

NO: R007

COUNCIL DATE: January 12, 2015

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## REGULAR COUNCIL

TO: **Mayor & Council**

DATE: **January 12, 2015**

FROM: **General Manager, Engineering**

FILE: **8740-01**

SUBJECT: **Metro Vancouver Transportation Plebiscite**

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## RECOMMENDATIONS

The Engineering Department recommends that Council:

1. Support the Region's "Mayors' Transportation and Transit Plan", which includes significant improvements in the South of Fraser area;
2. Support a 0.5% regional sales tax ("Metro Vancouver Congestion Improvement Tax");
3. Endorse advocating for a "yes" vote in the upcoming transportation plebiscite; and
4. Direct staff to develop and undertake a City advocacy plan, with the necessary resources to undertake the work.

## INTENT

The purpose of this report is to highlight the critical importance of a positive transportation plebiscite outcome given the significant benefits to Surrey, and to seek Council's support for the Region's "Mayors' Transportation and Transit Plan" and supporting the funding mechanism proposed by the Mayors' Council on Regional Transportation.

## BACKGROUND

The growth of the region is resulting in increased demands on the transportation systems. To maintain sustainable and responsible growth and to support the economic success of the region, there is a growing and urgent need for significant investment in transportation. Within Surrey, which is seeing the fastest growth in the region (50% population growth is expected between now and 2041, and doubling of jobs) the importance of these transportation improvements is particularly acute.

In June 2014, the Region's Mayors' Council released the "Regional Transportation Investments: A Vision for Metro Vancouver", which forms the basis of the "Mayors' Transportation and Transit Plan". This Plan was developed through extensive assessment of transportation needs for the region, and consolidates the highest-priority projects across the region. In addition to identifying a package of regional improvements, the Regional Mayors' Council was asked by the Province to recommend a funding source to pay for a portion of these investments, which would be put to referendum.

The Mayors and the Province agreed that the funding source must be affordable for residents, balanced between different sectors of the economy and society, and able to keep pace with growth over time. A regional sale tax was considered to be the fairest option because everyone pays, including businesses and visitors to the region, just as everyone benefits from the transportation and transit system. Further, the sales tax approach represented the lowest cost to the average resident compared with other funding mechanisms such as mobility pricing, annual vehicle registration fees, and an increase to the carbon tax.

In December 2014, the Province approved a plebiscite on whether to enable a 0.5% regional sales tax. If approved, the “Metro Vancouver Congestion Improvement Tax” would be applied as a sales tax to the majority of goods and services that are subject to PST and are sold or delivered within the region. The vote will be administered by Elections BC as a mail-in ballot plebiscite beginning March 16, 2015 and extending through May 29. The final question asks:

*“Do you support a new 0.5% Metro Vancouver Congestion Improvement Tax, to be dedicated to the Mayors’ Transportation and Transit Plan? Yes [or] No.”*

## DISCUSSION

In the face of substantial regional population and economic growth, urgent and effective investments in transportation need to be made in order to reduce congestion and provide people with viable transportation alternatives. This is of particular relevance to the South of Fraser area, especially Surrey, given our large population and rapid growth. The Regional “Mayors’ Transportation and Transit Plan” responds to these issues and calls for very significant improvements in the South of Fraser area, as part of a \$7.5 billion package of regional investments.

Surrey and the South of Fraser area already face a number of significant transportation challenges with increasingly congested roads and a level of transit that cannot meet current demand. Investment in all modes of transportation has been constrained by a lack of sustained and equitable regional funding, and this is proving to be insufficient to meet City growth.

It is well known that there are regional inconsistencies with regards to the distribution of all levels of transit service and infrastructure from rapid transit through to local bus services. For example, in 2012, only about 20% of bus revenue (operating) hours were allocated to the South of Fraser area, despite it being home to approximately 30% of the regions’ population and one out of five South of Fraser residents did not have any transit service.

The Region’s “Mayors’ Transportation and Transit Plan” addresses this service gap in addition to providing other significant and necessary, multi-modal improvements. These include:

- Build and run a 27-km Light Rail Transit (LRT) network in Surrey connecting City Centre, Newton, Guildford, Fleetwood, Clayton, and Langley;
- Add more bus service, including three new B-Line routes and substantial improvements to transit service throughout Surrey (e.g. new service in Clayton);
- Maintain and upgrade the Major Road Network (e.g. road widening on 64 Avenue and Fraser Highway); and
- Build a new Pattullo Bridge.

See Appendix I and Appendix II for a more detailed list of projects and improvements from which the City and South of Fraser area would benefit.

## **Advocacy and Awareness-Raising**

At the regional level there are two different organizations engaged in the plebiscite process. The Regional Mayors' Council is responsible for raising awareness of the plebiscite, identifying the benefits of a positive outcome, and leading public education and outreach efforts, including open houses and mainstream advertising. Stakeholder advocacy efforts are being led by a non-profit organization comprised of business, education, labour and environmental organizations called the Better Transportation and Transit Coalition. There is local Surrey representation and support for the Coalition.

Independent polling shows that current awareness for the plebiscite is low in the South of Fraser area. With Surrey representing approximately 20% of the region's population, City advocacy will be very important to achieve a positive regional outcome and ensure the timely delivery of LRT.

Surrey advocacy for the plebiscite will support the Regional Mayor's Council and the Coalition for example, by:

- Increasing awareness of the plebiscite among Surrey and South-of-Fraser stakeholders;
- Providing information on Surrey and South-of-Fraser transportation issues and improvements in the Mayors' Plan;
- Coordinating and supporting local public awareness initiatives with the Regional Mayors' Council staff (secretariat);
- Working with the "Yes" Coalition to develop locally relevant messaging; and
- Providing administrative support to Surrey-based Coalition members.

In addition, staff is recommending the development of a comprehensive advocacy plan for Surrey, with specialist consultant support, to include:

- A citizen communications plan to engage, inform, and encourage a "yes" vote;
- A stakeholder engagement plan to connect with community leaders and local organizations;
- A government relations plan for provincial and federal elected officials;
- A social media plan for platforms, including Twitter and Facebook;
- An advertising plan delivered across various advertising mediums; and
- A media outreach plan.

## **SUSTAINABILITY CONSIDERATIONS**

A positive referendum outcome will assist in achieving the objectives of the City's "Sustainability Charter", including in particular the following Surrey Sustainability Charter Scope action items:

- SC13: Create a Fully Accessible City;
- EC7: Promote Sustainable Building and Development Practices; and
- EC16: Increase Transit and Transportation to Support a Sustainable Economy.

## CONCLUSION

The upcoming plebiscite for the 0.5% regional sales tax is of critical importance to the City. A successful outcome will support the implementation of extensive multi-modal transportation improvements, which will help to address current regional transportation inequities, reduce congestion and shape the future growth of the City particularly through the implementation of LRT. Therefore, the Engineering Department recommends that Council:

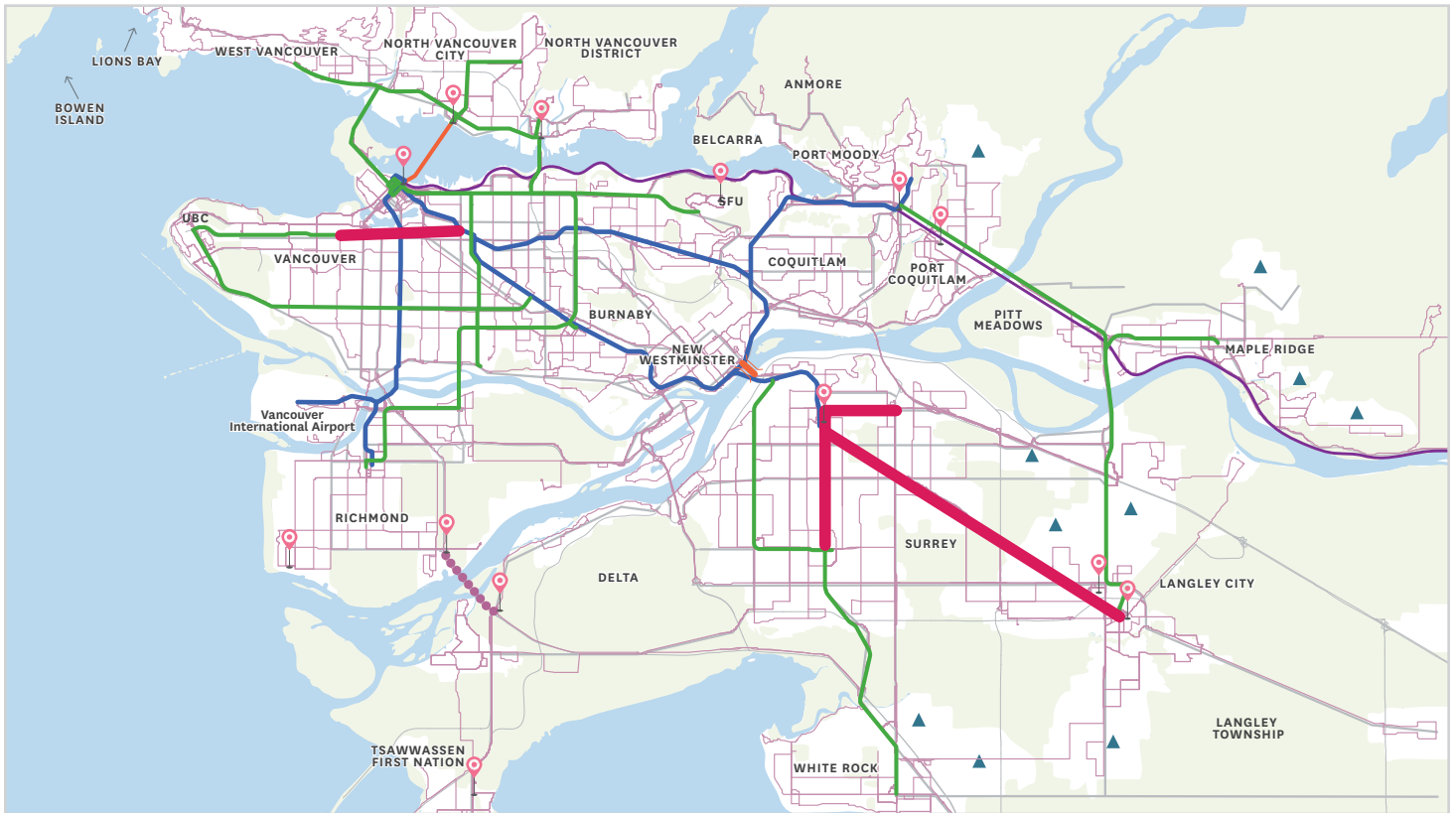
- Support the “Mayors’ Transportation and Transit Plan”, which includes significant improvements in the South of Fraser area;
- Support a 0.5% regional sales tax (“Metro Vancouver Congestion Improvement Tax”);
- Endorse advocating for a “yes” vote in the upcoming transportation plebiscite; and
- Direct staff to develop and undertake a City advocacy plan, with the necessary resources to undertake the work.

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General Manager, Engineering

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Appendix I – Map of Regional Transportation Improvements  
Appendix II – Benefits to Surrey and South of Fraser Area

# Appendix I - Map of Regional Transportation Improvements



## TRANSPORTATION PRIORITIES

A list of transportation investments, upgrades and services that are required to keep Metro Vancouver moving:

### ROADS

**A new 4-lane Pattullo Bridge to replace this aging but vital connection**

**Maintaining and upgrading the 2,300 lane kilometres of Major Road Network (MNR) to keep people and goods moving, enhance safety and connect our communities**

**Planned Provincial Massey Bridge**

### EXISTING RAIL TRANSIT

**Expand capacity of existing rail lines:** more train cars and expanded stations and systems to meet the growing needs on the **Expo, Millennium and Canada Lines, and the West Coast Express**

## NEW RAPID TRANSIT

**Light rail transit (LRT) in Surrey and the Langleys** to meet the needs of these rapidly growing communities. LRT service connecting Guildford, Surrey City Centre and Newton. And LRT service connecting Surrey City Centre and Langley Centre along Fraser Highway

**A Millennium Line extension from VCC-Clark to Arbutus Street, tunneled along the Broadway corridor** to serve current and future demand along the region's busiest bus corridor

## BUS & SEABUS SERVICE

**25% increase in bus service across the region:** This increase adds 400 more buses to the existing fleet of 1,830

**200 more kilometres of B-Line or better routes:** 11 new fast, frequent, reliable limited-stop services across the region

- More frequent all-day service:** significant expansion of the network of high frequency services, with service every 15 minutes or better, all day, 7 days a week

- More frequent peak-hour service:** so that commuters spend less time waiting in the morning and afternoon rushes

- 50% more SeaBus service:** every 15 minutes all day and every day, increasing to 10 minutes during the morning and afternoon rushes

- Service to new and growing lower-density neighbourhoods** across the region

- 80% more NightBus:** Increased service for those who need to get around late at night

- 30% more HandyDART service:** Improved service for those who cannot use transit without assistance and to meet the growing needs of our aging population

- 13 new or expanded transit exchanges** across the region to serve growing demand, support new transit service and make the system easier to use

## CYCLING AND WALKING

- 2,700 kilometres of bikeways,** including 300 km of fully traffic-separated routes: Making cycling a safer choice for both cyclists and motorists

- Better connections to transit** through **improved walking and waiting facilities** at or near transit stops and stations

## SYSTEM MANAGEMENT

- Expanded customer service programs** (e.g. information, incentives, and integrated payment systems) to make the system easier to use and more efficient

- Investment in transit priority** to move more people, faster along busy corridors

\*Note: Highlighting indicates priorities of benefit to Surrey

### Benefits to Surrey and South of Fraser Area

To provide a fast and efficient transportation system in a growing region, the Regional “Mayors’ Transportation and Transit Plan” is proposing new and better service, expanded infrastructure and other investments to keep the region’s people and goods moving.

Implementation of the Plan will:

- Enable 195,000 more Surrey and South of Fraser residents to be within walking distance of high-quality rapid transit;
- Provide 70% of the region’s residents, or 1.5 million more people, with transit service so frequent throughout the day that a schedule is not needed;
- Reduce traffic congestion, allowing drivers and transit users to save 20-30 minutes per day on many of the region’s most congested corridors;
- Save about 200 lives and prevent about 4,000 serious injuries every year; and
- Keep our economy competitive with faster and more reliable travel and better access to more jobs, workers, and markets.

Benefits to Surrey and the South of the Fraser include:

1. LIGHT RAIL TRANSIT (LRT)
  - LRT in Surrey will provide high-quality rapid transit as well as other benefits for Surrey.
  - A 27-km LRT network on 104 Avenue, King George Boulevard, and Fraser Highway will connect Surrey City Centre, Newton, Guildford, Fleetwood, Clayton Heights and the City and Township of Langley.
2. ROAD INVESTMENT – UPGRADES OF MAJOR ROADS
  - An additional \$36 million per year will go towards widening and upgrading major roads around the region such as 64 Avenue, King George Boulevard, Fraser Highway, and 88 Avenue to improve capacity and safety
3. PATTULLO BRIDGE
  - A new four-lane bridge, designed to allow for future expansion to six lanes, will replace the existing Pattullo Bridge.
  - The new bridge will include modern lane widths that meet safety standards, a centre barrier separating northbound and southbound traffic, and effective cycling and pedestrian facilities.

4. B-LINE – INTRODUCING NEW B-LINE SERVICES
  - The 96 B-Line will be extended to Semiahmoo/White Rock Centre via King George Boulevard and 152nd Street.
  - A new B-Line will be introduced on Fraser Highway from Surrey City Centre to Langley until LRT is implemented (until LRT is introduced).
  - A new B-Line will be introduced on Scott Road and 72 Avenue from Scott Road Station to Newton Exchange.
  
5. BUS – INCREASE IN SERVICE FOR MORE RELIABLE, MORE FREQUENT AND EXTENDED SERVICE
  - Existing, frequent all-day transit service will improve on busy routes such as King George Boulevard, Scott Road, and Fraser Highway.
  - New, frequent all-day transit routes will be added to new corridors such as 64 Avenue and 84 Avenue.
  - Existing, frequent peak transit service will be improved along routes like 108 Avenue
  - Transit coverage will be improved in areas such as Clayton, Morgan Creek, and Anniedale.
  
6. SKYTRAIN UPGRADES
  - The Expo line will receive upgrades and expansion to fleet and stations to reduce overcrowding and improve the transit experience.
  
7. BUS EXCHANGE UPGRADES
  - Surrey City Centre Exchange will be upgraded and reconfigured.
  
8. CYCLING/WALKING IMPROVEMENTS
  - Investments will be made toward 2,700 kilometres of bikeways including 300 kilometres of fully traffic separated routes region-wide.
  - Pedestrian connections to transit will be improved at or near transit stops and stations.
  
9. HANDYDART SERVICE
  - Services will be increased 30% for those who cannot use transit without assistance.
  
10. NIGHTBUS SERVICE
  - Services will be increased 80% for those who need to get around late at night.