

Transit tax's true costs need to be shown

Re: Anti-transit piece slammed, Letters, April 16

Iain Black references the San Francisco Bay Area, L.A. County and Puget Sound as cities that Vancouver should look to as positive examples for its sales tax referendum.

Yet, L.A. and San Francisco have both experienced a decline in recent years in the percentage of commuters using transit to get to work, while Seattle's figure has remained flat.

He also highlights Trans-Link's "incredibly strong record of delivering new service on time and on budget", but fails to mention the cost overruns and delays associated with the rollout of its electronic fare card system.

Doug Simpson mentions that I work for Energy Probe and that we are "funded by oil or the auto industry."

Our organization has never accepted any such funding.

While some of my co-workers have taken controversial views, our overall philosophy is that the true costs of all forms of energy and transit should be presented to consumers and that subsidies lead to waste and over-consumption.

I currently walk or ride my bike to work and support a congestion charge and tolls on roads, which would both be far more effective in taming congestion.

BRADY YAUCH
Executive Director, Consumer Policy Institute (an affiliate of Energy Probe)

LETTER OF THE DAY

Tanker threat overblown

Much information spread about oil tankers is simply wrong

Re: Tanker increase in local waters courts danger, Letters, April 14

Thomas Hara's well intentioned letter illustrates the problem of this tanker safety debate occurring outside the jurisdiction of competent experts. Much of the information floating around is just plain wrong, and tends to mislead the public.

Hara's letter says "2,700 litres or 94 barrels" leaked in the recent Vancouver Harbour spill. Twenty-seven hundred litres is actually about 17 barrels. Next he says "modern tankers carry one or two million barrels of oil." Actually ULCC tankers can carry up to four million barrels, and many smaller tankers are under a half million barrels. However, this information is irrelevant for Vancouver Harbour which

allows no tanker larger than Aframax (now, and for the Kinder Morgan expansion). These tankers, due to draft limitations, carry under 600,000 barrels, in many separate tanks, are double hulled, and they have the right-of-way over other shipping. Lastly, Hara frets about the "swift tides" under the Second Narrows Bridge — true, but again somewhat irrelevant as loaded tankers go under the bridge at slack water only (little or no current) with tethered tugs.

Public debate is important, but I encourage writers to research their subject to minimize errors.

JOHN HUNTER, P. ENG.
North Vancouver

The Yes side's support of the transit plebiscite is based on fairy tales and pixie dust as the proposed improved transit brought about by the new tax will do little in reducing congestion.

A Broadway subway will not reduce congestion; if anything it will increase it. Subways are only built when there is a minimum traffic flow of 15,000 persons per hour per direction, demanding long trains and large stations. As Broadway has traffic flows about one third of this, a massively expensive Broadway subway will cannibalize the rest of the transit system to pay for it and force passengers to make inconvenient transfers from

train to bus at Arbutus.

The only way to reduce congestion is to reduce road space and this is exactly what European transit planners are doing by operating trams on-street and at-grade, reducing road space for traffic. This is the "pull-push" philosophy of transit where some people are pulled to transit, and by reducing road space, others are pushed to transit. I find those who are vocal on the Yes side, stand to make money from a Yes vote. Those on the No side, demand accountability and fiscal responsibility.

D. M. JOHNSTON
Delta

The taxpayer-funded TV ads begging us to vote in favour of the Mayor's Council's transit tax start off by stating "the region is set to grow by one million more people."

We do not need, nor do we have the resources to accommodate a million more people in the region.

And it's not just the transportation system that's lacking. It's a lack of doctors, hospitals, emergency services, funding for schools, good jobs, etc.

If our civic governments can't or won't control population growth in the region they should find the money in their own budgets to pay for the necessary

services and infrastructure required to support it.

GARY TUPPER
New Westminster

Tanker traffic is strictly monitored

Re: A world-class spill response system?; Bellingham can have a boom around a leaky vessel within the hour, says harbourmaster, April 14

Before a loaded tanker is allowed to leave the Burnaby terminal it must pass inspection for compliance with Canadian and international regulations, it must have a captain and two local pilots on the bridge and be escorted by three tugboats, one of them tethered to the tanker.

Also, it is only allowed to sail during daylight hours and slack tide, and when its shipping lane is clear of all other traffic and its trip is monitored by the port's advanced airport-type guidance system.

Once well beyond Lions Gate Bridge, two tugboats leave while the third now-untethered tug accompanies the tanker to East Point off Saturna Island, where it is again tethered to the tanker for the trip through Boundary Pass and Haro Strait. And only then the two pilots and the tug boat leave.

To increase the tankers' safety even more, Kinder Morgan is proposing the tug escort continues all the way to the mouth of Juan de Fuca Strait.

JERRY SKLENAR
North Vancouver