

TRANSIT TAX

Now, you get to decide ...

Ballots will start arriving in Metro Vancouver mailboxes this week, asking residents to vote in the plebiscite on a 'congestion improvement tax' to fund transportation expansion in the region. The controversial tax has divided residents of the region, with the Yes side insisting that expanded transportation is needed to serve another million more people in Metro by 2040 and the No side arguing that TransLink — the region's transportation authority — should not be trusted with any more public money.

Elections BC estimates there are 1.5 million registered voters in Metro Vancouver. **Here's what they need to know.**

What you're voting on:

The proposed 0.5 per cent congestion improvement tax is a Metro-wide sales tax on top of the PST. The tax is expected to cost the average household 35 cents a day — or \$125 annually — and generate \$250 million a year to help pay for a list of transportation projects, including more buses, a subway for Vancouver and light rail for Surrey, over 10 years. Additional money is required from the provincial and federal governments.

The money would be kept in a separate fund administered by the province and audited annually to ensure it is spent on the priority transportation projects in the mayors' council's plan.



Where would the money be distributed?

The initial 10-year plan calls for \$7.5-billion worth of projects in Metro Vancouver, including more B-Line express buses, as well as expanded service for SkyTrain, West Coast Express and SeaBus and \$36 million in road improvements. Surrey would get the bulk of services, including three light rail lines, more express buses and expanded roads.



How do you vote?

Elections BC will mail out ballots between March 16 and March 27. Ballot packages must be received by Elections BC before the close of voting at 8 p.m. on Friday, May 29.

To be eligible to vote, voters must be a Canadian citizen; 18 years of age or older on or before May 29, 2015; a resident of B.C. for at least six months, on or before May 29, 2015; registered to vote in B.C.; and living in Metro Vancouver.

Voters who do not receive a voting package by March 27 can ask for one to be mailed to them by calling Elections BC at 1-800-661-8683 or online at elections.bc.ca/ovr. Elections BC will also open nine plebiscite offices in Metro Vancouver on April 13, to provide information on voting in the plebiscite, conduct voter registration, issue voting packages, and accept completed ballot packages. The locations will be posted on the Elections BC website.

**METRO VANCOUVER
TRANSPORTATION & TRANSIT
PLEBISCITE**

The region's mayors have developed a Transportation and Transit Plan called *Regional Transportation Investments - A Vision for Metro Vancouver: The Mayors' Transportation and Transit Plan* will:

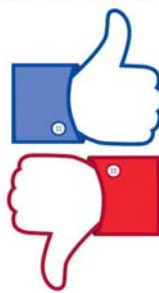
- Add bus service and new B-Line rapid bus routes
- Increase service on SkyTrain, Canada Line, SeaBus, and West Coast Express
- Maintain and upgrade the region's major roads
- Build a new Pattullo Bridge
- Build rapid transit connecting Surrey Centre with Guildford, Newton, and Langley
- Build rapid transit along Broadway in Vancouver

➤ See the region's vision and additional network options.

Who's for and against the proposed tax?

The Yes side: the mayors' council — minus mayors in Burnaby, West Vancouver and Maple Ridge — are leading the Yes campaign. It is supported by the Better Transit and Transportation Coalition, which includes business, labour, environmentalists and students. Arvind Gupta, president of the University of B.C., and Andrew Petter, president of Simon Fraser University, recently threw their support behind the campaign.

The No side: Jordan Bateman, spokesman for the Canadian Taxpayers Federation, has been leading the charge for the No TransLink tax. The No side is bolstered by the Canadian Federation of Independent Business as well as what the website describes as "a group of citizens, small business owners and concerned citizens."



When would it take effect?

If the plebiscite passes, the provincial government would create legislation, enabling the tax to come into effect in 2016. The mayors' council will also start work toward bringing in a road pricing scheme, which could include everything from tolling all the roads and bridges to charging drivers per distance charged. If the plebiscite fails, Premier Christy Clark has said the mayors' council and TransLink can still use existing tools to generate funds, such as raising property taxes, fares or gas taxes. TransLink also collects money for transportation improvements from the Hydro levy and parking tax.

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