

EDITORIAL: Stuck in neutral

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Handed the dubious task of how to restore public trust in TransLink again, the Lower Mainland's mayors have dusted off a not-terribly novel idea: Take control of the transit authority away from the board of provincial appointees and put it in the hands of elected mayors to make it more accountable.

The B.C. Liberal government's response was a prompt "No." They apparently like TransLink as unaccountable as it is, despite it being made obvious by voters in the cratered TransLink plebiscite that its opaque governance model is the biggest stumbling block to public trust.

And the province is being equally stubborn on allowing any new funding sources to expand the at-capacity system. It is property taxes or another referendum as far as Peter Fassbender is concerned.

The mayors remain dead-set against this. Thanks to federal and provincial downloading, growing wages negotiated with public sector unions and aging infrastructure in need of replacement, it's all cities can do to keep tax increases to a few per cent per year.

So we're deadlocked and getting nowhere.

Meanwhile, the new federal Liberal government has made it clear there's plenty of cash available for cities who can get their transit plans in order.

The province's obstinacy is putting residents in the fast-growing Lower Mainland at risk of getting cut out of the federal support while Ontario vacuums up infrastructure dollars.

And it's clear now: No amount of logic, lobbying, clear public opinion or newspaper editorial is ever going to lead to a change in how TransLink operates.

An election might, though.

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