

NO: **R240**

COUNCIL DATE: **November 26, 2012**

REGULAR COUNCIL

TO: **Mayor & Council**

DATE: **November 21, 2012**

FROM: **General Manager, Engineering**

FILE: **0500-01**

SUBJECT: **“Get OnBoard BC” Campaign for Sustainable Public Transit Funding in Metro Vancouver**

RECOMMENDATION

The Engineering Department recommends that Council:

1. Receive this report as information;
2. Endorse the City of Surrey being part of the “Get OnBoard BC” campaign for sustainable public transit funding in Metro Vancouver; and
3. Authorize the City Clerk to forward to each of the campaign coordinator and Metro Vancouver a copy of this report and the related Council resolution.

BACKGROUND

TransLink statistics show that overall transit ridership in Metro Vancouver has increased by 80% since 2000; however, improvements to transit services in the south of the Fraser area have not kept pace with this growth and are not on a par with service in the remainder of the Region. Currently, despite being the second largest municipality in the Region, Surrey receives only about half of the regional average of annual transit service hours per resident.

The City has actively participated with TransLink in the development of the long range regional transit strategy and the medium range South of the Fraser Area Transit Plan. The most recent South of Fraser Area Transit Plan (2008) envisioned a significant increase in transit service in Surrey and new rapid transit systems and rapid bus services connecting to other parts of the Region, including across the new Port Mann Bridge; however, funding has been and continues to be a barrier to fully implementing these plans.

Surrey is committed to assist in developing a sustainable funding strategy for TransLink.

DISCUSSION

The City of Surrey has been approached by the Get OnBoard BC coalition to join their campaign to secure adequate funding from the Provincial Government for public transit in Metro Vancouver. **Get OnBoard BC** is a grassroots coalition of municipalities, business groups, student organizations, professional associations, and academics launched in June of 2012 as a means to advocate for improved public transit in Metro Vancouver. Appendix I provides more information about the **Get OnBoard BC** campaign.

Their slogan “*Tired of being passed up? It’s time to Get OnBoard*” captures the goal of building a regional consensus for funding increased transit service. The City of Vancouver has recently joined the coalition. Other members include post-secondary student associations, members of the former Liveable Region Coalition, the Surrey Board of Trade and other groups concerned about transit in the Region. A sampling of coalition members is provided in Appendix II.

A video has been developed by the coalition which includes quotes from Mayor Watts and other regional decision makers. By joining the coalition, Surrey can help enhance the regional focus on this critical regional issue.

Relationship between Get OnBoard BC and the City’s LRT Advocacy

The **Get OnBoard BC** campaign complements Surrey’s advocacy for Light Rail Transit (LRT) in Surrey. By focusing exclusively on the need for additional long-term sustainable funding for transit, the Get OnBoard BC campaign sets aside any discussion of what projects should have priority and what technology should be used. As noted on their website:

“As an organization, we are agnostic to the use of specific technologies for proposed infrastructure projects. Given the current funding problems facing public transit in the region, debating on specific technologies and specific projects does not address the key question at hand: in the future, how will we fund public transit and future system-wide growth?”

Get Onboard BC is not in a position to advocate for specific solutions or for any specific community’s needs. In contrast, Surrey’s LRT advocacy campaign is focused on securing early implementation of an LRT network to serve the City of Surrey and other south of the Fraser municipalities. However, the most significant barrier to achieving LRT in Surrey and the South of the Fraser area is a lack of funding to build and operate such a project. As such, coordination with Get Onboard BC would be valuable to Surrey’s LRT coalition-building program.

SUSTAINABILITY CONSIDERATIONS

This initiative could assist in achieving a sustainable funding solution for TransLink. As such, it fits with the vision of the City’s Sustainability Charter and could assist in accomplishing the following Charter scope action items:

- SC19: Equity in Social Infrastructure Investments (Transport Infrastructure);
- EC16: Increased Transit & Transportation to Support a Sustainable Economy; and
- EN15: Sustainable Transportation Options.

CONCLUSION

The Get OnBoard BC Campaign for sustainable public transit funding in Metro Vancouver is consistent with the objectives of the City of Surrey and could assist in achieving improved transit services in the south of the Fraser area.

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

- Endorse the City of Surrey being part of the “Get OnBoard BC” campaign for sustainable public transit funding in Metro Vancouver; and
- Authorize the City Clerk to forward to each of the campaign coordinator and Metro Vancouver a copy of this report and the related Council resolution.

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General Manager, Engineering

VL/JB/PL/DB/brb

Appendix I - Information about the “*Get OnBoard BC*” campaign

Appendix II - Get OnBoard BC Coalition Membership

Information about the “Get OnBoard BC” Campaign

Get OnBoard’s aim is to obtain improved funding mechanisms for public transit in Metro Vancouver by raising the issue’s profile among the public, media and decision makers. Through public advocacy, it is hoped that the public transit system can be transformed and that a sustainable and responsible transit option can be developed and implemented to accommodate the region’s substantive future growth.

Get OnBoard has released the following core messages for the improvement of the region’s public transit system:

1. *Rapid transit cannot move forward in Metro Vancouver without sustainable and equitable funding mechanisms: TransLink’s current limited funding options, combined with a decline in revenue from taxes, cannot support the future economic and demographic growth of the region. To see the construction of regional rapid transit, we need new solutions, including potential road use tolling and reallocations from current municipal and provincial taxes. Equally as important, any new funding mechanisms must be equitable, so that dollars raised in a region be targeted to the transit infrastructure of that specific region.*
2. *Municipalities and regional entities need to be given the power of choice: In the past, BC’s provincial government has not always provided an adequate level of support to regional officials with regards to instituting new funding mechanisms to maintain and develop rapid transit. Those who represent the residents of Metro Vancouver should be able to decide freely whether and how to fund rapid transit solutions, rather than be forced to wait for decisions made on their behalf in Victoria.*

What the Campaign Supports

Get OnBoard advocates that collaboration amongst all partners is needed in order to find a solution for the region’s transit system. Here are the key items that the campaign supports:

Introduction of a sustainable and equitable regional funding solution: *In order to meet the demands of a growing region, we have to invest in our public transit system with a new, sustainable funding formula. We need a formula that will address short term funding, as well as mechanisms that will promote long-term growth. To this end, we support options including fair regional tolling policy, reallocation of taxes, including the carbon and the provincial corporate tax to pay for public transit, and potential nominal tax increases to fund short term need. We believe that any solution must be fairly administered and remain responsible to the everyday tax payer, as well as that any funds raised through new mechanisms must go to service and infrastructure projects in that municipality.*

Construction of rapid transit projects region-wide: *With over 5 million people expected to relocate to Metro Vancouver over the next 15-20 years, many current transit lines over capacity, and many areas of the region inaccessible to public transit, Metro Vancouver needs rapid transit. Current proposals in Surrey and on the Broadway corridor are unable to move forward given issues with transit funding, however, are necessary to future economic and population growth region-wide.*

We also believe that any future infrastructure projects must be built jointly between municipal and provincial authorities, with cost being distributed equally and responsibly between parties.

Increased services on needed options: *In the TransLink 2013 Base Plan, over 300,000 proposed hours have been reduced, with further services being cut back as TransLink grapples with how to operate services given reductions in revenue and decreases in capital from funding sources. While resources are being relocated to highly used lines (like the 44,99,480,135, etc.), transit service must be increased to allow for an easily accessible travel within the region. We also need additional services established in low-served transit areas, such as in Surrey and the outlying areas of Metro Vancouver, to create a more integrated transit network.*

Since its launch in June of this year, *Get OnBoard* has continued to gather momentum with a sustained campaign through social media and press releases to showcase the need for long-term transit funding. The campaign is calling on voters to support candidates in the 2013 provincial election that publicly endorse sustainable funding for transit, and includes a petition, a documentary and canvassing voters throughout the region. Organizations are invited to join the campaign with offer to have representation on the *Get OnBoard BC*'s executive board.

APPENDIX II

Selected Get OnBoard BC Membership (as of October 31, 2012):

UBC Alma Mater Society (UBC AMS)

Sustainable Transportation Coalition (STC)

Kwantlen Student Association (KSA)

Surrey Board of Trade

UBC Graduate Students Society (UBC GSS)

Simon Fraser Student's Society (SFSS)

Sustainable SFU

Capilano Student's Union

University Neighborhoods Association (UNA)

Arbutus Ridge Concerned Citizen's Action Committee (ARCCA)

Vancouver Community College Student's Union (VCCSU)

City of Vancouver

Council of Canadians (Vancouver-Burnaby Chapter)

Council of Canadians (Richmond/Delta Chapter)

Vancouver School Board (District #39)