

ADMINISTRATIVE REPORT

Date: June 18, 1996
Dept. File No. 4102-2

TO: Vancouver City Council

FROM: General Manager of Engineering Services and
Director of City Plans

SUBJECT: Status of Light Rail Transit and the City's Role

INFORMATION

The General Manager of Engineering Services and the Director of City Plans submit this report for INFORMATION.

COUNCIL POLICY

Council recommend to the GVRD and the Province that a Broadway/Lougheed LRT to Lougheed Mall and Coquitlam Town Centre via Port Moody be the first priority line for new Light Rapid Transit.

PURPOSE

To report on the status of the implementation of the Broadway Light Rapid Transit Project.

BACKGROUND

In May 1995, City Council recommended to the GVRD and Province that "a Broadway/Lougheed line to Lougheed Mall and Coquitlam Town Centre via Port Moody be the first priority line to the North East Sector."

In September 1995, the Province announced a 10-Year Transit Development Plan. This Plan included the construction of a primarily at-grade Light Rapid Transit (LRT) line along the Broadway-Lougheed Coquitlam Corridor by 2005 with a connection to New Westminster by 2008, provided municipalities commit to land use supportive to generating ridership along the route.

The Central Broadway to Coquitlam LRT link is 27 km long and is estimated to cost \$900 million. The Lougheed Mall to New Westminster link (6.5 km) is outside the 10-Year Plan but will also be studied now. It is estimated to cost \$250 million.

BC Transit is working with the Crown Corporation Secretariat, the GVRD and municipal representatives to develop a draft protocol agreement defining roles for various organizations in the next phase of the LRT Project.

PROTOCOL AGREEMENT

The Provincial Government has requested that before detailed work begins, a protocol agreement be developed. This agreement will define the work to be done over the next 1? to 2 years leading to a "go/no go" decision on construction and the relationship between the major agencies (Province, BC Transit, GVRD, the City and other affected municipalities). Discussions have already taken place between the Crown Corporation Secretariat, BC Transit, the GVRD and the five affected municipal staffs (including Vancouver).

The Protocol Agreement will provide a framework to discuss and resolve the major items listed below. The final arrangement will be determined through negotiation between the Province, the GVRD and five affected municipalities. A final agreement will be forwarded to Council for consideration and approval.

1. Cost Sharing, Governance and Private/Public Partnerships

The estimated cost of the LRT between Central Broadway and Coquitlam is \$900 million. However, the Province has only identified \$600 million within its Budget Management Plan. The rest will have to be found from other sources. These sources include those currently controlled by other governments (local municipalities and the GVRD), the Vancouver Regional Transit Commission (fuel taxes, hydro levies, property taxes) and potential new sources such as regional development cost charges or transportation demand management revenues.

The draft Protocol Agreement will specify that funding and governance issues will be determined through government-to-government negotiations between the Province and GVRD, even though the GVRD indicated on October 26, 1995, that it did not support a proposed transfer of financial responsibility for provincial costs for transit to the GVRD and municipal governments.

The City may be impacted by some of these negotiations and will want to take a direct role. For example, the use of the residential property tax could be proposed to finance the local share. This would impact all taxpayers. It would be important the City comment on the implications this could have on the ability of Vancouver taxpayers to pay a transit tax and, at the same time, the provision of other City services. Given our

population size, and relatively large tax base, Vancouver could end up paying a disproportionate share of the cost of the system relative to other parts of the GVRD.

Governance of the LRT (i.e., who controls or shares control) and governance of the overall transit system may also be addressed at this time. The City already supports the notion that the GVRD should be responsible for Transit in the Region. It may be useful to revisit this recommendation of Council if or when this matter resurfaces.

Previous major transit initiatives have been largely funded by the Province and owned and operated by BC Transit. Public/Private Partnership (P3's) have been discussed as a way to reduce government costs by including the private sector in constructing, operating and maintaining the Broadway LRT.

There is much work yet to be done to better understand how this could

work and the risks to government and the private sector. We believe significant preliminary design is required before any decision can be made on public-private partnerships.

2. Preliminary Design and Service Standards

The work in this area includes a wide range of activities, starting with basic service needs. These include identifying ridership patterns and projections, capacity requirements, train frequencies, equipment and operating needs, service needs, etc. There also needs to be a far better understanding of both local and long distance travel behaviour as well as an appropriate interface with the existing transit system. For example, the Broadway Corridor is already the most heavily used conventional bus corridor in the region, outside the downtown, carrying about 50,000 passengers a day (about one half of SkyTrain's daily ridership). Many of these trips are short and destined to employment and medical services destinations within Central Broadway. It will be necessary to assure these and other local transit service needs along the Broadway Corridor continue to be met when the LRT line is operating.

In addition, alignment and station location options need to be addressed within the corridor, including any grade separation needs. The City will also need to be very involved in the "fit" of the LRT within the City. The introduction of LRT in the Broadway Corridor will have a major impact on:

- the street system and traffic patterns
- the adjacent land uses, including access, noise, visual appearance, etc.
- urban design
- the City's (and others') infrastructure (sewers, water, gas, etc.)
- pedestrians, bicycle and existing transit services

To the extent possible, these impacts (and many others) will need to be reviewed and mitigation options identified during the preliminary design process.

It has been suggested that a public-private partnership needs to be established early as a means of reducing costs. Staff believe that the preliminary design and service standards need to be adequately resolved before there is any private sector involvement in this project. This issue could be resolved as part of a public decision-making process.

Once this project proceeds to final design and construction, the City's involvement would be similar to the development of the SkyTrain system. This requires developing working arrangements between BC Transit, their designers and contractors and virtually all City departments.

3. Land Use Planning

A Broadway line to Coquitlam will achieve two goals. It will move people along the Broadway/Lougheed Corridor (initially mainly in Vancouver) the "serving" function, and it will attract and encourage the development of the Burnaby and NE Sector portion of the Compact Metropolitan Region (the "shaping" function).

The Province will not begin construction of the line unless it has agreements in place with Coquitlam, Port Moody, Burnaby, Vancouver, and New Westminster committing to land uses that will achieve the GVRD Livable Region Strategic Plan targets. The Province wishes to conclude

these agreements in the next 1? to 2 years.

With regard to land use expectations, the draft Protocol Agreement requires, as a pre-condition of LRT construction, that municipalities along the line agree to accommodate GVRD housing "targets." This raises several issues:

- While the GVRD has an agreed target for the "Urban Growth Concentration Area," there are no agreed municipal targets. Consequently, it is unclear what "target" municipalities are expected to achieve to satisfy BC Transit ridership expectations. It is also unclear what actions will constitute "a commitment." Major rezoning activities can take longer than the 1? to 2 years it will take to decide whether to proceed with construction.
- The City's current zoning could accommodate an additional 100,000 people. This includes existing capacity for up to 10,000 units in the LRT corridor. This is in addition to the 25,000 people who already live immediately adjacent Broadway between Boundary and Granville, and means upwards of 40,000 people could eventually live close to the line.

City Plan is supportive of additional rapid transit within the City. However, rapid transit could result in pressures to increase densities along the Broadway LRT corridor. This has to be considered in the context that CityPlan also proposes that new housing initiatives focus on locating more housing in neighbourhood centres to provide housing choice and access to services throughout the City. The proposed CityPlan community visioning program provides a way to consider opportunities for a new Neighbourhood Centre on or close to the Broadway LRT. The LRT may prove to be a catalyst to encourage the development of some new neighbourhood centres.

- City Plan and the City's Industrial Lands Strategy propose retaining remaining industrial lands for a variety of City-serving activities. Industrial lands border part of the proposed Broadway route. As such, they provide an employment destination that would be well-served by the LRT. The Grandview/Boundary Industrial Area has 7,000 jobs and with intensified use is expected to employ 10,000 to 15,000 people.

These existing land uses and adopted land use directions suggest that the City's role in providing additional capacity along the LRT line may be different from the other municipalities. Given our established land use patterns, our understanding is the Province expects a significantly higher housing commitment from the other four municipalities than from Vancouver. However, our commitment will need to be agreed with the Province and GVRD.

4. Public Consultation Process

In Vancouver the proposed line runs through well established neighbourhoods including some intensely developed areas; in some cases high density housing. The line also runs through the commercial area of Central Broadway. The line will raise important issues for adjacent residents and businesses.

No details are available about the public consultation process or funds available for consultation and mitigation. The draft Protocol Agreement

suggests that the consultation process will emphasize mitigating negative local impacts. When more information is available staff will report to Council.

5. Staffing Implications

The development of LRT within the Broadway Corridor will have significant staff requirements beyond current available resources. The issue of funding the municipal staff needs has not yet been discussed and will need to be reported back to Council. For example, the draft Protocol Agreement suggests that each municipality will designate an individual to be responsible for land use planning. This individual would be responsible for developing and overseeing the work plan, including public consultation for defining the land use and development process.

This proposal raises two concerns:

- Experience with the SkyTrain planning program suggests that land use planning around stations is a major initiative and will take considerably more than one staff person to achieve.

With the SkyTrain program the Planning Department developed Station Area Plans. This also involved extensive work on alignment and mitigation of system impacts. In some station areas, land use changes were oriented to reducing impacts rather than increasing density. The SkyTrain system had four stations outside the downtown and required 3.5 staff about five years to complete alignment, mitigation, and land use plans. The Broadway LRT anticipates ten stations in the City, in a much more crowded and developed corridor.

When the program is clearer, a staffing proposal will be reported to Council.

- The LRT offers tremendous potential to change the character of Broadway. It will require significant urban design input to develop a system that serves transportation needs and also enhances the functions of Broadway as an urban place.

In anticipation of the potential issues which must be addressed, staff are initiating reviews of other cities with similar LRT's. The experiences of similar installations will provide a better understanding of impacts, problems and opportunities for successfully integrating the LRT system into the City. It will also assist in developing a work program and estimating staff resource needs.

CONCLUSION

There are many uncertainties that need resolving before the LRT project begins in earnest. The magnitude of this project within the City and the challenges facing the City and BC Transit are significant. As more information comes available, staff will report to Council to seek direction on governance, funding, staff needs, design, land use, and public consultation programs.

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