

Proposed transit tax: pros, cons

Re: Metro mayors ask voters to approve tax hike for TransLink, Dec. 12

I agree wholeheartedly with the Mayors' Council idea to increase the PST (provincial sales tax) by 0.5 per cent to fund future transportation infrastructure in Metro Vancouver.

However, there must be a caveat that this money raised is spent wisely.

In my mind that means turfing the unelected TransLink Board immediately.

Why should the people of B.C. throw more money at this unwieldy regressive bloated board of outrageously highly paid bureaucrats?

WENDY QURESHI
North Vancouver

Re: Voting No on transit referendum will boomerang on taxpayers, Column, Dec. 12

Our 17 cents per litre regional gas tax already motivates consumers to leave Metro Vancouver.

We go to Abbotsford, Mission and some to Washington state to gas up then do some other shopping along the way.

This gas tax policy negatively impacts our economy.

A regional sales tax simply adds more motivation to leave Metro Vancouver.

ART VAN PELT
Maple Ridge

LETTER OF THE DAY

Port Metro protects whales

Economic growth does not have to be at the expense of the environment

Re: Metro Vancouver development threatens whales, Letters, Dec. 11

Susan Jones' letter does not accurately represent Port Metro Vancouver's collaborative approach to protecting the environment.

Port Metro Vancouver's mandate is to facilitate Canada's trade objectives, while providing for a high level of safety and environmental protection and ensuring that local communities are considered. We are accountable to the federal minister of transport.

Recognizing that many of the regional issues we face in the Lower Mainland fall outside of our jurisdiction, Port Metro Vancouver works with all levels of government, First Nations, communities,

port users and non-government organizations to develop solutions that improve the flow of goods through the Asia-Pacific Gateway, enhance the quality of life for residents, and ensure protection of wildlife and habitat.

An example of this approach is our Enhancing Cetacean Habitat and Observation Program, or ECHO. ECHO endeavours to better understand and manage the potential threats to at-risk whales from commercial vessel activities.

The proposed Roberts Bank Terminal 2 Project is undergoing an environmental assessment by the most rigorous form of review in Canada.

Port Metro Vancouver is developing the environmental impact statement,

and we expect to submit this document to regulators in early 2015. The document will reflect years of scientific studies to understand the potential effects of the project on environmental components, including southern resident killer whales, air quality, salmon, coastal birds and human health.

Economic growth does not have to be at the expense of the environment. I am proud of Port Metro Vancouver's environmental leadership, and I welcome readers to join in the discussion at PortTalk.ca.

CLIFF STEWART, P. ENG
Vice-president, infrastructure
Port Metro Vancouver

I congratulate our new mayor of Maple Ridge, Nicole Read, for voting no on the referendum question.

There is nothing in the package for our distant part of Metro Vancouver and while yes, TransLink replaced our free ferry with a bridge, it gave us a toll bridge and even if we choose to bypass that bridge, the next closest bridge, the Port Mann, is also now a toll bridge. This leads me back to what I have said since the

Golden Ears bridge was built, either toll all crossings with a small toll or toll none of the crossings.

I would be willing support a one per cent increase in the PST for transportation improvements if it would resolve this blatantly unfair "taxation" we pay for living in Maple Ridge or Langley.

IAN STRACHAN
Maple Ridge

In the endless debate over the appropriate way to raise funds for public transit there seems to me to be only one option that is undeniably fair — a fuel tax.

The more fuel-guzzling the car and the more it's driven, the more fuel one consumes.

If you choose to drive an electric car, ride a bike, or walk, you avoid consuming gasoline or diesel and would be rewarded by paying less fuel tax.

A simple tax that is proportional to the volume (not price) of fuel consumed would be the fairest and simplest possible source of revenue to fund public transit.

Basing the tax on fuel volume rather than fuel's ever-fluctuating value would provide for a more predictable revenue stream.

DONALD DUNBAR
West Vancouver