

north shore news

LAUTENS: Just take the No. 250 Utopia bus

Trevor Lautens, contributing writer
May 8, 2015 12:00 AM



This
JUST IN
Trevor Lautens

This may be a unique reason to vote against the big interests' Metro transit plan: It doesn't go far enough.

Universal rule: All transit systems stimulate the authorities' Stalinism. The business, bureaucratic, political, academic and union elites — the now and future car-driving class — treat transit riders like store-window dummies. Here's a wild entrepreneurial idea: Aim to attract riders. Not just move them a little faster, more frequently.

At no cost to the public, I offer 13 real innovations:

1. Plainly, more buses (and trains and SeaBuses) — but far more.
2. Every major artery in Metro with a dedicated bus lane. Some buses-only all day. Others only at peak hours. Yes, including the middle lane of the Lions Gate Bridge. (If traffic through the twinned George Massey Tunnel can switch to three lanes at rush hours, anything is possible.)
3. Satellite bus centres, where riders can be driven or picked up near their homes. Think of our North Shore slopes where public transit is out of reach. Think cold, wet nights. Think women. Think the old, the unsure of foot. Think!
4. A guaranteed seat for all. You read that right. Otherwise, except for short rides, standees would pay half price. Allowing for a transition period, that would force TransLink to sit up and take notice, so to speak.
5. Much longer hours of operation. Overnight shouldn't be impossible.
6. Ticket-punchers (cum security guards) on every bus. Drivers should be free to drive. Not distracted by freeloaders, drunks, rowdies or even change-offering, transfer-taking thee and me.
7. Now the buses. Their technology hasn't changed in my lifetime. The 10-year transit plan may quickly become obsolete. (Robotics, perhaps?) Read on:
8. Individual heating/cooling vents for each rider.
9. Quick attach-release seat belts.
10. One or two toilets. If aircraft have them ...
11. All this just basic sense. Now for some innovation: All Metro buses double-deckers.

12. Madly unconventional wisdom: Drink, by which I mean liquor, offered on the upper deck, what I think the English still call “outside” from the days when it really was outside. Smart! Natural draw for those who have imbibed (small joke) the wisdom of “If you drink, don’t drive.” Nothing like a (non-spillable) cocktail on the bus after a hard day of money-making to drop you off home cheerful-like. Where’s our vaunted salesmanship?

13. Some readers may have left in scornful disbelief. Others, bold pioneers, will still be with me. Now the test. Stay for this one: Dedicated dog-and-owner buses, serving dog-permitting parks.

Crazy, eh? Not at all. Solid good sense. Observe the dogs hanging out of many a car window — again, especially on this shore. At present the only means of transporting your best friend to a place of exercising legs and bowels is by a ton or two of costly, air-fouling private motorized vehicle. Think of the savings. Think of the happy socialization among dogs and owners. Think, love could even bloom. Again, think!

Of course all of the above would cost far more than the mayors’ council’s paltry \$7.5 billion. But the long-term returns would pay off socially, individually.

Objections? Off the top, from Vancouver’s taxis, a ridiculously protected species. The auto business likely wouldn’t clap hands. Never mind. We’d still buy cars, but go back to the 1950s habit of keeping them in the garage for the family Sunday drive.

...

All praise for federal Health Minister Rona Ambrose, who had what has become the courage to say: “Once you legalize something, you normalize it. When you normalize it, the message is that it’s safe and marijuana is not safe for young people.”

Thus the rise to power of the young of 40-odd years ago, mesmerized by the likes of madman Timothy (“turn on, tune in, drop out”) Leary. Starting with the “medical marijuana” stalking-horse, pot is the thin edge of a huge, ultimately destructive wedge. Little notice was paid two years ago to a Canadian Drug Policy Coalition report — by “academic experts” based at Simon Fraser University — urging decriminalizing of all drugs.

Unsurprisingly, the Western world in manifold ways is eagerly embracing what someone has aptly called “declinism.”

...

Among the many misfortunes of my life is that I met Yulanda Faris only once. It was at a Vancouver Opera function last November. What natural, unaffected charm. She was a generous benefactor, of opera and much more, especially through supporting young performing artists. Gwyneth Westwick, president of the VO Guild, was much more than perfunctory in noting her kindness and generosity.

A service will be held next Friday at 11 a.m. — fittingly, at West Van’s Kay Meek Centre.

...

This column first appeared in the North Shore News 25 years ago this week. Hold the party, no pictures, no autographs! A tasteful bronze plaque over the News entrance will suffice.

Former Vancouver Sun columnist Trevor Lautens writes every second Friday on politics and life with a West Vancouver bias. he can be reached via email at rtlautens@gmail.com (<mailto:rtlautens@gmail.com>).

What are your thoughts? Send us a letter via email by clicking [here \(http://www.nsnews.com/opinion/send-us-a-letter\)](http://www.nsnews.com/opinion/send-us-a-letter) or post a comment below.