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VANCOUVER SUN

Province doesn't have 'one magic solution' for funding, minister says **4**

B.C.'s minister responsible for TransLink says a pitch by Metro Vancouver mayors to toll all local bridges or charge a fee per distance travelled to fund transportation projects is "worthy of a look."

But Peter Fassbender said while the so-called "mobility pricing" should be considered in terms of cause and effect and how long it would take to be implemented, it should not be done in isolation.

"Funding is an issue, there's no question," Fassbender said Thursday during a luncheon speech hosted by the Urban Development Institute. "We clearly said to the mayors that we, as government, are prepared to work with them and look at options, but we're not prepared to suggest one magic solution to funding. We need an integration of funding sources."

Fassbender has been working with mayors on coming up with funding for transportation, following a failed plebiscite this past spring in which voters rejected a 0.5 per cent sales tax. The mayors had sought support for the sales tax to help fund a \$7.5-billion, 10-year wish list, which included a subway along Vancouver's Broadway corridor and light rail in Surrey.

Mobility pricing was considered a long-term fix to the problems facing the beleaguered transportation agency, but the mayors have yet to come up with an immediate funding source.

Fassbender said while the public rejected the sales tax, he believes that decision was based more on a high level of distrust for TransLink rather than the mayors' plan for transit projects. But he refused a call by mayors to restructure the TransLink board, saying he didn't believe this would help to boost public confidence in the transportation authority.

"I clearly said to the mayors that I am not prepared to change governance again on this TransLink board or the relationship with the mayors' council or the relationship with the provincial government," he said. "I don't believe governance is the issue; I believe how people involved in governance work together is the real issue we need to address."

"The public expects us to find a path to the solution rather than blaming each other."

Fassbender noted the mayors select the TransLink board and now have two people — Vancouver Mayor Gregor Robertson and Surrey Mayor Linda Hepner — as sitting members. Rather than restructuring the board, he said, the local politicians will just have to learn to work together.

"To suggest they can't talk to them or work together has never made sense to me," he said.

Fassbender maintains transportation is critical to boosting B.C.'s economy and the province is committed to finding a funding source that will meet the needs of the region for the next 60 years.

"We need to be very clear that we have to find a way that is fair and equitable to the people in this region who benefit from a transportation system," he said. "And it's not just about moving people; it's about moving goods."

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