

north shore news

District of North Vancouver Council proposes joint transit plan

Tri-municipal working group would present 'unified voice'

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Photo Mike Wakefield

A proposal that would see the three municipalities on the North Shore come together to work on a unified transportation plan was approved by the District of North Vancouver council on Monday night.

The proposal — brought forward by Coun. Doug MacKay-Dunn — seeks to bring together the District of North Vancouver council as well as councils from the City of North Vancouver and District of West Vancouver to form a working group aimed at reviewing the North Shore area transit plan as well as TransLink's 10-year investment plan.

It also asked for all three municipalities to come together to review the working group and help communicate the needs of North Shore residents to both TransLink and the provincial government.

MacKay-Dunn stressed the need for a unified voice to help counteract Vancouver and Surrey's influence on transit matters.

"Not to do this would be, in my opinion, not fulfilling our responsibilities as the elected representatives of our North Vancouver community," said MacKay-Dunn.

"We have to speak with one voice. If we don't, we will be whip-sawed and one municipality will be played off one another."

A report given to council highlighted several examples of transit issues plaguing the North Shore such as the cancellation of the C15 bus taking commuters from Deep Cove to Parkgate as well as Capilano students being left behind due to overcrowded buses.

"More specifically, (it's) something we've been asking for, for a long time and never been able to get to is an actual cost benefit statement of what we get right now in the way of transportation to what we pay," said Coun. Roger Bassam.

Some concerns were raised about the timing of the proposal and how it would relate to the larger transit referendum which is being raised across the Lower Mainland.

The B.C. government approved a Metro Vancouver transit tax referendum question which would call for a 0.5 per cent tax to the mayors' transportation and transit plan back in December.

Ballots are expected to be sent out in mid-March. The tax in turn would fund a new B-Line rapid bus route as well as fund the building of a new Pattullo bridge, construction of a rapid transit route along Broadway in Vancouver and increased service across the SkyTrain and Canada Line.

"It's clear transportation is the dominant issue for North Shore residents," said Coun. Jim Hanson.

The motion was tweaked to invite the four members of the legislative assembly and the members of parliament from the area as well with the amended proposal gaining approval.

The timing of the proposal in relation to the transit referendum plan was incidental but part of a much needed discussion, said Mayor Richard Walton.

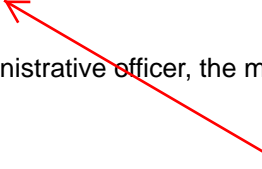
Walton was recently ousted as the chairman of the TransLink mayor's council with Vancouver Mayor Gregor Robertson replacing him. Surrey Mayor Linda

Hepner was elected as vice-chairwoman.

"Transit is part of the solution. If people have viable transit then there's a reason to get out of their cars. **If we get even three, four, five per cent of people out of their cars with good alternatives it will really help alleviate these pinch points,**" he said after the meeting.

According to David Stuart, the district's chief administrative officer, the meeting of the North Shore municipalities could come by the end of February.

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This is a questionable sustainable solution to congestion since 3 years of population growth will set you back to where you started. - cjk