

NSV - Neighbourhoods for a Sustainable Vancouver

July 12, 2012

Transportation Engineering
City of Vancouver

Re: Vancouver Transportation 2040 Draft Directions

Neighbourhoods for a Sustainable Vancouver (NSV) have reviewed the Vancouver Transportation 2040 Draft Directions and we recommend that the City of Vancouver priorities in this document be reconsidered before finalizing these important long-term transportation policies. We believe some of the current proposals could put our city on a path that results in outcomes exactly the reverse of some Greenest City goals, and opposed to the wishes of many Vancouverites.

We are concerned that the proposed draft transportation plan could lead to over-sized, Metrotown-type development in neighbourhoods across Vancouver. With rail rapid transit as a priority, areas not located near the transit stations would be underserved by an underfunded transit network depending heavily on diesel buses. This scenario could lead Vancouver to increased overall automobile dependency, rather than less, resulting in increased greenhouse gas emissions.

The proposed policies appear likely to result in an increase in street traffic and parking congestion, the loss of existing older, more affordable rental stock, and the loss of heritage and character buildings. Vancouver would become less sustainable, less affordable and less livable. These results are the exact opposite of the Greenest City objectives.

However, with a new priority to shift to an electric transit network rather than a few corridors, and with an emphasis on an expanded electric trolley bus service, we could see a system with lower environmental impacts in the near term. The expansion of such a network would give quicker results, and avoid the decades-long delay it would take to deliver the proposed rail rapid transit services. The proposed rail systems in fact may never come to be because they are ultimately too expensive for the region.

Below are our specific recommendations.

❖ **The priority of transit should be an expansion of a cost-effective electric trolley bus network instead of the proposed small number of expensive rail corridors.**

The network of electric trolley buses could be improved and expanded across the city and much of the region, including the replacement of diesel buses, for a fraction of the cost of one rapid rail corridor. Funneling most of the transit budget into a few corridors at the expense of the rest of the network is the wrong direction. For example, after the Canada Line was built the trolley buses were not reinstated on Cambie Street. They were instead replaced with less frequent diesel buses. An added loss was reduced bus service on Granville Street.

❖ **Vancouver rapid transit corridor priorities should not be regionally designated in the Regional Context Statement.**

We note a draft map in the document library that it shows Broadway, Main/Fraser, Commercial/Victoria, Hastings St., and 41 Ave./49 Ave. as rapid transit priorities. We could support transit improvements here if this means increased electric trolley bus services. However, we would oppose increased use of diesel buses, as they would increase GHG and toxic emissions, and other negative environmental impacts.

Further, we are concerned that these areas could become "Frequent Transit Development Corridors" under the Regional Context Statement (under Metro Vancouver's new Regional Growth Strategy). This would then give Metro Vancouver and TransLink greater influence in land-use decisions and weaken the voice of Vancouver local planning processes. Many people do not realize that since these corridors can be up to 800 meters on each side of the road, the corridors would cover a very large portion of the city. The City of Vancouver should not make such a dramatic shift of land-use authority to the regional government, the Province or TransLink.

Therefore, these Vancouver transit priorities should not be considered "Frequent Transit Development Corridors" under the Regional Context Statement. Land-use decisions should be based on local area planning processes.

❖ **Adopt a polluter-pay funding model instead of land-based or user-pay funding models which we do not supported.**

- **Use a polluter-pay funding model** which would include fuel taxes, carbon taxes, and an emissions/mileage-based insurance and registration fee. Please do not use road pricing and tolls which are expensive to administer and invade privacy by tracking individuals movements.
- **Land-based funding models that we do not support** include the "Hong Kong model" of using development to fund transit, or using regional development fees or property taxes. Development and property taxes are the main sources of municipal funding, and should not be used for funding provincial responsibilities such as transit. Doing so would be a form of downloading of provincial responsibility onto municipalities..
- **User-pay transit funding models** increase user fees, and discourages transit ridership. We do not support an increase in user fees. Transit user fees should be kept as low as possible in order to encourage a mode shift from automobiles to transit.

❖ **Ensure that Transit oriented development is in the scale and character of each individual neighbourhood.**

All development should be consistent with local area plans, Community Plans and Community Visions. Policies and projects should be able to demonstrate a high level of local area support by a majority of residents before approval, confirmed through objective and comprehensive methods. Increases in transit oriented development should be considered only after rapid transit infrastructure is completed, not in anticipation or in advance of transit infrastructure completion.

❖ **Promote demand management for UBC.**

We encourage policies that increase student housing on campus at UBC, instead of the current trend of promoting high end condo development. We also encourage locating more UBC courses in areas already served by transit such as Downtown and Great Northern Way. Such policies would help reduce some UBC transportation demand.

❖ **Reduced parking requirements in new developments, and increased street parking regulations and parking permits should require extensive neighbourhood-based community involvement in creating policies.**

We believe that any policies that lower costs to developers by reducing parking requirements will not likely lead to lower housing prices and if fact will lead to more off-site parking problems. Each area has different parking issues and requirements so parking policies should not be directed by city-wide policy changes. Parking requirements should be subject to local area community planning processes and should be consistent with Community Visions and Community Plans.

❖ **Reduce negative environmental impacts on neighbourhoods from commercial vehicles.**

Advocate for improved demand management strategies for commercial truck movements within the City of Vancouver. Promote low-noise/low-emission vehicle technologies by establishing enforceable noise and air-quality standards.

In conclusion, current Draft Directions could put our city on a path that results in outcomes exactly the opposite of some Greenest City goals, and opposed to what many Vancouverites want. We urge you to consider the points raised above, and we recommend that the City of Vancouver priorities in the draft directions be reconsidered before finalizing these important long-term transportation policies.

Sincerely,

The Steering Committee
Neighbourhoods for a Sustainable Vancouver

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Reference Documents:

Vancouver Transportation 2040 <http://talkvancouver.com/transportation>

Document Library <http://talkvancouver.com/document/index/5>

Council Agenda - May 29, 2012

<http://vancouver.ca/ctyclerk/cclerk/20120529/regu20120529ag.htm>

Transportation Plan Phase II Consultation Launch  [Video Clip of this Item](#)

Council Presentation-Phase 2

<http://www.slideshare.net/Transportation2040/transportation-2040-presentation-to-city-council-may-29-2012>