

north shore news

Lions Gate Bridge won't close to cars: Stone

No plan to shut bridge to all but buses, bicycles by 2030

Jane Seyd / North Shore News

April 19, 2015 12:00 AM

Transportation Minister Todd Stone says the province has no plans to close the Lions Gate Bridge to cars and North Shore politicians are calling the idea a complete non-starter after an obscure agreement to close the bridge to traffic by 2030 surfaced Thursday.

Politicians were reacting after Jordan Bateman, director for the Canadian Taxpayers Federation and leader of the No side in the Lower Mainland's TransLink vote, unearthed a 15-year-old agreement between the province and the City of Vancouver to close the bridge to vehicle traffic.

The deal was made by the city of Vancouver, TransLink and the B.C. government, promising a car-free bridge in exchange for the park board's approval to remove 47 trees from Stanley Park in order to make a wider causeway.

Under the agreement, the bridge would become dedicated to bike, pedestrian and transit use. The deal was based on the understanding that a third crossing of Burrard Inlet would be built.

Bateman said he found out about the agreement after the District of West

Vancouver had recently asked the province about the status of the plan and received no response.

On Friday, Stone told media there are no plans to close the Lions Gate to traffic.

Years ago, under the NDP, "there was consideration for a third crossing of the Burrard Inlet to divert traffic from the Stanley Park causeway," Stone said in a press statement. But there are no plans to build another bridge, which Stone noted has

"many technical challenges and potential impacts to surrounding communities."

West Vancouver Mayor Michael Smith told The Province newspaper his municipality's requests for clarity on whether the Lions Gate Bridge closure will go ahead have gone unanswered.

"It is absurd to suggest we could only have one way to get off the North Shore," Smith said. "Our position is this closure

certainly can't happen without a replacement. So we sent a letter to Todd Stone asking 'Are you going to take the bridge out of service?' And we were treated with dead silence."

District of North Vancouver Mayor Richard Walton said he's never seen the Lions Gate Bridge closure document, and doesn't believe the plan will ever be put in place.

"That was a discussion from 15 years ago and it's no longer relevant," he said Friday. "I don't think that that's going to happen because I think it was predicated on there being a third crossing." Walton said a third bridge to the North Shore is "no closer now" than it was then - and is likely a more distant prospect because the

costs of land needed to make that happen have skyrocketed.

Bateman said Friday he's glad to hear Stone back away from the plan. But he added legally it's still on the books. If the deal is dead, it should be officially rescinded, he said.

"I'd prefer to see them on the Lions Gate Bridge tearing up a copy of the agreement."

- with files from Maria Spitale-Leisk and The Province

© 2015 North Shore News