

NO: R038

COUNCIL DATE: February 20, 2017

REGULAR COUNCIL

TO: **Mayor & Council**

DATE: **February 16, 2017**

FROM: **General Manager, Engineering**

FILE: **8740-01**

SUBJECT: **Surrey Light Rail Transit Vision**

RECOMMENDATION

The Engineering Department recommends that Council:

1. Receive this report as information;
2. Authorize staff to implement the Light Rail Transit (LRT) vision and framework for the full development of urban integration and design guidelines including development planning along all LRT corridors in the City; and
3. Endorse the LRT vision in transforming Surrey into 'Connected-Complete-Livable' communities, and more specifically, the official vision statement:

“Street-oriented LRT will transform Surrey into connected, complete and livable communities, making the City and Region more vibrant, accessible, competitive and sustainable.”

INTENT

The purpose of the report is to present the Surrey LRT vision and the associated framework. This work will support discussions seeking endorsement from TransLink and will enable on-going work to meet the needs of urban integration and LRT related development planning along LRT corridors.

BACKGROUND

The provision of rapid transit in Surrey is supported by nearly 40 years of regional policies and transportation plans. Since the 1976 Livable Region proposal, where the town centres in the region were proposed to be connected by a rapid transit network, a succession of regional strategic plans have identified the need to connect Surrey City Centre with other regional centres and the town centres within Surrey. These plans include the Livable Region Strategic Plan (1993), Transport 2021 (1993), the South of Fraser Area Transit Plan (2008), Metro Vancouver's Regional Growth Strategy (2011) and TransLink's Regional Transportation Strategy (2013).

Mayors' Council 10-Year Vision

In 2009, TransLink and the Province jointly launched the Surrey Rapid Transit Alternatives Analysis (SRTAA) study. An extensive review was carried out for nearly 700 alternatives that combined different rapid transit technologies (i.e., Bus Rapid Transit (BRT), Light Rail Transit (LRT) and SkyTrain) with a range of identified corridor options. After consulting with stakeholders through an initial screening, and eventual high-level qualitative and quantitative evaluation process, three rapid transit corridors emerged as the most preferred, namely 104 Avenue, King George Boulevard and Fraser Highway.

Subsequent evaluation resulted in a handful of shortlisted options being identified with varying technology choices, geographical coverage and associated costs. In June 2014, the Mayors' Council in development of the region's 10-Year Vision Plan reviewed this material along with updated analysis and selected LRT as the preferred technology. The Mayors' Council's transit and transportation vision provides LRT South of Fraser in two phases:

- Phase 1: Surrey-Newton-Guildford (SNG) Line - connecting Surrey City Centre with Newton and Guildford town centres along King George Boulevard and 104 Avenue, and delivered within 7 years of adopting the vision; and
- Phase 2: Surrey-Langley (SL) Line - operating along Fraser Highway from King George Boulevard to Langley City, planned for service within 12 years after adoption of the vision.

Technical planning of Surrey Light Rail has been proceeding since early 2015, led by TransLink in close communication with City of Surrey staff and key stakeholders.

On November 23, 2016, a substantial funding commitment for Phase 1 was approved by the TransLink Board of Directors and Mayors' Council following extensive public consultation. This allowed planning, design and consultation efforts for the SNG Line to be advanced to the pre-procurement stage.

DISCUSSION

Eglinton Crosstown LRT Project Experience

Street-oriented, modern, low-floor LRT is being planned all across Canada, including Edmonton, Calgary, Toronto and Mississauga. These growing cities are rethinking rail transit and the transformative benefits an urban-style LRT system can bring to create modern urban centres that support jobs, business, residential and community life.

In September 2016, Surrey hosted the City of Toronto's Chief Planner, Jennifer Keesmaat, who shared the experiences of Toronto in preparing for and constructing a similar "urban LRT" line along Eglinton Avenue and explained how urban LRT gives cities the opportunity to build and design connected centres, keep people and jobs local, and re-envision streets and communities.

Pointing to the vision that inspired the Eglinton LRT project in Toronto, the lecture brought new perspectives and key lessons learnt from Canada's largest city to Surrey, with key focus on the value of establishing an overall civic vision and overall urban integration plan, rather than 'traditional' travel time driven model, which tend to underplay the true transformative urban benefits ground based LRT technology brings in integrating communities, improving the user experience, animating the streetscape with more pedestrian activity and local vibrancy.

Having a vision and urban integration plan ensures that the new LRT infrastructure is well-integrated throughout the entire corridor, and considers elements beyond just the immediate track infrastructure such as streetscapes, sidewalks, cycle tracks, landscaping and plazas. Leveraging benefits from private development, by encouraging interfaces between active ground floor fronting businesses, lends to the look and feel of a successful LRT system.

Toronto's experience ended in highlighting opportunity to leverage investment in rapid transit to reshape their communities along the corridor by building a compelling vision and reaching agreement on municipal integration with delivery agency early. Toronto's experience also stresses the value and public benefit of using LRT (in this case, Eglinton) as more than just transportation from point A to point B, but rather as a catalyst for revitalization along the whole corridor the system serves.

Vision Development Consistent with the Region and City Plans

To be part of the transformation occurring in other growing cities around Canada and around the world, City staff are undertaking a similar exercise to develop a vision for Surrey LRT that will be integral to building an integrated regional transportation system in Surrey, one which brings life to Surrey's streets and builds city-shaping. In this sense, a vision for Surrey LRT is crucial not only in building a great transit system, but also in building a great city.

In this sense, the City of Surrey identified the need for its own vision that will build internal and external alignment and which articulates the unique value of LRT while reflecting Surrey Council and TransLink Board priorities.

The vision will articulate the transformative aspects of LRT technology, more specifically making communities vibrant, connecting places where people can live and work, linking communities by a street-oriented rail network, and bringing together mobility and affordability. Creating a shared vision establishes the framework for discussions with the region, as well as for public communications and engagement work.

Over recent years, the City of Surrey has developed a series of strategic city-shaping plans and undertaken a number of initiatives to ensure that the City's transportation, land use and livability goals are supported and integrated with rapid transit. To this end, on October 20, 2014, Surrey City Council adopted the revised City Official Community Plan (OCP) to guide urban development in Surrey Metro Centre with multiple nodes in five town centres. The updated OCP focuses on rapid transit as a means of linking communities to focus and stimulate development and build the future of the City by leveraging the construction of an on-street, urban style LRT system. The City engaged extensively to develop the OCP's nine interconnected 'building blocks' centred on a core theme of creating a greener, more complete, more compact and connected community, that is resilient, safer, inclusive, healthier and more beautiful. These are illustrated in Appendix "I" and form the basis for the City's LRT vision elements.

Furthermore, the LRT vision provides for better places to live, built on transportation excellence, and aligns with regional plans and policies:

- SCBCTA (TransLink) Act: The purpose of the act is to move people and goods and support economic development, environment, and regional growth strategy.
- Regional Transportation Strategy (RTS): The Strategy sets out an approach on investing in system expansion with increasing focus on walkways and bike networks to and within the Frequent Transit Network (FTN). In addition, the Strategy encourages development of corridor and area plans that improve access to frequent transit areas and affordable housing, while nurturing the principles of healthy communities with prosperous businesses, safe streets, clean air and thriving natural environments.

- Mayors’ Council 10-Year Vision: The Vision calls for concurrent investment in connecting municipal infrastructure and direct contributions - TransLink to play a catalyst role in cost-sharing upgrades.
- BC on the Move: The plan commits to provide more travel choices in urban areas by investing in cycling, walking and transit throughout the Province.

LRT Vision Framework

Based on assessment of other successful LRT systems and dialogue with senior staff, the City established a LRT vision framework to guide the full development of urban integration and design guidelines along all LRT corridors in the City. The framework includes three crucial vision elements that lead into the associated vision statement.

The three elements are key in defining the project vision, more specifically;

Connected-Complete-Livable

These elements and components inform the intent, look and outcome of the LRT system the City is striving to deliver and are further defined below and illustrated as renderings and real life examples in Appendix “II”.

Vision Elements	Description
Connected	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connecting people, places and communities quickly, safely and seamlessly to destination as well as connections to the region • Bring fast transit to the doorstep, create safe, seamless pedestrian connections, improve accessibility, reinforce and promote short trips to local parks, libraries, community centres, cultural hubs
Complete	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creating “Complete” streets through entire corridor that includes sidewalks, cycling tracks, boulevard/public realm interface with businesses • Integrated multi-modal trips and make it safe, attractive and comfortable for all to get around • Consistent standards will bring out quality and unique Corridor identity
Livable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Livable communities are beautiful, affordable and healthy places where people and jobs want to be • Livable will evolve Surrey’s unique community identity and allow for sustainable, green infrastructure and landscape; reinforce and connect natural heritage and features

In December 2016, the City introduced the LRT vision elements of Connect-Complete-Livable, with a broad selection of stakeholders and an associated ‘word cloud’ (Appendix “III”), which illustrated a variety of characteristics representing the LRT vision which was met with overall support.

The City has further refined the visioning work, distilling the key elements into a single vision statement:

“Street-oriented LRT will transform Surrey into connected, complete and livable communities, making the City and Region more vibrant, accessible, competitive and sustainable.”

Moving LRT Vision forward

The LRT vision will be integral to Surrey's community, Transportation and city-shaping vision and will allow build constituency, establish an emotional connection and support municipal integration.

The vision framework will guide the plans and policies forward as well as inspire and engage Surrey citizens, partners, businesses and community leaders on LRT vision. More immediately, it will help direct the urban integration and design guidelines as the project matures, including the next phase of development planning that:

- Articulates how LRT infrastructure will integrate or “fit in” with evolving urban environment of the corridor on “opening day” and at “ultimate buildout”;
- Illustrates the corridor vision and design principles in order to enrich further public resident consultation, corridor interface with private development and public realm at large and to assist the LRT project procurement process; and
- Illustrates and develops guidelines with respect to character defining element of individual neighbourhood along alignment for private sector development.

CONCLUSION

Based on the above, it is recommended that Council:

- Receive this report as information;
- Authorize staff to implement the Light Rail Transit (LRT) vision and framework for the full development of urban integration and design guidelines including development planning along all LRT corridors in the City; and
- Endorse the LRT vision in transforming Surrey into ‘Connected-Complete-Livable’ communities, and more specifically, the official vision statement:

“Street-oriented LRT will transform Surrey into connected, complete and livable communities, making the City and Region more vibrant, accessible, competitive and sustainable.”

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PL/MD/SI/cc

Appendix “I” – City Vision Elements
Appendix “II” – Connected-Complete-Livable
Appendix “III” – Word Cloud

City Vision Elements



Connected-Complete-Livable

LRT: Transforming Surrey



Vision Elements: *Connected, Complete, Livable*



LRT Vision Element: *CONNECTED*



Connecting people, places and communities quickly, safely and efficiently

CONNECTED: Gold Coast - Australia



LRT Vision Element: *COMPLETE*



Complete streets make it safe, attractive and comfortable for all to get around

COMPLETE: Strasbourg – France



LRT Vision Element: *LIVABLE*



Livable communities are unique, beautiful and healthy places where people and jobs want to be

LIVABLE: Strasbourg - France



Word Cloud

