

**Subject: [Fwd: Representation on TransLink Board: North Shore municipalities]**

**Date:** Wed, 14 Jan 2004 17:01:14 -0800

**From:** Brian Platts <bplatts@shaw.ca>

**To:** Corrie Kost <kost@triumf.ca>

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**Subject: Representation on TransLink Board: North Shore municipalities**

**Date:** Thu, 15 Jan 2004 00:49:31 +0000 (GMT)

**From:** Elizabeth James <cagebc@yahoo.com>

**To:** Mayor Ron Wood and Council <rwood@district.west-van.bc.ca>, Mayor Don Bell and Council <council@dnv.org>, Mayor Barbara Sharp and Council <council@cnv.org>, Mayor Lisa Barrett and Council <lbarrett@bimbc.ca>, Mayor Doug Miller <office@village.lions-bay.bc.ca>, "James Ridge, CAO" <james\_ridge@dnv.org>

**CC:** BC Auditor-General Wayne Strelieff <wstrelieff@bcauditor.com>, fonvca@fonvca.org

14 January 2004

Mayor Ron Wood  
DISTRICT OF WEST VANCOUVER  
750-17th Street,  
WEST VANCOUVER, BC  
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RE: NORTH SHORE TRANSLINK REPRESENTATION

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Dear Mayor Wood:

In recent press reports and by your report to Council last Monday evening, taxpayers learned that the Mayors of the five North Shore municipalities agreed among themselves that Mayor Barbara Sharp should continue as North Shore representative on the TransLink Board.

This decision is a departure from the protocol of previous years, which saw the committee position rotating on an annual basis through the mayors of the three largest communities - West Vancouver and North Vancouver City and District. Under that schedule, it was expected that you would take over the reins from Mayor Sharp.

In answer to a question from Clr. Soprovich, you indicated that the rationale for this decision was that it would achieve "continuity" and that, had you taken on the task, it would have meant "a steep learning curve" for you.

We believe the following points should be made in this regard. However, the comments should, in no way, be construed as a criticism of Mayor Sharp nor, indeed, of yourself or any other individual. Rather, they are an expression of serious concerns about the whole TransLink and GVRD process. For clarity, they are separately itemized below:

**1. Choice of representative/rotation:**

District of North Vancouver Councillor Crist, in an upcoming Notice of Motion, has suggested that it would be more democratic if all members of the 5 councils were included in the discussion and decision. We agree with Clr. Crist and believe that something similar was also on the mind of Clr. Soprovich, when he asked his question.

**2. Steep learning curve:**

For many years now, you have had a close working relationship with Clr. Durman and, before him, former Clr. Williams. Both gentlemen have provided regular reports to Council. Both have been accurate and extremely explicit with respect to the projects, workings, finances and decisions of TransLink. In fact, of all regional municipalities, members of West Vancouver Council likely know about as much as there is to know on the subject - or at least as much as TransLink is prepared to divulge! It is difficult to understand, therefore, how it is that you would have a "steep learning curve."

**3. Communications, reporting and voting protocols:**

As you know, the GVRD Board is required to ratify - or not - certain major decisions of TransLink - an agency which has a budget equal to the combined budgets of GVWD, GVSDD and Recycling Services.

A recent example occurred when TransLink approved the go-ahead to the RAV project. If memory serves me well, your Council discussed the matter and your GVRD representative was directed to vote to approve, but subject to detailed, and very

important conditions.

By contrast, the matter was not even brought to members of NV District Council until approximately 5:15 p.m. on the eve of the GVRD vote. At that time, Mayor Bell sent an email to his Council saying, in effect, 'I have to vote on RAV tomorrow, any comment?' No opportunity was afforded DNV councillors to have an open discussion on what will be - by the time the debts&nb! sp;are all paid - a \$4-billion expenditure. While it is not known how the matter was handled by other NS councils, this reveals a glaring flaw in the democratic process. Furthermore, this is consistent with Clr. Durman's experience that 'artificial deadlines are created, leaving little time for due consideration'....let alone public input.

Another example relates to the recent TransLink vote on the agency's 3-year/10-year Plan. Following the vote, I called TransLink to see how the vote went and, in particular, to find out how Clr. Sharp cast her North Shore vote. I was told that the Board voted in favour but the person at the other end didn't know the breakdown. On the next try, the person taking my call didn't know the answer but said they'd find out and call me back. They didn't.

Asking around, the general opinion was that Mayor Sharp had voted in favour. As it happens, this was incorrect! but, in an effort to obtain verification, I once again called TransLink. This time, I was bunted from local to local until I reached voicemail, left a message with the question and asked for callback. That didn't happen either.

In the meantime, you fielded a question by council as to how Mayor Sharp had voted. Clr. Durman did not have the complete answer; nor did Mayor Bell of DNV.

These situations give ample reason to support a resolution tabled by DNV Clr. Alan Nixon at a meeting of Council held on Monday, December 8 2003:

Moved by Councillor NIXON, Seconded by Councillor CRIST and CARRIED [Clr. Harris opposed]:

THAT the Mayor and Chief Administrative Officer of the District of North Vancouver initiate discussions with their counterparts in the City of North Vancouver, District of West Vancouver, Bowen Island, Lions Bay and Squamish municipalities, the objective being to establish a **North Shore Transportation Authority whose primary responsibility, amongst others, will be to collectively elect a representative to the GVTA (TransLink) Board of Directors with a report back to Council by no later than March 31, 2004.** [The emphasis is my own. It should be noted that Clr. Nixon initially used 'agency' or 'committee,' rather than "authority." Which begs the question: does use of the word "authority" automatically guarantee it cannot happen for legal reasons?]

It is not clear how quickly this was relayed to other councils. Nor is it known whether any action ensued. [In any event, the March 31 2004 deadline for report is, of course beyond the date at which a decision on representation was required.] What is certain, however, is that to have five mayors, by themselves, making the decision - to renew Mayor Sharp's appointment - flies in the face of the intent of Clr. Nixon's motion.

Further, in this day and age of almost instant communications, it has to be of some concern that all members of all North Shore councils are not given more effective opportunities to participate in! the decision-making. It is one thing when it takes a member of the public several weeks - and a rather disturbing letter from Mayor Sharp - before accurate information on TransLink/GVRD actions can be accessed. It is quite another when even members of council feel left out of the decisions they were elected to make.

## SUMMARY

As your Council is keenly aware, many serious concerns have been expressed about TransLink by residents of all North Shore communities - some of which were echoed in a report released by BC Auditor-General Wayne Strelieff... [www.bcauditor.com/AuditorGeneral](http://www.bcauditor.com/AuditorGeneral) : *Transportation in Greater Vancouver: 2001/02 Report 2: Part III.*

The A-G's follow-up report of January 2003, showed that no action had been taken on several important recommendations - notably those concerning what Mr. Strelieff termed TransLink's non-performance or compliance with "public sector expectations." It is not known whether the situation has improved in the interim.

Taxpayer concerns range from problems and deficits in the current system of governance, to strong doubts about the accuracy of information released by TransLink, to a lack of confidence in both technical expertise and decision-making.

As far as the North Shore is concerned, under the present GVRD arrangement, residents are expected [required] to pay very high bills for TransLink decisions that offer them little or no benefit by way of improved transit or transportation solutions. This applies, also, to other smaller municipalities in the Region. Questions as to the *willingness and ability of taxpayers to pay* are particularly important when one considers the huge capital, operating and debt-servicing costs of the Expo, Millennium and looming RAV-line projects. North Shore concerns are reinforced by the sparse benefits being 'planned for,' or perhaps only 'considered' for the North Shore, in TransLink's proposed 3-year/10-year plans.

**RECOMMENDATIONS:**

1. THAT North Shore/Squamish councils and CAO's "fast-track" their consideration and approval of Clr. Nixon's resolution;
2. THAT a North Shore Transportation Authority [NSTA] be duly established;
3. THAT Mayor Sharp be advised that her re-appointment is to be an interim one, subject to review by the NSTA on/before March 31 2004;
4. THAT North Shore CAO's request an immediate status report from TransLink as to, (a) its review of/changes to the governance structure; and, (b) the status of its compliance or otherwise with the report and recommendations of BC Auditor-General, Wayne Strelieff.
5. THAT, in the event the aforementioned changes are forthcoming - and approved by the A-G - the GVRD immediately apply the new structure to TransLink operations.
6. THAT the councils of other municipalities be canvassed for their opinions as to the benefits - or otherwise - they derive from their participation in the current TransLink structure.

Thank you for reviewing this material. Your early response will be much appreciated.

Yours truly,

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