

Subject: [Fwd: "JUST SAY NO!"]

Date: Wed, 28 Nov 2001 15:19:44 -0800

From: Brian Platts <brian_platts@telus.net>

To: Corrie Kost <kost@triumf.ca>

CC: Dave Sadler <davesadler@telus.net>

Subject: RE: "JUST SAY NO!"

Date: Wed, 28 Nov 2001 23:09:44 +0000 (GMT)

From: Elizabeth James <cagebc@yahoo.com>

To: cagebc@yahoo.com

CC: Mayor and Council - DNV <Council@district.north-van.bc.ca>, Directors Team <managecomm@district.north-van.bc.ca>, "FONVCA (E-mail)" <fonvca@fonvca.org>

Dear Clr. Crist:

Many thanks for your note and, on behalf of all those who help me by providing much of the information I use, thank for the kudos offered.

Although you thought, I am sure, that you were disagreeing with me on some facets of the issue, in fact you made my points!

1. **Burden on the poor:** Ratifying the recent TransLink vote ratifies, also, another 25-cent single zone fare increase. 25-cents doesn't sound like much when you say it quickly, does it? Yet that increase 'punishes' both those who have no alternative but to use transit - i.e. the poor, the physically and mentally handicapped and students - *and* those who, for one reason or another, opt to do what TransLink urges, i.e. "leave the car and take the bus". The punishment last time around cost an *average* single-zone rider +/- \$175/annually! So, over two years then, Joe and Jane Average will absorb a hit of \$350...In actual fact, of course, the hit will be much higher than that, because Joe and Jane can rarely keep their travel to a single zone. On top of all that, as we have seen recently, even if the fares are increased and the additional taxes levied, there is *still* no guarantee that services w! ill be cut. In fact, if we do not succeed in doing something to curb the insane and unconscionable pursuit of more and more SkyTrain, I am personally willing to guarantee that ever-increasing fares and taxes will become the norm.

2. **Bias and Haranguing:** First of all, although West Vancouver Council does, in its own votes, favour decisions that are in the best interest of its community [isn't that what it is supposed to do?] barring a couple of ill-advised comments from one councillor [which don't bear repeating] I have never sensed from its business-like discussions that it wished to harangue anyone - unlike one other council I could mention! In fact, compared to the North Shore's last representative on the TransLink board, I have watched a very real attempt on the part of Mayor Wood to include, marry and be fair to the wishes of all five municipalities in his TransLink vote - an almost impossible task given the Board structure.

3. **West Vancouver's 'own bus service':** Indeed, West Van has its own service, a good one and it's well utilized to boot. TransLink CEO, Pat Jacobsen, is quite right though when she points out that the difference in operating costs is as clear cut an issue as some would have us believe. Although the difference to be the \$58/hour cost of the Blue Bus vs the \$89/hour cost of the Coast Mountain union agreement, (a) it is a whole lot more economical to take riders from the well-defined and relatively small area of West Vancouver to downtown and back again, than it is to gather up riders from the whole of the hugely-dispersed areas of the remainder of the Lower Mainland - including the Langleys - and deliver them to heck and gone all around that area; (b) the union is the same for both services and it remains to be seen what happens to the hourly operating costs when the Blue Bus contract comes up for! renewal. That said, I do strongly support an *expert* study as to the feasibility of using the Blue Bus service for the whole of the North Shore, to connect with the Coast Mountain services on the other side of both bridges. Further, I heartily support the campaign you and others have been waging to increase the very successful Seabus service.

4. **Cars vs "Carless!":** Clr. Crist, I am pretty nearly ready to blow my stack at the next person who says this. Do not, please don't, keep telling car drivers to get out of their cars and use the transit service, when there is no darn [I'd like to use a stronger word or two here] transit service worthy of the name to use! If that were not so, why *is* it, pray that you and your wife bought a car? Next point, although many are fond of telling us how much the automobile is 'subsidized', I'd really like to be able to show you just how much use of the automobile contributes in dollars to our local economy. I bet that, as it stands today, our local economy would totally collapse if the car were to be taken out of the equation....a couple of weeks ago, I began a list of everything car-related that I and my family had purchased, directly and indirectly, over the years. The! list is enormous, and still growing. Furthermore, with respect to pollution and reverting to the question of hypocrisy...if you and other politicians are serious about reducing pollution, why not begin with some actions which are relatively easy to achieve:

(a) Lobby the federal government to lower the sulphur content of fuels - both gasoline and diesel [I think I previously sent you information showing that diesel-powered transport trucks each spew out emissions equal to 150 automobiles - there are over 375,000 of such trucks plying Canadian roads, 2,600 of which cross the US/Canada border every day in the pollution-sensitive Fraser Valley -

and that says nothing of all of the other diesel-powered vehicles;

(b) Lobby the feds to ban diesel-powered pick-up trucks/private vehicles - they are only purchased to benefit personal budgets;

(c) Lobby the councils of pollution-sensitive municipalities to do what everyone else has done in the Lower Mainland - i.e. ban burning of garbage and fall leaves etc.

(d) Most of all, lobby TransLink, GVRD *and* the Province to put a stop to the SkyTrain folly. I have lost count of the number of times I have written the message: "Until we put a stop to ! building more of this land-based fast-ferry, all we do is pour good money after bad down the Glen Clark/Bombardier black hole and we'll never be able to afford a good transit system.

(e) Find out, if you will, Clr. Crist why it is that the new Liberal Government, which is so keen on WasteBustering, core reviews and cutting costs, is saying absolutely nothing about SkyTrain. In the Auditor-General's August report, he made gentle references to 'some conflicts and over-lapping duties' and to SkyTrain. What our *Coalition* wanted from him was a hard-hitting, Denis Desautel-type, report. We didn't get it. Instead, he handed TransLink/GVRD Chair Puil a plum to whine out at every damn meeting he attends...."We don't want to do this, but what can we do? We're in this state because the Province reneged on its agreement to help us collect the levy." Balderdash!! We're in this state because of SkyTrain capital, operating, and de! bt-servicing costs and because of wilful mismanagement on the part of TransLink. The NDP knew that, and that's why they got rid of it onto the Region. Premier Campbell even told Mr. Puil that. TransLink is not a brand-new, feeling its way organization, as the A-G states. It's the incompetent, unelected and unaccountable BC Transit mess with a new name and the same old problems being made even worse - with the tacit acceptance of regional politicians.

Clr. Crist car drivers and other taxpayers in this Region are sick and tired of being made the scapegoats for incompetent decisions being made by unaccountable bureaucrats who don't know what the heck a good transit system should look like, and by the politicians who depend on them because they don't know either.

Ernie Crist <CristE@district.north-van.bc.ca> wrote:

Dear Ms. James:

I am indebted as we all are I am sure for your continuing endeavor re this important issue. I appreciate the well researched material you continue to make available and I agree with most your common sense approach has to offer.

The problem is that if we agree to the cuts as presented as options by Translink, the only ones who will suffer are those who can afford it the least. That is to say Translink will be quite happy to cut services, after all the un-elected directors of Translink will still be able to draw their salaries and drive their cars.

As for West Vancouver, they may be right on many points but they to me appear to be somewhat hypocritical. After all they have their own bus system and if everything else fails they can always avail themselves of their own private three Van plus per household transportation system.

Sorry to be so cynical but I am just getting a little tired with their sanctimonious haranguing. When I, on this and other related issues and on more than one occasion suggested that the GVRD and Translink Board be directly elected, they along with the other elected intelligentsia on the North Shore including the District of North Vancouver ridiculed the idea. So forgive me when I am somewhat suspicious of their motives. Still, I appreciate your principled stand, even though I can't "Say No" - the simple reason is that all those who have cars and who do not to rely on public transportation with the exception of a few could not care less about their less unfortunate and "carless" citizens. To sum up - Yes I agree that this is a mess, in fact even for BC it is remarkable but I am not prepared to put the burden of stupidity, incompetence and selfishness on the poor only. They are suffering enough as it is. Did you notice that there are more gas guzzlers then ever on the road? This is just by the by of course.

Yours truly

Ernie Crist

-----Original Message-----

From: Elizabeth James [mailto:cagebc@yahoo.com]

Sent: Tuesday, November 27, 2001 11:53 AM

To: Mayor and Council;

Subject: Fwd: "JUST SAY NO!"

To: Director of Communications, BC Chamber of Commerce

In addition to the addresses shown below, this message is being sent to many other groups and individuals who have expressed their concerns about regional transportation issues.

Our *Coalition* appreciates the stand taken by the Chamber - as expressed by the West Vancouver

Chamber President - and hope that, even at this late date, we can unite to take some positive action to change the TransLink decisions.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Liz James, Chair

Elizabeth James <cagebc@yahoo.com> wrote:

Date: Tue, 27 Nov 2001 19:10:21 +0000 (GMT)
From: Elizabeth James
Subject: "JUST SAY NO!"
To: karen@ara.bc.ca, gringdal@bcada.org, michele.penz@bcaa.bc.ca, ammccinnis@telus.net, rvda-bc@vancouver.net, bcta@bctrucking.com, cfaces@home.com

URGENT - TO ALL CONCERNED TAXPAYERS and ALLIED GROUPS

FROM: *The Coalition for Accountability in Government Enterprises* [CAGE-BC]

DATE: 26 November, 2001

RE: TRANSLINK - RAISED FARES, GASOLINE TAXES and PROPERTY TAXES

The Coalition for Accountability in Government Enterprises supports the ongoing implementation of a range of well-researched, safe, environmentally-sensitive, cost-effective, public transportation solutions which take people from where they are to where they need to be in a timely manner.

By now, readers will know only too well that TransLink has decided to raise bus-fares again next year, to take advantage of the additional 2-cents per litre gas tax conditionally approved by the Province, and to apply a transit tax of about \$7.90 per \$100,000 of residential assessed values in the Region. How that is to play out on commercial property is not completely clear. These measures should raise about \$80 million.

Using the fact that the NDP reneged on collection of a vehicle levy as an excuse, and welcoming the Auditor-General's emphasis of that fact, GVRD/TransLink Chair and Vancouver Councillor George Puil, reminds taxpayers that TransLink faces a shortfall, is not allowed to run a deficit [different than huge debts apparently] and that, though he 'doesn't want to do it' TransLink is 'between a rock and a hard place'. The claimed shortfall started out at \$40 million and climbed to \$47 million.

Premier Campbell, who has the ear of his Deputy former TransLink CEO Ken Dobell, is staying virtually mum on the whole affair - "Not our problem," says Mr. Campbell, "transportation costs and solutions should be the business of those in the Region." Well, that would be all well and good were it not for the fact that it was Glen Clark's Provincial government - aided and abetted, we'll admit, by Mr. Puil's overweening eagerness to grab the transportation brass ring - which got the Region into the SkyTrain expansion fiasco in the first place, at ten times the cost of the fast-cats, when all's said and done.

This Friday, November 30th, GVRD is to decide whether or not to ratify that TransLink vote and, although it's likely to be a much closer vote, in all likelihood the Vancouver-weighted Board will opt to go ahead.

The question then will be, what do we do? Do we just roll over and let them get away with it? Or do we all pull together and try to do something about it?

One of the reasons that TransLink, the Rapid Transit Project Ltd., and the Province have been able to get this far along the road, virtually unimpeded, is because their opposition has been fractured from Day One.... The Bus Riders' Union speaks for one lobby group, Neighbours for Fair Transit [NFFT] for another, the Grandview Cut people for their area, and the creme de la creme for theirs. The Chamber of Commerce speaks for its members, BCAA speaks for theirs, and the Trucking Association for theirs.

City of Port Coquitlam Mayor is all in favour of taxes, just so long as we pay for even more SkyTrain, and the City of Port Moody don't like the taxes but will vote for them conditional upon *not* building SkyTrain to disrupt their businesses! Vancouver, of course, wants everything it can get - just so long as Regional taxpayers underwrite the cost. And this is supposed to be regional planning?

If everyone on this mailing can agree with our header, then let's all talk from the same page. Let's look at the root cause of the problem, rather than engaging in interminable squabbling over the symptoms and how to divvy up the meagre spoils.

As it stands, decisions are being made by unelected, unaccountable politicians and bureaucrats who have little or no transportation expertise. So long as more and more SkyTrain is on their agenda, taxpayers in the Region will **never be able to afford or implement a safe, region-wide, effective transportation network.**

It is the capital, operating and, most of all, the debt-servicing costs of SkyTrain which are draining away most of the transportation dollars available to the region. It does not matter whether one is talking taxation at the provincial level, or at the level of TransLink/GVRD, it's all the same taxpayer. Furthermore, it will drain away jobs and services....all for a system which is inappropriate to the region, and which has proven to be incapable of attracting sufficient paying ridership to attract people out of their cars.

TransLink is *not*, as CEO Pat Jacobsen would have you believe, facing a one-time shortfall. The problem will continue for thirty years or more. It will also get much, much worse if Premier Campbell commits the province to the airport extension based on the excuse of the 2010 Olympic bid.

Until we get all levels of government to acknowledge the truth of that, the decisions will compound, the problems will escalate and taxation and fares will continue to increase. If they are allowed to win this round, once started down that road, the politicians and the entrenched bureaucrats they depend on will never, **ever** stop.

Regardless of Friday's GVRD Board decision, therefore, we are hereby asking you *all* to join with us, to dig in your heels on taxes until they agree to come the table and negotiate with *us* the people - the shareholders of the corporation. We need to launch a region-wide demonstration and/or forum. We need to tell them we are cutting off the money supply beyond the level of this year's funding, and we need to call for their mass resignation. *Nothing less will get their attention.*

Each one of us will have his/her own valid reasons - bus services, jobs, LRT, bikeways, pollution, trucking costs of fuel taxes and congestion, road maintenance, etc. - as to why we want to be at the table to discuss all of the options available.

But, surely, we can ALL agree that it must be done... and done NOW!

Thank you for your early response.

Sincerely,

Liz James, Chair
Coalition for Accountability in Government Enterprises
P.O. Box 16090, 3017 Mountain Highway,
NORTH VANCOUVER, B.C. V7J 2P2

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