



Corporate NO: R051

Report COUNCIL DATE: March 6, 2000

REGULAR COUNCIL

TO: Mayor & Council **DATE: March 2, 2000**

FROM: Manager, Land Development & Transportation
Engineering Department **FILE: 0048-001**

SUBJECT: TransLink's Draft Strategic Transportation Plan

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council:

1. Receive this report as information,
2. Pass the resolution "That TransLink pursue through the UBCM / FCM, and the Federal Government to dedicate a portion of its current gas tax towards funding of the Strategic Plan, and
3. Forward a copy of this report to TransLink.

INTENT

To advise Council on the highlights of the draft Strategic Transportation Plan (STP) produced by TransLink, as it pertains to the City of Surrey. An overview of the Plan was provided at the last GVRD (Greater Vancouver Regional District) Council-of-Councils meeting held in Richmond on January 29, 2000.

BACKGROUND

The Greater Vancouver Transportation Authority (GVTA) was established approximately 1½ years ago. It formally commenced its function as the regional transportation authority as of April 1, 1999. The GVTA Act that created the organization (now known as TransLink) states that the Authority must prepare and adopt a strategic transportation plan respecting the regional transportation system and transportation demand management, within two years of being established. The two-year period ends this fall. However, the TransLink Board approved a recommended target date of the end of March, 2000, so that the Plan and

associated public consultation process could guide the Board in its program plans and budgets for 2000.

Over the past several months, TransLink staff have hurriedly prepared the draft Plan which was presented to the TransLink Board of Directors on January 19, 2000. The public consultation process is planned throughout February and early March. The Board's Committee-of-the-Whole will hear public delegations on the proposed draft Plan at its March 1, 2000, meeting. Subsequently, the Board is expected to receive a summary of all public input at its Regular Meeting on March 15, 2000. This may also include the submission of a modified Plan based on the public input received. The Board is then expected to consider the draft Plan for final approval at its meeting on March 29, 2000.

It should also be noted that the Plan must be submitted to the GVRD Board for ratification, as stipulated in the GVTA Act, Section 14(4). Ratification by the GVRD Board is intended to run concurrently with the TransLink Board's review and public consultation process to minimize the overall review and approval period.

DISCUSSION

General Summary of the Draft STP

The objectives of the draft Plan are generally consistent with Surrey's recently adopted Transportation Plan.

A copy of TransLink's draft Strategic Transportation Plan Executive Summary is attached for information. It is based on the Livable Region Strategic Plan (LRSP) and the Transport 2021 Study (T2021). It is considered an interim strategic plan, since the timeframe to develop this plan was very compressed and also since the GVRD's (Greater Vancouver Regional District's) LRSP is to be reviewed in 2001. The interim Plan sets out specific actions that TransLink proposes to take over the next three to five years only. It is expected that a more complete strategic plan, covering a twenty to thirty-year period of time, will be developed in conjunction with the LRSP review over the next two years.

The LRSP and T2021 were finalized and adopted by the GVRD approximately seven years ago. However, certain objectives set by these plans relative to transit market-share in the region and TDM (Transportation Demand Management) have not been met. Population growth is occurring outside of the Growth Concentration Area; employment growth continues to be dispersed within the Region; transit mode-share by 2006 was targeted to be at about 17% compared to about 11% today; and TDM objectives are not being met.

In response to this, an ambitious draft Plan was developed that substantially increases transit expenditures; undertakes selective road development or improvements; and focuses on managing transportation demand. It will also include ongoing annual monitoring of transportation system performance within the Region, for those systems under TransLink's responsibility.

The Plan's vision is "Enhanced Livability through Managed Mobility", outlined under three global objectives as follows:

1. Enhance the transit system through expansion of existing services and provision of a range of new services that meet customer needs.
2. Improve the Major Road Network through rehabilitation and upgraded maintenance of existing roadways, and selective addition of new facilities that will support goods movement and relieve congestion at key locations.

3. Develop a system that implements transportation demand management, promotes the use of walking, cycling, and other alternatives and will integrate management of all elements of the transportation system in a fiscally responsible manner and monitor the progress of implementation.

To achieve these objectives over the next five years, the draft Plan proposes to increase TransLink's annual expenditures from approximately \$507 million today to approximately \$815 million by 2005. This is to be financed through a transit fare increase of \$0.25 (one-zone fare) in June, 2000 and again in 2003; an impact related automobile levy averaging \$75 per vehicle beginning October, 2001, and increasing by 5% annually; and the addition of a parking charge in 2005. Implicit in this Plan is the fact that without these sources for increased revenues, the scale of the Plan will be markedly different. Other sources of increased revenue are either unavailable to TransLink (e.g., increased fuel tax, hydro levy) or not supported by its members (i.e., increased property taxes). The alternative would be a substantial annual deficit of nearly \$200 million by 2005.

Highlights Specific to Surrey

1. Overall Transit Plan

The overall Transit Plan component proposes about a 32% increase in service hours over current service hour levels by 2005. This would be realized by an increase in the City bus fleet, express buses, B-line vehicles (articulated buses), introduction of Community Bus in specific areas (e.g., South Surrey), the addition of a SkyTrain line and an additional train for West Coast Express. This is aimed at increasing ridership levels by about 29% over current levels (i.e., from about 11% region-wide to 14%).

One of the original motivators in the creation of the GVTA was the issue of the inefficiencies of the regional transit system, subsequently one of the goals for the GVTA was to improve service levels through greater efficiency in transit service delivery. The STP is addressing this goal to a degree; by the planned provision for Service Plan reviews on an on-going basis which would seek to review the existing system and introduce efficiencies (routing changes, etc.) where possible. In addition, the provision of new or alternative types of service such as Community Shuttle, would be provided through a competitive tendering process. However, the Plan does not speak to other possible initiatives to address other existing inefficiencies which should also be pursued. A commitment to continue to address such issues should be incorporated into the Plan.

1.1 Express Bus Service

The introduction of new Express Service Buses (highway-type buses with reading lamps, luggage racks, high-back seats) on routes from South Surrey/White Rock to Vancouver (using Highway 99) should eliminate standing on this route. Due to the long travel distance and higher operating speeds, the reduction of the number of standees on this route has been a consistent request from the public.

New express routes between Richmond Centre and Surrey City Centre, and between Surrey City Centre and Coquitlam Centre, are planned for introduction in 2001 and 2003, respectively. This reflects consistent service requests from the public and Surrey over the past decade and will be welcomed.

1.2 B-Line Service

This is a high frequency (minimum 10-minute headways), limited stop bus service. The first in the region was the "99B-line" on Broadway, which resulted in a dramatic increase in ridership. Future services are intended to incorporate new technology that enables these transit vehicles to communicate

with traffic signals (resulting in fewer delays), and provides real-time information to passengers waiting for the next bus.

A future B-line in Surrey is planned for the King George Highway/104 Avenue corridor between White Rock and Guildford. The timing of this planned service is beyond the draft STP timeframe.

1.3 City Bus

The fleet of City buses is to be increased from 1,042 vehicles today to 1,323 vehicles by 2005 (about a 27% fleet increase). This is intended to raise the level of service throughout the Region, focusing on the higher density areas or the Growth Concentration Areas according to the LRSP. The objective is to provide a minimum of 10-15 minute frequency service during peak hours and 15-20 minute service during the daytime in these areas.

The areas encompassing Newton, Surrey City Centre/Whalley, Guildford and Fleetwood are to be included under this plan (i.e., the higher density areas of Surrey).

1.4 Community Shuttle

This service can range from shared-ride taxis to 30-foot vehicles operating on fixed routes during the day and operating as demand-responsive service during the evening, where standard transit vehicles are expensive and ineffective to operate. These services are to be introduced where minimum performance and productivity standards are met. It is intended to have as many as 52 Community Shuttle Buses operating in about ten communities within the Region.

The first area planned for the pilot implementation of the Community Shuttle service is South Surrey/White Rock. Implementation is planned for December, 2000. Planning work for the service in this area has been ongoing for about the past eight months and is nearly complete. Once the plan is implemented it should be monitored to evaluate its cost effectiveness, increase in ridership and be modified, if necessary.

1.5 Area Transit Plans

Monitoring and updating area transit plans is to become a means to monitor transit system performance and make improvements where necessary. It is intended to introduce fixed three-year cycles for the development of Area Transit Plans.

The South of Fraser Area Transit Plan was initiated in 1999 and is to be completed by the spring, 2000. This area includes Delta, Surrey, White Rock and the Langleys. The next scheduled review and update of the Area Service Plan would be for 2002 and 2005.

1.6 SkyTrain

The Transport 2021 Study identified the need for additional lines to be completed by 2006. The existing Vancouver to Surrey line is at capacity in peak periods. This will be alleviated with the introduction of twenty new Mark II cars that will increase capacity by about 25%. The addition of the New Westminster to Lougheed/Central Broadway line will provide additional capacity in this area.

However, there will be a slight reduction in capacity on the Surrey portion of the SkyTrain line, as the operation of the new line will require diversion of trains to Lougheed via New Westminster. It has been indicated by TransLink staff that during peak periods, one of every three trains from Waterfront Station will divert to Lougheed Mall via New Westminster. This means that during the peak period, headways between trains will increase from every two minutes to/from King George Station to about every 3-4 minutes. For off-peak periods, train headways to/from King George Station will increase to about six minutes, compared to about five-minute headways currently. Headways on the Lougheed portion of the line will be six minutes at any time. This is not expected to have a significant impact on trips to/from Surrey as boardings are generally more predominant west of the New Westminster Station.

2. Road and Infrastructure Plan

The recommended strategy intends to ensure that the existing transportation infrastructure assets are maintained and enhanced, while providing future network needs to meet growing demands. It intends to achieve better coordination and management of the assets.

A number of objectives, and associated action items, are outlined that support this strategy and that are applicable on a region-wide basis as follows:

Major Road Network (MRN) Designation - maintain the integrity of the MRN by including only those roads that meet approved criteria.

MRN Maintenance & Rehabilitation - implement standards and cost tracking that ensure the MRN is maintained to acceptable standards in a cost-effective manner. Available funding for uploaded roadways will increase by the Year 2002 to \$12,000/lane-km/year for each eligible municipality from the current \$9600/lane-km/year. Funding for downloaded highways will be maintained at the current level of \$12,000/lane-km/year.

TransLink Bridges - maintain TransLink-owned bridges to acceptable standards in a cost-effective manner (i.e., Knight Street, Pattullo, and Westham Island).

Road Capital Projects - improve the efficiency of the MRN by funding annual programs of minor capital projects on the network and establish cost-sharing arrangements with municipalities; establish an annual capital allocation of \$5 million in 2000, increasing to \$40 million by 2004, for the provision of new major road facilities in partnership with other agencies.

For minor capital projects, the current allocation of \$10 million is expected to double by 2005. Based on 50/50 cost-sharing, each municipality will be eligible for funding using a pre-determined formula. This potentially doubles Surrey's current eligible annual funding from about \$2.2 million to \$4.4 million by 2005.

A total of seven major capital projects were identified as having a strategic role in serving transportation demand within the Region. TransLink intends to pursue partnerships with the Province and others to examine these projects further. Of the seven projects, the following impact Surrey:

- South Fraser Perimeter Road;
- Fraser River Crossing (to replace the Albion Ferry);
- Fraser Highway Widening (King George Highway to Surrey/Langley boundary);

- Highway 10 Widening (Scott Road to 152 Street).

One issue TransLink may wish to consider for the Highway 10 project would be to allocate these resources to the Highway 1 - 99 connector project being pursued by Surrey.

As noted above, the total annual funding for major capital projects will begin at \$5 million in 2000, increasing to \$40 million by 2005.

Albion Ferry - operate in an efficient, cost-effective manner and develop a strategy to implement a fixed link crossing in the next five to ten years. This crossing could connect Maple Ridge/Pitt Meadows with Langley or Surrey.

Cycling Infrastructure - implement a program for the development of cycling infrastructure and supporting facilities. The City would suggest that TransLink consider supporting both on / off road facilities.

Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) Implementation - develop a vision and strategic plan for ITS in the Region in 2000 and implement initiatives accordingly in subsequent years.

3. Management Strategy

The recommended strategy identifies a number of areas for action to adequately manage the transportation system. Those that would directly affect Surrey are:

Demand Management - introducing road pricing (tolls) on new facilities; implementing a vehicle charge; implementing a parking tax; developing a transit fare strategy by the end of 2001; developing a parking management strategy by the end of 2001; and considering the application of benefiting area charges with development of new transportation facilities.

As part of the preparation of the City's new Transportation Plan, an attitudinal survey of 525 Surrey residents in 1997, found that 36% favoured tolling, 23% a gas tax, 22% higher parking charges, and 4% increased auto premiums as the most desirable means of funding transportation infrastructure. The remaining 15% found none of the options acceptable.

Cycling - work with municipalities and the Province to provide infrastructure, services, and programs to increase cycling use.

Surrey has an ongoing program to develop on-street and off-street cycling routes. The availability of additional funds through cost-sharing arrangements with TransLink are anticipated.

Major Development Review - work with municipalities to establish criteria for developments supportive of the LRSP from a transportation perspective and to ensure that development supports the STP.

The focus of this objective is to encourage member municipalities to conform to the LRSP and the STP, relative to their review of major development proposals.

MRN Management - develop a regional road use priority plan with municipalities by the end of 2001 that gives priority to transit, goods movement, and HOV's (High Occupancy Vehicles); pursue with members early implementation of transit priority measures on the regional road system; and achieve signal co-ordination on regional roads after 2001.

4. Financial Plan

To implement all of the recommended strategies under the STP, additional revenue sources are required. Most of the existing revenue sources would appear to have, on an individual basis, little potential for adjustment to meet the financial requirements of the STP. These include AirCare fees, the hydro levy, gasoline tax, and Provincial parking tax. Annual costs for TransLink of \$507 million in 1999 are projected to increase to \$815 million in 2005. Annual revenue of \$488 million in 1999 is projected to increase to \$622 million in 2005, with no new revenue measures; an annual deficit of \$193 million would occur. The approach recommended is to target both car and transit users with vehicle charges, a local parking tax, and a transit fare increase as follows:

- A vehicle levy that averages to about \$75 per vehicle is recommended for introduction effective October, 2001, increasing by 5% annually after 2002. This is to address the issue of “urban sprawl”, which encourages longer-distance travel. It is intended to encourage people to live close to work.
- A local parking tax of 14% is recommended effective January 2005. This complements the vehicle levy by adding more cost at the destination point.
- A transit fare increase of \$0.25 for a single-zone fare. The last fare increase was implemented in 1993, with a fare adjustment in 1997 (i.e., the off-peak fare reduction was eliminated).

Based on estimated costs and revenues under these strategies, the STP would build up approximately \$42 million in reserves by 2005. In comparison, without the additional sources of revenue, TransLink would run an annual deficit of close to \$200 million by 2005, based on existing revenue sources funding the recommended STP strategies. In order to respond to continued public demand to address the congestion and transit concerns within the Region, additional funding is required. Otherwise, the overall goals of the LRSP and the STP will not be achieved. Furthermore, without this additional funding, the STP will be significantly different.

With respect to funding the Plan, the vehicle levy would create substantial revenue and would be relatively easy to administer. However, the long term financial strategy should consider a more comprehensive and coordinated approach involving all existing and potential revenue sources and jurisdictional levels. For example, obtaining an appropriate share of the Federal gasoline tax should be pursued. Other forms of user-pay, such as tolls on select facilities, may be viable in addition to the vehicle levy.

The proposed Financial Plan has been developed on a relatively broad basis at this time and specific details are not yet available as to what share of the planned annual budget will be directed to providing services and infrastructure improvements in Surrey. It appears that with the major capital projects and transit service improvements described, Surrey will be a significant beneficiary. When more details become available, an analysis will be made of these proposed annual Strategic Plan budgets versus Surrey's future program needs and a report will be provided to Council.

CONCLUSION

The overall goal of the STP is an ambitious one, but achievable. Surrey expects to benefit with additional transit services being planned, as well as increased cost-sharing funds available for major road capital projects. In order to address concerns of residents and move towards the objectives of the LRSP, some initiatives must be introduced to control the growth of single-occupant vehicle use in the Region. However, in order to provide residents with options to the auto, other alternatives, such as more transit, must be provided. The strategies outlined in the STP generally conform to the City's Official Community Plan and Transportation Plan and can be supported by the City of Surrey with on-going monitoring. This report has been reviewed by the Transportation Committee.

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Manager, Land Development & Transportation

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Attachment

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