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Traffic help on the way - Walton

[Brent Richter](#) / North Shore News

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Federal and provincial help is apparently on the way to help untie the traffic knots at the Ironworkers Memorial Second Narrows Crossing bridgehead.

That's one of the messages from District of North Vancouver Mayor Richard Walton, who talked all things transportation at a North Vancouver Chamber of Commerce luncheon Wednesday.

The district has been working with the province to redesign the onramps and offramps between the bridge and Lynn Valley Road, aiming to ease traffic congestion.

The total cost of the highway project is expected to be \$140 million between the three levels of

government. "The federal government and the provincial government will be making a significant announcement on Nov. 12," Walton said.

The \$5-million sale of the old Keith Lynn alternative secondary school to the district last month "unlocked" the co-operation and funds of the provincial and federal governments, Walton said.

The impending referendum on how (or if) Lower Mainland residents will fund the TransLink mayors' council vision for transportation improvements was also part of the discussion Wednesday.

Included in the mayors' council vision for the North Shore is 10-minute SeaBus service in peak travel times, B-line service between Lynn Valley and downtown Vancouver, Capilano University and Metrotown as well as Phibbs Exchange all the way to Dundarave, plus increased bus service and bike lanes.

Paying for \$7.5 billion in transportation infrastructure improvements across the Lower Mainland will likely come from a new regional sales tax and regional carbon tax and at some point, road pricing, Walton said. The rest of the world has moved way ahead of Canada into funding transportation infrastructure in these ways, Walton added.

But Metro Vancouver voters must give their approval to opening up any new funding sources, the province has mandated. That referendum will go ahead between March and June 2015 and Walton said he's currently spending "long, long hours" working to see that it passes.

Walton said Lower Mainland residents can expect a mail-in ballot, similar to the referendum that sank the harmonized sales tax in 2011.

He and Port Coquitlam Mayor Greg Moore just returned from a factfinding trip to Los Angeles, which has had two similar referendums in the last six

years - one that succeeded and one that failed.

Critical in a winning referendum is having all relevant business, transportation, charity, tourism, non-profit and citizens groups on board endorsing the plan, he said.

Some initial polling by TransLink has found that people are supportive of the mayors' plan for funding, Walton said, but support from the business community is even higher.

"The business community recognizes that the more ways you can give people options to get out of their cars, the more road capacity you have for goods movement and the economic links between the two are absolutely solid," he said to the business audience.

And halting development isn't the answer to our traffic problems, Walton added, as the population will grow and urbanize whether the transportation system keeps up or not.

"If North Van city and North Van district say tomorrow 'No, development.

I can't take any more development,' I can tell you our chance at getting any provincial or federal monies goes right down the toilet. Other areas of (Metro Vancouver) are taking way more than we are. Despite the perception in North Van district right now, for the last five years, our average growth rate has been .7 per cent. That's about the lowest in Metro Vancouver. It's much lower than anywhere else," he said. "Turning off the spigot isn't going to solve traffic problems. It's going to make it more difficult to solve."

Though the mayors were opposed to putting transportation funding at risk with a referendum, the B.C. Liberals introduced legislation for a referendum in June. Two of the North Shore's four Liberal MLAs - Jane Thornthwaite and Ralph Sultan - were at Wednesday's event offering praise for Walton's quarterbacking of the massive responsibility, and expressing optimism that the referendum would pass.

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