

NO: **R106**

COUNCIL DATE: **June 17, 2013**

REGULAR COUNCIL

TO: **Mayor & Council**

DATE: **May 23, 2013**

FROM: **General Manager, Engineering**

FILE: **0500-01**

SUBJECT: **TravelSmart Partnership**

RECOMMENDATION

The Engineering Department recommends that Council:

1. Receive this report as information;
2. Endorse the City's participation in TravelSmart to promote sustainable transportation behaviour in the City and the Region and, more particularly, in relation to the City's municipal transportation demand management initiatives, such as the City's Safe & Active Schools Program for elementary students and through the promotion of employer-based outreach programs.

INTENT

The purpose of this report is to present an overview of TransLink's TravelSmart Program and to seek endorsement for the City's participation in the Program.

BACKGROUND

TravelSmart is a Regional initiative to promote transportation demand management (TDM). TDM refers to the application of strategies and programs to manage travel demand specifically associated with single-occupancy private vehicles. The most important outcomes of TDM are new behaviours which result in:

- Modal shifts (more people choosing to walk, cycle, take transit and carpool);
- Trip reduction (more people choosing to carpool or conduct business online or by phone);
- Reduction of vehicle kilometres travelled (more people making fewer trips by car and to closer destinations); and
- Time and route shifting (more people changing the time or route of their driving trip to avoid traffic congestion).

TravelSmart

TransLink is mandated by the Province to “develop and implement transportation demand management strategies and programs” (*South Coast British Columbia Transportation Authority Act, 1998*). TransLink’s regional TDM program is named TravelSmart and is independent of other TransLink functions such as transit planning (i.e., TravelSmart does not deliver transportation services or influence transportation planning decisions).

Originally conceived as a personalized transportation marketing program in the mid-2000s, TravelSmart combines targeted outreach, online tools as well as public education and outreach to help achieve behavior change (e.g., participating individuals can pledge to take “one less car trip per week”). Through these initiatives, TravelSmart helps to improve an individual’s awareness and understanding of transportation options and build positive attitudes about sustainable transportation choices.

TravelSmart currently provides a range of programs in Surrey including:

- Travel training in elementary and secondary schools and support for student-led campaigns focused on walking and cycling;
- Business outreach and discounted transit pass programs for employers;
- Transit training sessions for seniors and the “bus buddy” program; and
- Transit training for new immigrants, geared towards those with language barriers.

More formal collaboration with TravelSmart could provide the City with opportunities to expand programs that would act to reduce transportation demands and would add value to current transportation initiatives being undertaken by the City.

Program History

In March 2003, Surrey Council approved the City’s participation in the Transport Canada Urban Transportation Showcase Program, including TravelSmart’s personalized transportation marketing program in South Surrey. Results indicate that the use of more sustainable modes of transportation increased substantially with TravelSmart participants. Walking and public transit use increased by 9% and 12%, respectively, while car trips declined by 8% (Transport Canada, 2010).

During the 2010 Winter Olympics, TravelSmart helped to reduce vehicle traffic by 36% during peak periods. Key TDM strategies included directly engaging employees in downtown Vancouver businesses, working with schools and community associations and raising general community awareness through an integrated media and communications strategy (Transport Canada, 2011).

TravelSmart was subsequently re-launched in 2011, with Port Coquitlam, Langley (City and Township) and the North Shore municipalities initially brought in as municipal partners in 2012. As TravelSmart has gained more experience and resources, it is now able to undertake further expansion into some of the larger municipalities in the Region. In October 2012 TravelSmart’s program manager made a presentation to the Surrey Transportation and Infrastructure Committee. Subsequently, a similar presentation was provided to Council in March 2013 at which time the TravelSmart representative requested that Council endorse the City of Surrey participating in the program. Council referred the matter to staff for a report complete with recommendations.

DISCUSSION

TravelSmart initiatives align with and complement a number of the City's plans and initiatives. For example, the *Transportation Strategic Plan* identifies TDM as being an important tool to manage traffic growth within the Region:

"TDM works at the scale of individuals but has huge power across a community. If every person who drives to work... decided to leave their car at home just one day a month, the 5% reduction in commuter traffic could significantly ease daily congestion" (p. 62).

In addition to supporting high-level transportation and related sustainability goals, the benefits to the City in partnering with TravelSmart are numerous. From a transportation engineering perspective, benefits would likely include:

- Cost savings on sustainable transportation outreach by sharing the delivery of select TDM programs such as Surrey's Safe & Active Schools Program;
- Onboard travel training for seniors and new immigrants at no cost to the City;
- Support for employer-based commuting programs, especially through information sharing;
- Expanded promotion of walking and cycling in City Centre (particularly at major employment sites such as Surrey Memorial Hospital, Central City and the New City Hall) as part of the Surrey City Centre Active Transportation Working Group, of which TravelSmart and the City are members; and
- A TravelSmart web portal to promote the City's transportation services and facilities, which would link to the City's transportation webpage.

The City's participation would further enhance the growing reputation that the City has in providing holistic transportation solutions. In tandem with good land use planning and alongside advocacy for more transit in Surrey, TDM is an important and complementary set of measures to further promote alternative transportation options and/or to decrease the number of trips that are made on streets in Surrey.

SUSTAINABILITY CONSIDERATIONS

Research shows that public education and outreach are important strategies in reducing the number of single-occupant vehicle trips. Transportation infrastructure is very expensive to build and operate and investments are often directly proportional to the number of trips that are made in any given area. Any program that acts to reduce vehicle trips will act to defer the need for additional investment by the City or the Region, which is clearly important from a sustainability perspective in view of the competing demands for resources that cities and the Region face on an on-going basis.

CONCLUSION

Based on the above discussion, it is recommended that Council endorse the City's participation in TravelSmart to promote sustainable transportation behaviour in the City and the Region and, more particularly, in relation to the City's municipal transportation demand management initiatives, such as the City's Safe & Active Schools Program for elementary students and through the promotion of employer-based outreach programs.

Vincent Lalonde, P.Eng.
General Manager, Engineering

JB/PB/MF/brb

Appendix I – Letter dated December 3, 2013 from the Healthier Communities Partnership Committee

g:\wp-docs\2013\admin\cr\05150704mf (md).docx
BRB 6/12/13 3:17 PM



December 3, 2012

Mayor Watts and Council;

The Healthier Communities Partnership Committee wishes to provide our endorsement for the TravelSmart program. We have been connecting with TransLink and the TravelSmart program and see great synergies for the City of Surrey. The way that our citizens choose to travel has important ramifications for individual health, community health, and the health of our environment. There is an increasing body of research that points to the links between obesity levels, chronic illness and active transportation.

The TravelSmart outreach programs for schools, seniors and new Canadians will give us a platform to talk to our constituents about travel choice and the impacts they have on their health. Choosing to walk or ride a bike to work or the grocery store can have very positive effects on health. Just 30 minutes of walking per day can lead to a 50 per cent reduction in a person's chances of cancer, diabetes and heart disease. We often think about going to the gym or for a run as a necessity for physical activity, but if we began to frame our transportation choices as an investment in our health, we could see dramatic impacts for our communities.

We are endorsing the adoption of TravelSmart as Surrey's Transportation Demand Management program, and we hope to continue to explore the potential that transportation options have on the health of our citizens.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mary Martin".

Councillor Mary Martin
on behalf of the Healthier Communities Partnership Committee