

Subject: The Emperor's Clothes are off! Where do municipal candidates and the BC Liberals stand?

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**"There never was a business case for SkyTrain in this Region,"
Pat Jacobsen, new CEO of TransLink shortly after taking up her position last year.**

Readers:

The following article was sent to the *Coalition* and others in yet another attempt to get *the truth about GVRD transit* out into the public arena. We emphasize to anyone willing to read this material, that these are not the personal opinions of either the writer, or of anyone connected with the Coalition. The figures shown are those published by BC Transit - now TransLink - by GVRD and in the Liveable Region Strategic Plan.

The transit being built throughout the GVRD is the largest single capital project in the Province. It's debt-servicing bill, amounting to billions of dollars, must be paid by *all* citizens in the Province for many decades to come - well beyond the middle of this century! Whether or not you can use the transit, and whether or not you live in the GVRD. The Pacificat fiasco pales by comparison.

During the last Municipal election, candidates were not put on the spot and asked where they stood on transit issues - yet in the Lower Mainland they can name one another to sit on both the TransLink and GVRD boards - at higher pay - and spend billions of **your** hard-earned money, accountable to no-one until the next election!

It would be appreciated if readers would consider this material carefully and distribute it far and wide throughout the Region - for it is only by incisive questioning by an informed public that we can make this **THE ISSUE** in the upcoming municipal election. If that does not happen, then tax-hungry municipal councils will turn more and more to projects like this in order to feed development - whether or not that development is good for your community.

The outcome is in your hands.....

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THE FAILURE of TRANSIT-ORIENTED DEVELOPMENTS

by Phil W. leGood, Simon Fraser University and SPEC

12 August, 2002

Do transit-oriented developments induce residents of the development to use rapid transit [SkyTrain]?

From data provided by the GVRD entitled, *Residential Growth in Rapid Transit Corridors*, two tables indicate that both the number of housing units and the population in a 400-meter radius around the existing SkyTrain line increased substantially over a ten-year period from 1986-1996.

- Housing units increased by 34% in the existing SkyTrain corridor - the Expo line - to a total of 35,375 in 1996 - an increase of 9,028 from 1986.
- Population along the existing SkyTrain corridor grew by 39% to a total of 77,168 in 1996 - an increase of 21,838 from 1986.

By contrast, documents from BC Transit [now renamed TransLink] which show the number of daily passengers per peak hour riding SkyTrain in the years 1986 and 1998, indicate an increase of only 1,800 passengers.

In 1998, BC Transit reported a total daily peak period ridership of 7,800 passengers - up from a reported 6,000 passengers in 1986. Yet in 2002, TransLink reports a daily peak period ridership of only 7,200 despite a further growth in population in the Greater Vancouver region (2001 census).

Please note: During the same ten year period, 1986-96, the existing SkyTrain corridor was expanded into Surrey from New Westminster at a capital cost of \$.5 billion.

Questions and comments:

- Despite extending the existing SkyTrain line to Surrey during the 1986-96 period and an increase of over 9,000 housing units, with an increase of almost 22,000 people residing in those units, why has peak period ridership on SkyTrain increased by only 1200-1800 passengers?
- Has transit-oriented development along the existing SkyTrain corridor encouraged its residents to use the "rapid transit" system?
- Have higher densities in the existing SkyTrain corridor provided sufficient ridership to justify a total transit investment costing residents of the **entire region** some \$150 million a year in debt service costs?
- What modes of transportation do the other estimated 10,000 to 21,000 people in the existing SkyTrain corridor use to get to work or school?
- It appears that the existing SkyTrain line fulfilled an objective of the LRSP (Livable Region Strategic Plan) by using "high capacity transit - SkyTrain - as a means of **shaping the pattern of residential growth** in the region". **Yet, less than 10% of the reported population growth residing within a 5 minute walk of the existing SkyTrain corridor use this "high-capacity transit" mode.** Why?
- In 2002, TransLink indicated that only 1,200 passengers daily will ride the new Millennium Line during the peak hour. This is despite an investment which will cost residents of the **entire region** some \$80 million a year for debt service costs.
- A cost to the region's residents of \$230 million a year - for both the existing SkyTrain Expo line and the Millennium line - is yielding a ridership of only 8,400 daily passengers per peak hour [2002 TransLink estimates]. During this same daily peak period, more than 450,000 other residents are, primarily, using their personal cars, buses, or their own power to get to work or school.

The GVRD report on Residential Growth in Rapid Transit Corridors stated, "the LRSP does not contain specific population targets for rapid transit corridors. However, regional policy supports higher densities in these corridors, and the higher densities are needed **to provide sufficient ridership to justify the transit investment**".

The data provided by GVRD appears to indicate that despite higher densities in the existing SkyTrain corridor sufficient ridership has **not occurred** to justify the transit investment in SkyTrain. So what is the purpose of investing in more SkyTrain?

It appears that land re-zoned for higher densities along these corridors subsequently increases the value of the

land. Municipal government's intentions to re-zone areas for higher densities can increase property values by as much as 400%. An increase in property values usually coincides with an increase in the cost of housing for the region's residents. Two incomes or more are required to afford the mortgage payments or even rent. In fact, more and more of the region's residents are having to pay over **50% of their gross incomes for housing.**

Historical statements extolling the virtues of "rapid transit" such as: "it will get people out of their cars, it will improve mobility on the region's roadways for the movement of goods and services, and it will improve air quality" no longer have any validity. The evidence is clear - in the Greater Vancouver region, more single occupancy vehicles are on the road, congestion is worse and poor air quality has become a health issue since investing in SkyTrain.

SUMMARY

It is clear then that, despite a large investment in SkyTrain [by both taxpayers throughout the Province and, more particularly, in the GVRD - EJ], and despite a large increase in population and housing units [density] along the existing SkyTrain corridor, **a comparable amount of new ridership on SkyTrain has failed to materialize.**

Instead, the benefits of SkyTrain have accrued:

- to a **very** small minority of the region's residents who ride it;
- to those who owned the land adjacent to the SkyTrain lines; and, last but not least,
- to Bombardier, Inc.

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