

# Neighbourhoods for a Sustainable Vancouver

January 18, 2010

Mayor Robertson and Councillors  
City of Vancouver  
453 West 12 Avenue  
Vancouver, B.C. V5Y 1V4

Dear Mayor and Councillors:

## **Re: City's Principles for Broadway Corridor and UBC Line Rapid Transit Study**

We strongly support rapid transit. Improvements to service are long overdue throughout Metro Vancouver, and the Broadway Corridor is correctly viewed as a priority due to inadequacy of the current bus service to meet existing demand. Local knowledge and support are crucial to ensuring that the selected system (or systems), routes, methods of construction and related land-use planning serve the affected neighbourhoods well and make the entire Metro Vancouver transportation system more user friendly and cost effective.

TransLink has credibility challenges due to an unelected board, systemic conflict of interest as planner, regulator and real estate developer, inability to provide adequate transit service and its dismal record regarding community impacts from Cambie Line construction. It is therefore particularly important that the City's principles for involvement in the TransLink-led study represents the interests of the affected communities and neighbourhoods. In this regard we have a number of issues of concern regarding the City's report.

- 1) There has been no public involvement or consultation in the creation of the City's principles.
- 2) The report was only available for preview two business days prior to the Council meeting. This continues an endemic pattern under this current Council of violations of professed due process, openness, and proper notice.
- 3) TransLink's provincial mandate to use development for transportation funding, and its regional role in land use planning reinforced by the proposed Regional Growth Strategy, creates a conflict of interest. That makes this process markedly different and even less transparent than previous rapid transit planning in Vancouver. This also poses a threat to density-enabled civic amenities and inclusion of affordable housing. Council support of this mandate is contrary to current City policies and the Vancouver Charter, an implicit acceptance of provincial downloading, and therefore unsustainable in practice.
- 4) CityPlan, the West Point Grey Vision and other local area plans have not been identified in the City's corridor principles as existing "Related City Land Use and Planning" processes. Increased regional and TransLink influence on land use policies in transit corridors could undermine local area planning, so it is increasingly important that these policies are respected through planning processes.

5) We note that the report states that this corridor is... *"serving one of the largest transit destinations in the region and one of the busiest bus corridors in North America, ... Frequent pass-bys of passengers and bus-crowding occur even with a bus every 90 seconds. Existing transit service significantly under-serves the corridor during the peak travel periods..."*

Existing zoned capacity in the Broadway corridor already supports an increase of 30% residential and 22% commercial densities that the existing transit system cannot support. There is more than enough existing zoned capacity to support rapid transit, and any future increased density should be approved only after new public transit has been approved, funded and under construction. Prematurely upzoning would over-burden the existing inadequate service, leading to even greater dependency on automobiles and increased congestion in the corridor. We do not want to repeat the mistakes of the Tri-Cities, where increased densities were approved in advance of the Evergreen Line, which may not be built for years to come.

6) The existing Transfer of Density policies that allow density from the Heritage Density Bank to be landed in the Downtown and Central Broadway area are contemplating other areas to land this density. Although heritage density transfers within the same neighbourhood may be justified and supported, we oppose transfers from downtown to lower density neighbourhoods as this will encourage excessive heritage incentives at the expense of community amenities and affordability. Transfer of density is a complex city-wide issue that deserves public consultation and community oversight rather than being included in the corridor planning report.

We note that Businesses and Residents for Affordable Transit Alternatives (BARSTA) is calling for local businesses and residents to be on a Community Advisory Committee with the City, which we support. Our network, which includes community groups from across Vancouver, including the directly affected neighbourhoods, would also like to be included as stakeholders in such a committee. Since reasonable concerns have been raised about whether there is transparent TransLink analysis when comparing various transit options, we would appreciate being fully involved in the detailed analysis of these options.

There needs to be a consideration of cost effectiveness of the technology chosen, potential debt loads for the region, tax increases and density-related trade-offs needed to cover these costs. TransLink is too removed from accountability for the debt they take on. The City needs to have a principle and process that protects its residents from fiscally irresponsible planning and development.

We note that the City report states in Appendix A, page 5, point 10... *"Provide opportunities for meaningful engagement of stakeholders and the general public."* The City should take heed of its own advice by providing opportunities for public consultation and involvement in the City's corridor principles and for an ongoing City Community Advisory Committee, both of which we would appreciate being included as stakeholders.

Regards,

Ned Jacobs,  
On behalf of the Steering Committee  
Neighbourhoods for a Sustainable Vancouver

Group contact email: [nsvancouver@hotmail.com](mailto:nsvancouver@hotmail.com)