

## TransLink urged to clarify tax-and-spend plan



Express bus service on Highway 1 over the new Port Mann Bridge, connecting northern Langley to Surrey City Centre and Lougheed Station in Burnaby, is among the planned transit upgrades that depend on TransLink getting new funding sources – beyond a proposed two-cent gas tax hike.

*Gateway Program*

By [Jeff Nagel - BC Local News](#)

Published: **August 04, 2011 10:00 AM**

Updated: **August 04, 2011 10:48 AM**

TransLink's independent commissioner is warning the plan to finance the Evergreen Line and other transit upgrades with a two-cent gas tax hike plus other yet-to-be-determined fees or taxes may be too murky to accept.

Martin Crilly suggested area mayors insist on a better understanding of how money will be spent if the province fails to enact some of the revenue sources.

"What are the mayors actually buying for sure?" he asked in an interview.

Many motorists and some mayors already oppose raising the TransLink-dedicated gas tax from 15 to 17 cents per litre, an increase the province has pledged to legislate this fall to take effect next April.

But even more uncertainty hangs over the other sources – possibly an annual vehicle levy averaging \$24, a second regional carbon tax or even a system of road-use fees, all of which may be at least as controversial as the two-cent gas tax increase. Higher parking taxes and mechanisms to tax property developers are also on the table.

If there's no agreement within a year among mayors and with the province to use an additional source, a temporary property tax hike of \$23 per average home kicks in for 2013 and 2014.

Crilly said it's not clear enough what happens next.

If no longer-term revenue solution is in place going into 2015, TransLink and the mayors may be faced with deep cuts or at least shelving many of the priority projects supposed to be paid for through the proposed funding supplement.

"It's important to be clear what happens in that circumstance because it's not beyond the realm of possibility that we might find ourselves in that place," Crilly said.

"You don't want to be in a position of having to make emergency cuts."

If Victoria fails to pass the gas tax hike, he said, the supplement would effectively collapse and TransLink wouldn't deliver its \$400-million share of the \$1.2-billion Evergreen Line linking Burnaby, Port Moody and Coquitlam.

TransLink spokesperson Erin McConnell said the proposed supplement will be revised in light of Crilly's comments to show the order in which future transit upgrades would proceed if the extra sources don't materialize.

That could open up new splits between the region's politicians depending on how the priorities are phased.

Some projects – like express bus routes on King George Boulevard and Highway 1 through Surrey and a Langley-White Rock route – would enhance South-of-Fraser service, while more frequent SeaBus runs would appeal to the North Shore.

A general lift in bus service, more road and cycling infrastructure and upgrades to several transit stations are also promised.

McConnell said the **improvements would deliver** an extra 20 million transit trips per year, equivalent to **removing 70,000 cars a day from traffic.**

"That would have significant benefits in reducing congestion," she said, seeking to soothe angry motorists who feel they will pay for transit service they don't use.

Area mayors, meanwhile, are divided on whether they can accept a plan that leaves a big controversial

funding source to be determined with a property tax hike as the fallback mechanism.

"I don't see how property taxes relate to transportation," said Delta Mayor Lois Jackson, one of several mayors who oppose any scenario that could result in higher property taxes.

She noted TransLink already has a built-in ability to collect three per cent more from property taxes each year without mayors' council approval.

Development charges to extract money from businesses near SkyTrain stations would be a better choice for a new source, she said, adding she could also conceivably support a regional carbon tax or an annual levy on vehicles, provided it's for a small amount.

Jackson also wants TransLink to reconsider a previously discarded idea – taxing shipping containers that pass through the port.

"They take up a tremendous volume of road capacity and add to the burden of maintaining roads and highways," she said.

A \$20 charge per container would generate \$50 million based on the 2.5 million containers a year that go through Metro Vancouver.

In comparison, TransLink's proposed gas tax hike would generate \$45 million, while a total of \$75 million annually is needed to pay for the entire proposed package.

Jackson said she'd also like to see the spending priorities pared down and the Evergreen Line built for less by scrapping SkyTrain technology.

Port Coquitlam Mayor Greg Moore said he supports the expanded list of transit investments, not just an Evergreen Line-only option that some mayors suggest would be simpler.

"We need better bus service South of the Fraser," he said. "We've got a third Seabus that's just sitting there and not operating."

TransLink has agreed to extend its public consultations to the end of September in response to a request from Metro mayors at Moore's urging.

Mayors are expected to vote on the finalized supplement in early October.

Crilly said a move towards user-pay road fees or tolls is inevitable and would make the entire transportation system more efficient.

A ring of tolled bridges around the region could be a first "easy step" toward road pricing, he said, although he acknowledged it would require the province to revise its policy of only tolling new or upgraded infrastructure.

A haphazard set of bridge tolls is coming anyway, Crilly noted, referring to the Golden Ears Bridge and the tolling of the new Port Mann Bridge when it opens in 16 months.

## Total Number of Registered Vehicles 1988-2009

YEAR	31-Jan 1999	31-Jan 2000	31-Jan 2001	31-Jan 2002	31-Jan 2003	31-Jan 2004	31-Jan 2005	31-Jan 2006	31-Jan 2007	31-Jan 2008	31-Jan 2009
MUNICIPALITIES											
ANMORE	713	756	815	866	932	995	1,061	1,178	1,281	1,354	1,426
BELCARRA	451	492	477	487	558	576	630	622	607	615	619
BOWEN ISLAND	1,917	2,165	2,185	2,307	2,442	2,581	2,724	2,817	2,856	2,949	2,994
BURNABY	114,761	117,518	115,604	115,181	120,136	121,690	121,627	125,571	129,095	132,422	133,069
COQUITLAM	66,807	68,495	70,279	71,559	73,980	75,209	76,115	77,984	80,860	83,161	83,378
DELTA	57,643	62,754	63,886	65,033	68,540	69,547	70,492	71,033	72,287	75,146	76,418
LANGLEY *	79,632	81,115	82,748	84,846	90,676	92,859	96,380	100,411	104,467	108,344	111,153
LIONS BAY	939	976	998	1,005	1,042	1,065	1,080	1,068	1,095	1,113	1,105
MAPLE RIDGE	39,421	40,577	41,950	43,319	46,602	47,845	49,287	50,659	52,267	54,025	55,112
NEW WESTMINSTER	28,881	29,192	30,435	31,631	32,012	31,734	32,048	32,855	33,987	34,857	35,563
NORTH VANCOUVER **	74,724	75,150	76,146	77,149	80,227	81,128	81,905	83,032	84,090	85,467	85,362
PITT MEADOWS	9,179	9,314	9,456	9,782	10,463	10,631	11,009	11,355	11,750	12,124	12,611
PORT COQUITLAM	31,196	31,593	31,833	32,710	34,765	35,215	35,740	36,373	36,699	37,246	38,092
PORT MOODY	13,900	15,137	15,349	15,054	15,955	16,665	17,570	18,455	19,422	20,586	21,888
RICHMOND	111,451	116,292	116,609	116,505	116,202	118,699	121,831	124,100	126,479	130,339	131,243
SURREY	186,539	192,784	200,474	209,432	225,356	231,535	240,538	252,352	263,270	275,688	282,412
VANCOUVER	284,925	287,141	290,698	295,260	306,321	304,981	308,162	312,070	316,954	323,384	327,968
WEST VANCOUVER	26,227	26,215	26,425	26,659	27,857	28,220	28,410	28,774	29,256	29,579	29,496
WHITE ROCK	14,135	15,200	15,144	15,224	15,896	15,712	15,864	15,996	15,976	14,270	13,807
<b>GVRD TOTAL</b>	<b>1,143,441</b>	<b>1,172,866</b>	<b>1,191,511</b>	<b>1,214,009</b>	<b>1,269,962</b>	<b>1,286,887</b>	<b>1,312,473</b>	<b>1,346,705</b>	<b>1,382,698</b>	<b>1,422,669</b>	<b>1,443,716</b>

### NOTES:

1. These numbers include passenger vehicles, commercial vehicles, motorcycles, trailers, motorhomes and commercial trailers with active insurance policy on January 31, by municipality.
2. February 28, 1991 numbers were used because January 31, 1991 data was not available.
3. \*Denotes the City and Township of Langley.
4. \*\* Denotes both the City and District of North Vancouver.

### SOURCE:

Insurance Corporation of British Columbia.

	YEAR	31-Jan 1988	31-Jan 1989	31-Jan 1990	28-Feb 1991	31-Jan 1992	31-Jan 1993	31-Jan 1994	31-Jan 1995	31-Jan 1996	31-Jan 1997	31-Jan 1998
MUNICIPALITIES												
ANMORE		N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	219	327	380	437	512	551	598	635
BELCARRA		N.A.	N.A.	332	368	401	412	427	440	443	458	476
BOWEN ISLAND		N.A.	N.A.	1,015	1,201	1,388	1,504	1,683	1,771	1,880	1,987	2,062
BURNABY		109,974	111,937	114,842	113,777	117,436	114,815	115,832	116,208	118,555	118,522	121,043
COQUITLAM		43,830	45,836	48,675	50,615	53,234	53,139	55,635	58,063	59,034	62,330	64,519
DELTA		51,604	52,977	55,875	56,677	59,422	57,518	58,320	58,804	59,027	60,095	60,757
LANGLEY *		56,290	58,337	61,197	63,836	68,259	67,388	68,609	70,499	72,068	74,569	77,412
LIONS BAY		N.A.	N.A.	861	904	942	929	920	931	934	960	977
MAPLE RIDGE		N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	35,556	36,867	38,267
NEW WESTMINSTER		25,121	25,280	26,880	27,239	28,619	28,250	29,071	30,019	29,008	29,015	28,683
NORTH VANCOUVER **		69,209	69,802	72,187	71,206	72,785	70,877	71,275	71,395	71,942	72,636	73,594
PITT MEADOWS		N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	8,469	8,686	9,084
PORT COQUITLAM		23,878	25,426	26,451	26,425	27,913	27,438	27,621	28,414	28,922	29,850	30,757
PORT MOODY		12,056	12,429	12,726	12,749	13,442	12,832	13,334	13,423	13,465	13,912	14,505
RICHMOND		79,443	81,118	83,362	85,289	89,436	88,187	90,109	94,596	97,592	104,977	110,023
SURREY		120,866	126,836	136,800	141,686	151,754	149,671	154,931	161,591	165,445	173,104	181,383
VANCOUVER		260,130	260,755	267,089	267,053	269,486	254,309	254,895	257,180	259,107	265,936	271,836
WEST VANCOUVER		25,066	25,052	25,592	25,591	26,081	25,674	25,711	25,708	25,704	25,964	26,139
WHITE ROCK		15,685	16,577	17,702	18,038	18,494	17,479	17,222	17,018	16,581	16,272	15,644
<b>GVRD TOTAL</b>		<b>893,152</b>	<b>912,362</b>	<b>951,586</b>	<b>962,873</b>	<b>999,419</b>	<b>970,802</b>	<b>986,032</b>	<b>1,006,572</b>	<b>1,064,283</b>	<b>1,096,738</b>	<b>1,127,796</b>

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