REGION'S SUSTAINABLE TRANSIT PLAN MUST BE FUNDED

By: Mike Harcourt
Vancouver Sun
October 22, 2009

If TransLink's "sustainable Metro Vancouver" budget increased $450 million per year -- on top of its present approximately $1-billion budget -- we could have:

- Three more LRT lines (Evergreen Line from Lougheed Mall to Coquitlam Town Centre via Port Moody, the Millennium Line extended toward the University of British Columbia and an expanded and extended Expo Line);

- Seven Bus Rapid Transit(BRT) Lines: King George Highway and Scott Road in Surrey; Lougheed to Abbotsford, 200th in Langley;

- 500 to 700 more regular buses, particularly for massively under-served high-growth communities such as Surrey and Langley. A network of high frequency bus routes connecting to rapid transit could be running every 10 to 15 minutes. Plus the overcrowded and pass-by bus routes in Vancouver and other cities could be fixed.

If we completed all these transit projects over the next few years, Metro Vancouver's citizens would finally have the transit system we need and deserve. So when you strip away all the controversy around TransLink's proposals -- the most aggressive being $450 million more per year on average over the next 10 years -- that's what we in the Metro Vancouver area need to do.

As well, over the next 10 to 20 years we have a number of old bridges and approach roads we will need to replace. The Port Mann and Pattullo Bridges you know about. But what about the 50-to-80-year-old Queensborough, Knight, Oak and Lions Gate Bridges, as well as an expanded Massey Tunnel?

Here are some ways to pay for these:

- TransLink's funding sources -- fares, gas tax, vehicle levies and other sources -- could raise an extra $275 million. The property tax, which most mayors and their citizens think is already over used, could be left alone.

- Other sources could be accessed -- federal-provincial infrastructure funds, carbon taxes, cap and trade, greenhouse gas emissions reduction regimes, congestion charges. London raises $400 million per year in congestion charges. The San Francisco Transportation Authority uses electronic tolling.

Vancouver's car, truck and taxi drivers are already paying $1.5 billion in congestion costs. So...
let's shift from paying congestion's costs -- real money, time, stress and pollution.

If the governments of Canada and British Columbia are serious about reducing greenhouse gas emissions, increasing Metro Vancouver's economic competitiveness, increasing our 2.2 million citizens' quality of life and creating a sustainable region, then they have to partner with us. We need and deserve our 10-to-20-year,$10-billion-to-$15-billion sustainable transportation action plan.

Mike Harcourt is associate director of the University of British Columbia's Continuing Studies Centre for Sustainability.

<<

For More Information: Cascadia Project — Bruce Agnew
208 Columbia St. — Seattle, WA 98104
206-292-0401 x113 phone — 206-682-5320 fax
email: bagnew@discovery.org