

TRANSPORTATION

Metro votes to take up the TransLink challenge

Joint committee will look at governance options

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VANCOUVER SUN

Metro Vancouver directors have voted to become part of the review of TransLink's governance, saying the public has lost confidence in the mayors' council after the recent transportation tax plebiscite.

The directors, which include mayors and councillors drawn from the region's 21 municipalities, rejected a suggestion Friday that TransLink's mayors' council lead the investigation, saying the Metro board better represents the region's needs and has more resources available.

In the end, the board agreed to form a joint committee drawn from the mayor's council and the non-mayors on the Metro board.

It would examine governance options, which might include creating a public utility model similar to that used in Metro for water and sewage or following the lead of London, England, where the metropolitan mayor runs the transit system, or of Brisbane, Australia, where the Queensland state transportation minister is in charge of transit.

"We have to continue on with the Metro view in mind and the mayors' council is only a little adjunct to TransLink, let's be honest," Delta Mayor Lois Jackson said. "We've got to take the leadership role."

The move comes a day after Premier Christy Clark appointed Liberal MLA Peter Fassbender, former mayor of Langley City, to head a new portfolio dealing with TransLink and the fallout of the B.C. government-ordered plebiscite, in which voters soundly rejected a sales tax increase to fund transportation.

Metro directors argued they should be meeting with Fassbender as soon as possible, while trying to come up with alternative governance models.

Some directors said Metro didn't get a fair deal when TransLink was created 15 years ago. At the time the province agreed to allow the region to use gas and property taxes and a vehicle levy to raise funding for transportation. But both the NDP and the Liberals then reneged on the vehicle levy, leaving TransLink without a substantial cash source.

"We really need to look back at where we've come in the last 15 years and whether this whole experiment in funding transit in the region has been one that's been good for the region, good for the province and good for all of us," said Burnaby Coun. Colleen Jordan.



RIC ERNST/PNG

After voters soundly rejected a sales tax increase to pay for transportation improvements, Metro Vancouver directors voted Friday to investigate new models of governance for TransLink.

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DEREK CORRIGAN
MAYOR OF BURNABY

Vancouver Mayor Gregor Robertson added there needs to be a new model that will somehow have the province take their investment in local transportation seriously. Other directors argued the B.C. government has to either fully take over TransLink or give it entirely to the mayors.

“There has to be one master that's going to be responsible for decisions made at TransLink and is going to be accountable for those decisions,” Burnaby Mayor Derek Corrigan said. “I suspect the decisions are going to get tougher and tougher over the next couple of months. It is not going to work the way it is and we've proven the provincial government is not going to come

forward with any solution. We're at the point of having a showdown and if you're going into a showdown you have to be well equipped.”

Metro also agreed to have staff investigate options to increase the region's role in advocating and planning transportation. The regional growth strategy, for instance, calls for transit hubs around SkyTrain stations and town centres but mayors say the strategy is in jeopardy if there is no funding to ensure there are buses and trains to serve these areas. Directors also noted Metro has not had strong transportation planners since TransLink took over transportation.

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