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Richard Walton is mayor of the District of North Vancouver and chairman of the Mayors' Council on Regional Transportation. Greg Moore is mayor of Port Coquitlam and chairman of the Metro Vancouver Regional District.

Invest in transit or watch things get worse 11

It's time to expand: Cutting congestion is critical for the economy, travel times and clean air

Traffic congestion is a top concern in Metro Vancouver. Our roads and bridges are some of the most congested in Canada. Drivers are stuck in traffic. Waiting commuters are often passed by full buses. And trains are overcrowded. Getting to work or school is taking longer and longer. In some communities, people don't even have the alternative of frequent and convenient transit.



NICK PROCAIYO/PNG FILES

Voters in Metro Vancouver will need to decide whether they are prepared to pay extra for transit improvements to fight gridlock across the region.

Today's reality will only get worse.

One million more people will live here by 2040, adding 600,000 more cars to the roads and millions more trips on the transit system. In the absence of transit and road improvements, traffic gridlock, longer commute times and overcrowded SkyTrains and buses will be our future.

Metro Vancouver's mayors came together in unprecedented consensus on a transportation and transit plan that will fight congestion by investing in our transportation and transit system to keep people and business in our region moving now and in the future.

A more efficient and earthquakeready Pattullo Bridge, more HandyDart service, a new subway along Broadway in Vancouver, light rail connecting town centres in Surrey and Langley, improved bus service in Maple Ridge, North Vancouver, the Tri-Cities, south of the Fraser and in growing communities, increased SkyTrain service for Burnaby, Vancouver, New Westminster and Surrey, increased SeaBus and West Coast Express frequency and improved roads across the region — these are just a few of the investments in the mayors' plan.

The mayors also carefully considered how to pay for these investments, asking what would be most affordable and fair for all our citizens.

That is why we agreed on a small regional increase (half a percentage point) to the provincial sales tax in Metro Vancouver. This regional PST would apply to all residents, businesses and visitors, as well as to drivers and transit users, who all benefit and rely on an effective and reliable transportation system. As a result, this funding mechanism has the lowest cost per household, and the least impact for lower-income families.

Across the region, business, labour, environment and health leaders — who often have different views on such critical decisions — have united in a coalition to support and endorse our plan.

We have submitted the referendum question to the provincial government for final approval. We have asked for their support in solving our dual problem of congestion and growth, and in helping residents make an informed choice about their future. We await their imminent

response and the final question.

The choice will be yours to make: Whether to move forward and make new investments in our transportation and transit system, or keep the status quo. Details on the voting process will be coming early in the new year.



We know our citizens and businesses are concerned about congestion and the impact on commutes, productivity, our air, our economy and our way of life. They want action on this critical issue. With this in mind, the mayors have worked together in the interest of residents to deliver the best possible plan and funding solution. The cost of doing nothing would be the highest cost of all.

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