

# Report cites need for Broadway corridor line

Area is at risk of losing jobs because of over-stretched transit system, mayor says

BY KELLY SINOSKI, VANCOUVER SUN MARCH 1, 2013



Mayor Gregor Robertson speaks about the future of transit in Vancouver on Thursday. 'We need to take the transit system to the next level,' he said.

**Photograph by:** Wayne Leidenfrost, PNG, Vancouver Sun

The City of Vancouver has renewed its push for a \$2.8-billion subway along the Broadway corridor, this time highlighting the crucial need for transit to turn the corridor into an "innovation hub."

The push, made jointly with the University of B.C., is based on a new KPMG report that suggests Vancouver is growing faster than was anticipated three years ago, and "a rail-based line is needed to meet the corridor's population growth and significant economic potential."

The corridor, stretching from Commercial Drive to UBC and 16th Avenue to False Creek, has been touted as "one of North America's fastest-growing life science and technology clusters" with commercial and industrial floor space almost equal to that found in Vancouver's downtown.

But the area is also North America's busiest bus route, and with another 150,000 people expected for the corridor in the next 30 years, Vancouver Mayor Gregor Robertson warned the area is at risk of losing high-tech jobs to other cities such as Toronto, New York or San Diego because of "gridlock and over-stretched transit."

"What is currently a powerhouse for jobs will suffer and be choked off from the opportunities," Robertson said. "We need to take the transit system to the next level. Without it, the Vancouver and B.C. economy risks falling behind."

The KPMG report suggests that while the Broadway corridor has many strengths, such as a supply of locally trained graduates and proximity and access to hospitals and clinical trial opportunities, it is being constrained by several factors, including lack of access to affordable office/ lab space and of superior transit infrastructure.

In order for the corridor to retain its competitive edge as a world-class life sciences and technology hub, the report states, rapid transit, along with more affordable commercial and residential space and a city/university strategy to attract investment, is critical.

The Broadway corridor is one of TransLink's top priorities for a rapid-transit line, along with light rail for Surrey, but no decision has been made about which project will go ahead first, or where the funding will come from to pay for it.

TransLink's mayors' council on transportation is in the midst of working with the province to develop new funding sources to generate revenue for transit.

Robertson, who is pushing for a \$2.8-billion subway line for the corridor, maintains the latest announcement, made two-and-a-half months ahead of the May 14 provincial election, isn't an attempt to give Vancouver an edge on Surrey, noting both projects are desperately needed in the region and should go ahead together.

Both projects would take at least five years to design and another five to build, meaning the earliest they could be built would be 2020 to 2022.

Robertson noted that the projects are different - with Vancouver needing transit to meet rising demands whereas Surrey wants it to shape growth.

"These are no either-or choices; they both need to happen," he said.

But he added Vancouver, with its high ridership base, would be more profitable than the Expo line.

UBC president Stephen Toope said it's crucial to start the planning now. But he noted it's premature to say whether UBC would contribute to the cost of the project.

ksinoski@vancouversun.com

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