) is preferred. Municipalities can work with Metro Vancouver and TransLink to develop transit priority measures that can provide for improved service levels. For example, working to provide for bus lanes and layover spaces help in accommodating more service. Regional control over parking supply is not supported, although Metro Vancouver is encouraged to work with municipalities to conduct research and provide a level playing field for development by promoting measures such as lower parking standards, taking into account phasing and local context. These activities can take place without providing prescriptive measures in the Regional Growth Strategy.*

What Is Missing?

Through the public consultation process Metro Vancouver staff has asked if there are items missing from the Options Report that should be addressed in the Regional Growth Strategy. The following items are noted for consideration:

- As noted above, the draft Options Report lacks a strong planning vision. The document is focused more on governance and oversight issues than on articulating a strong and compelling vision for the region;
- The plan illustrates the Metro Vancouver core as including the Broadway Corridor, which is much larger than the LRSP core. Why was this change made? This tends to place an emphasis on this centre in comparison to how other important centres like Surrey City Centre are illustrated. This needs to be corrected;
- While the document discusses the need for sustainability and measures to reduce the production of greenhouse gases, it does not contain any guidance or goals on how the region will adapt to inevitable impacts of climate change;
- With the exception of providing diverse and affordable housing choice and mixed use centres, the Options Report does not contain any policies with regard to the social and cultural aspects of region; and
- The final document should contain a more detailed description of how the links to other documents under the umbrella of the Sustainable Region Initiative, such as the Liquid Waste Management Plan, the Solid Waste Management Plan, etc., are used as tools to shape and manage the growth of the region.

General Comments

In the tables and maps describing current population and employment and predicting future population and employment growth, there is a concern that the City of Surrey has been combined with the low-growth municipalities of Delta and White Rock. This does not provide an accurate portrayal of the relative rate of growth of these municipalities over the next 25 years. Major municipalities should be described separately in future documents.

It would appear that the concept of the Growth Concentration Area is being dropped from the revised Regional Context Statement in favour of policies promoting compact development and a clear growth containment boundary. The Growth Concentrations Area was seen as contradictory to the objective of creating complete communities in other viable locations, and the City of Surrey supports the removal of this concept from the Regional Context Statement.

Finally, it is noted that one of the great assets of the regional structure, at this time, is that it is a federation of municipalities working together to reach consensus on major issues. It has been successful and, in the vast majority of instances, municipalities have followed the policies and principles set out in the current Regional Growth Strategy – the LRSP. **Surrey is opposed to the Regional Growth Strategy being overly prescriptive and**

Metro Vancouver becoming another regulatory agency with respect to local land use decisions. Options, which state general goals and provide targets and general guidelines toward which municipalities can work in cooperation with the region are generally preferred.

Workshop Session with Regional Staff:

Given the number and level of concerns documented within this report, it is recommended that Council request that staff arrange a workshop session involving Council and senior staff from both Surrey and Metro Vancouver to discuss the concerns and comments in this report and other matters important to the City of Surrey, in the preparation of a revised Regional Growth Strategy and that such a session be organized as soon as possible.

CONCLUSION

This report provides comments on the document entitled "Choosing a Sustainable Future for Metro Vancouver – Options for Metro Vancouver's Growth Management Strategy" for Council's consideration.

Based on the above discussion, it is recommended that Council:

- Endorse the comments contained within this report as the City of Surrey's response to the document entitled "Choosing a Sustainable Future for Metro Vancouver – Options for Metro Vancouver's Growth Management Strategy";
- Authorize staff to forward a copy of this report and the related Council resolution to Metro Vancouver; and
- Request that staff arrange a workshop session involving City Council and appropriate senior staff from both Surrey and Metro Vancouver to discuss the concerns and comments contained in this report and other matters important to the City of Surrey in the preparation of a revised Regional Growth Strategy and that such a session be organized as soon as possible.

Original signed by
Jean Lamontagne
General Manager
Planning and Development

JM/kms/saw

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