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Province pledges \$2.5B for roads and highways 10

10-year plan also covers improved bridges, bike lanes, trucking

The B.C. government has promised to expand to six lanes the section of Highway 1 between Langley and Abbotsford and improve cycling and pedestrian routes on the Stanley Park causeway as a part of a 10-year, \$2.5-billion transportation plan.



cycling lanes on the Stanley Park causeway IMPROVE

The plan, dubbed B.C. On the Move, aims to rehabilitate bridges, highways and side roads in rural B.C., improve efficiency of trucks, ferries and airports, and provide "safe movement of people and goods in B.C.," Transportation Minister Todd Stone said Tuesday.

Projects include replacing half the BC Transit bus fleet, building a new George Massey Bridge and highway interchanges, such as the one at Mountain Highway in North Vancouver slated to start construction next year, and upgrading Abbotsford's Mount Lehman Road.

The widening of Highway 1 to six lanes is also cited as "critical for safety and congestion relief," but there are few details as to the cost or timing of that project, or any others.

Langley Township Mayor Jack Froese said this was the first he had heard of the highway

widening but both he and Abbotsford Mayor Henry Braun hailed the announcement as good news. Froese noted it would make a huge difference to the constant bottlenecks on that stretch of highway, especially between 232nd and 264th Avenues. "You can see the need there," he said. "It certainly is necessary."

The plan would see more than \$800 million spent in the next three years on existing infrastructure and \$1 billion on expanding major B.C. highways. It also includes \$18 million over three years to link communities by new bike lanes and trails throughout the province, while transit services outside of the Metro Vancouver area will also get a \$312 million boost over the next three years.

But NDP transportation critic Claire Trevena said she doubts the province will be able to deliver.

"I find this 10-year transportation plan is basically insulting for the people of B.C.," she said. "It looks pretty, has lots of nice pictures but is very thin on detail, isn't committing more than three years and really doesn't tell us more than we already knew. I'm wondering, really, what the minister's true plan is here, and whether he'll be able to deliver on it."

The announcement comes as Metro Vancouver residents await ballots for an upcoming transportation plebiscite that will ask them if they support a 0.5-per cent sales tax increase to fund a raft of transportation projects across the region. **Stone noted many of the B.C. projects have nothing to do with those in the upcoming plebiscite in Metro Vancouver, nor will any of them require a plebiscite to go ahead.** That was a condition set by Premier Christy Clark, he noted, to give Metro residents the final say on any new transportation funding sources in the region.

"The province of B.C. is vast," Stone said. "Many of the roads and bridges and cycling infrastructure have nothing to do with the TransLink mandate. We want to ensure the public we're willing to invest."

However, Stone noted both he and Clark are urging residents to vote Yes, saying transit and transportation investment is critical to growing the region. He noted the province is also committed to funding its one-third share of the capital projects in the region and will encourage the federal government to also step up.

"Our one-third is on the table," he said. "It's very much in the best interest of people who live in the region to endorse a Yes vote."

The province has also committed to a provincial trucking strategy that would provide at least two parking locations in the Lower Mainland for trucks and upgrade bridges and overpasses for heavier loads.

Also in the plan, \$7 million would be spent on improving pedestrian and cycling safety along the Stanley Park causeway by widening the pathways and installing safety fencing on both sides.



Other improvements include the installation of a wildlife detection system in the East Kootenays, a region with high roadkill rates; working with TransLink to add new elevators and escalators for improved accessibility at SkyTrain stations; and increasing the number of

wheelchair taxies across B.C.

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