

REPORT TO MAYOR AND COUNCIL

PRESENTED: JUNE 28, 2021 - REGULAR MEETING
FROM: ENGINEERING DIVISION
SUBJECT: 2021 UBCM RESOLUTION – ACCELERATED SOUTH OF FRASER TRANSIT SERVICE IMPROVEMENTS

REPORT: 21-80
FILE: 8500-01

RECOMMENDATION:

That Council support submission of a resolution to the Union of BC Municipalities (UBCM) for consideration at the September 2021 convention, requesting the Province of British Columbia accelerate and expand transit service improvements south of Fraser, including expediting the construction of planned rapid transit infrastructure and increasing bus service.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

The Climate Action Strategy (CAS), endorsed by Council in 2019, aims to put the Township of Langley on course to meet its 2030 and 2050 emissions targets while preparing for the risks and uncertainties associated with a changing climate. Given that transportation, with gas and diesel fueled vehicles, accounts for 54% of total carbon pollution in the Township, reducing emissions from vehicles by expanding and improving transit service will be critical to reaching these targets. The lack of rapid transit options and frequent reliable bus service contributes to a high rate of vehicle use in areas South of Fraser, including in the Township of Langley. 88% of all trips are currently in personal vehicles.

The CAS identifies the expansion of the transit network as an important step in reducing transportation related emissions with five supporting actions. This includes developing a Transportation and Mobility Strategy, creating a Township-wide Transportation Demand Management (TDM) Program, advocating for expansion of the transit network (including an update of TransLink's South of Fraser Area Transit Plan), implementing measures to prioritize transit in traffic management and improving transit stops and accessibility.

Given the Province's focus on climate action towards cleaner transportation with investment in community infrastructure critical to the economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, the proposed UBCM resolution requests that the Province, in collaboration with TransLink, work to accelerate the expansion of transit infrastructure and services South of Fraser, including expediting the construction of planned rapid transit infrastructure and increasing bus service.

PURPOSE:

To obtain Council's approval to submit a UBCM resolution asking that the Province work with TransLink to accelerate the expansion of transit infrastructure and service improvements south of Fraser.

BACKGROUND/HISTORY:

Transportation in gas and diesel fueled vehicles is the largest contributor of greenhouse gas emissions in the Township, accounting for 54% of total carbon pollution as illustrated in Figure 1. A lack of rapid transit options and frequent reliable bus service contributes to higher rates of vehicle use south of Fraser, including in the Township of Langley. Residents of the south of Fraser area, which consists of Township of Langley, City of Langley, City of Surrey, City of Delta, and City of White Rock, use vehicles 10% more often than the Metro Vancouver region. In order to move people out of personal vehicles in time to meet emissions targets, significant transit service improvements are required.



Figure 1. Emission Sources in the Township

Climate Action Strategy

The Township's Climate Action Strategy (CAS) identifies 5 Big Moves (Figure 2). Big Move 1 is to have more than half of current passenger vehicle trips by sustainable modes of transportation (active mobility, transit, EVs) by 2030.¹ In total, there are 42 actions related to transportation and mobility in the CAS including a standalone action to advocate for expansion of the transit network through available channels including the UBCM.



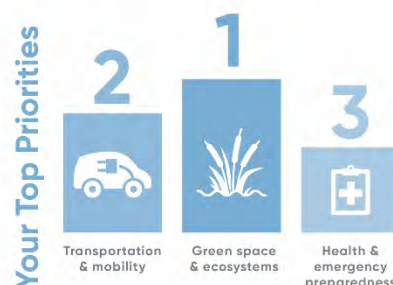
Figure 2. CAS Big Moves

¹ Township of Langley. *Climate Action Strategy*, 2020. <https://webfiles.tol.ca/Engineering/Climate%20Action/Climate%20Action%20Strategy.pdf>

The CAS presents a future vision for transportation and mobility where transportation choices are healthy and clean. Active mobility and transit provide health benefits and equitable choices for residents who are unable or choose not to drive. In the public engagement survey for the CAS, transportation and mobility was a top priority. In addition, “advocate for expansion of the transit network” was one of the most popular overall actions selected by respondents.²

Transit Plans for South of Fraser

TransLink developed the South of Fraser Area Transit Plan (SOFATP) in 2007. Only 40% of near-term priorities identified in the Plan were completed by 2015³, including investing in fast and frequent bus services, developing the Frequent Transit Network (FTN), improving facilities and transit priority, and expanding to growing and underserved areas. Subsequently, areas south of Fraser did not see a significant change in mode share* between 2011 and 2017.



TransLink's 2018-2027 Investment Plan prioritizes south of Fraser transit service improvements including a new B-Line service, increased bus service to reduce wait times and overcrowding, and planning and design for the Surrey-Langley Line of South of Fraser Rapid Transit (SOFRT).⁴ However, construction of Stage 2 of SOFRT, which is the proposed Surrey-Langley SkyTrain (SLS) is not fully funded. Funding and completion of the SLS is the subject of discussion with higher levels of government. The remaining bus service expansion included in the ten-year vision is unfunded.

More recently, TransLink completed engagement for the development of the Regional Transportation Strategy, Transport 2050. Engagement indicated that a majority of respondents consider expanding and improving the transit system a top priority as the region changes.⁵

DISCUSSION/ANALYSIS:

Metro Vancouver and many of its member municipalities, including the Township of Langley, have set greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions reduction targets of 45% by 2030 and 100% by 2050. To meet those targets, municipalities must significantly reduce the number of trips residents make in passenger vehicles and accelerate the pace of mode switching to public transit and other sustainable transportation options.



Increasing Service Needs South of Fraser

Areas south of Fraser are expected to welcome more than 400,000 new residents over the next 30 years placing an increased demand on transportation infrastructure.⁶ The most recent trip data available from 2017 indicates that across Metro Vancouver, 72% of all trips are made in personal vehicles. South of Fraser, 82% of all trips are made in personal vehicles. The Township of Langley ranks even higher at 88% of all trips made in personal vehicles.⁷

* Mode Share is the percentage of travelers using a particular type of transportation or number of trips using said type.

2 Township of Langley. *Climate Action Strategy Engagement Summary*, 2020.

https://webfiles.tol.ca/engineering/caS/Township%20of%20Langley%20CAS%20Engagement%20Summary_2021-03-24%20-%20FINAL.pdf

3 TransLink. *2015 Progress Update South of Fraser Area Transit Plan Near-Term Priorities*, 2015. <https://www.translink.ca/-/media/translink/documents/plans-and-projects/area-planning/South-of-fraser/sofatp-progress-update.pdf>

4 TransLink. *Phase Two of the 10-Year Vision 2018 – 2027 INVESTMENT PLAN*, 2018. https://www.translink.ca/-/media/tenyearvision/document-library/vision/10-year_vision_phase_2_investment_plan.pdf

5 TransLink. *Transport 2050 Phase 1 Report*, 2019. <https://view.publitas.com/translink/transport-2050-phase-1-report-stakeholders/page/42-43>

6 City of Surrey. *Surrey Langley Skytrain*. <https://www.surrey.ca/services-payments/parking-streets-transportation/surrey-langley-skytrain>

7 TransLink. *Trip Diary 2017*. https://public.tableau.com/app/profile/translink/viz/Trip_Diary_2017/TripDiary2017

Further, municipalities in the south of Fraser have among the highest vehicle kilometers travelled (VKT) per trip when compared with the rest of Metro Vancouver. Three of the top four municipalities in Metro Vancouver with the highest daily VKT per person, including Township of Langley, City of White Rock, and City of Delta, are located in the south of Fraser. This data indicates that residents in this area continue to be disproportionately reliant on personal vehicles for transportation needs.⁸

At the same time as vehicle use remains high, overcrowding on existing public transit is increasing. In 2018, three quarters of the bus routes in the south of Fraser outpaced the regional ridership growth rate of 8.0%.⁹ Table 1 shows how annual bus ridership growth has outpaced the increase in bus service hours in 2017 and 2018, prior to the pandemic.

Year	Increase in Bus Boardings	Increase in Bus Service Hours
2018	15.6%	4.8%
2017	8.3%	3.7%

Table 1: Bus Ridership in the South of Fraser

Figure 3 shows increases in overcrowding across bus services. The most significant increase in bus ridership and corresponding jump in overcrowding is happening in the fast-growing communities in the southeast (south of Fraser), including Township of Langley.

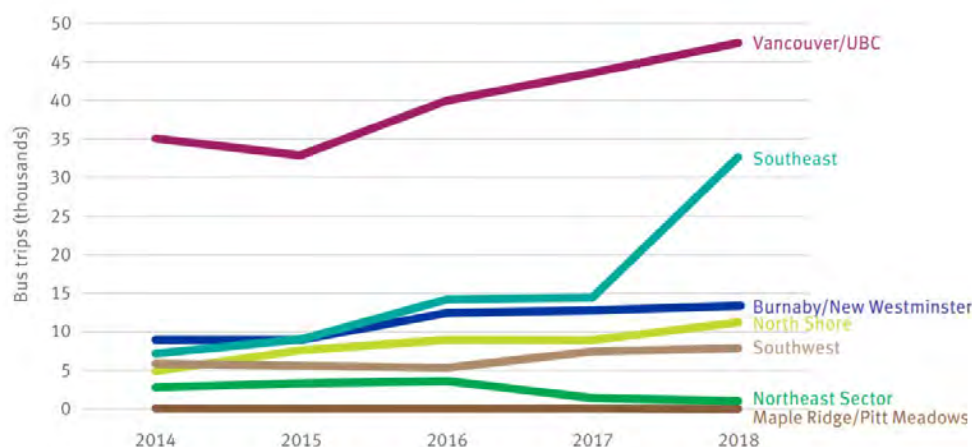


Figure 3: Increase in Overcrowding on Buses by Sub-region

Alignment with Provincial Plans: StrongerBC and CleanBC

As part of BC's economic recovery plan StrongerBC, the Province has identified investing in community infrastructure and prioritizing climate action as critical to restoring growth and emerging more resilient from the COVID-19 pandemic.¹⁰ In addition thousands of new residents, areas south of Fraser are adding over 185,000 jobs in the next 30 years, making this area a key hub of economic activity in the Province¹¹. While the Province's economic recovery plan includes investing more than \$130 million to help people and businesses drive down emissions, including funding some transportation-related projects and initiatives, it does not identify any new funding for major transit service improvements like those needed to meet the growing demand in the south of Fraser.

8 TransLink. *Trip Diary 2017*. https://public.tableau.com/app/profile/translink/viz/Trip_Diary_2017/TripDiary2017

9 TransLink. *2018 Transit Service Performance Review*. https://www.translink.ca/-/media/translink/documents/plans-and-projects/managing-the-transit-network/tspr/2018_tspr.pdf

10 Province of BC 2020. *StrongerBC | BC's Economic Recovery Plan*. https://news.gov.bc.ca/files/StrongerBC_BC's-Economic-Recovery-Report.pdf

11 City of Surrey. *Surrey Langley Skytrain*. <https://www.surrey.ca/services-payments/parking-streets-transportation/surrey-langley-skytrain>

Province-wide, transportation emissions account for nearly 25 million tonnes of CO₂ annually.¹² Residents south of Fraser take more trips and travel further than most other residents in the Metro Vancouver region contributing to increased carbon pollution across the region and province. Without significant near-term investment in south of Fraser transit service improvements, it is unlikely the Township of Langley can successfully achieve Big Move 1 of having more than half of current passenger vehicle trips be made by sustainable modes of transportation by 2030. This will present challenges for meeting the larger targets identified in the CAS. This, in culmination with other municipalities south of Fraser facing similar challenges in meeting emission reduction targets, could affect the Province's ability to meet legislated targets as identified in CleanBC.

Regional Mobility Equity

While housing costs are highest in downtown Vancouver, the combined costs of transportation and housing in the region are highest south of Fraser and on the North Shore.¹³ Due in part to a current lack of sustainable transportation options, residents rely on personal vehicles for the majority of their transportation needs. This means that they are spending more money on fuel, more time in cars, and are contributing more carbon pollution than residents elsewhere in the region.

The proposed resolution below recommends transit service improvements be accelerated and expanded to meet the growing needs of communities south of Fraser as outlined in this report.

ACCELERATION OF TRANSIT SERVICE IMPROVEMENTS SOUTH OF FRASER

WHEREAS the Province of BC has identified climate action, including cleaner transportation, and investment in community infrastructure as critical to BC's Economic Recovery Plan

AND WHEREAS Metro Vancouver and many of its member municipalities, including the Township of Langley, have committed to reducing greenhouse gas emissions 45% by 2030 and 100% by 2050 requiring an immediate and significant shift away from gas and diesel-powered passenger vehicles yet areas South of Fraser, which will grow by more than 400,000 residents in the next 30 years, are currently underserved by public transportation infrastructure including a lack of frequent, reliable bus service or rapid transit

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Province of BC will work with TransLink to accelerate the expansion of transit services South of Fraser, including expediting the construction of planned rapid transit infrastructure and increasing bus service to ensure that residents have access to cleaner transportation modes, and, allow municipalities to meet their emissions reduction targets.

Respectfully submitted,

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¹² Province of BC. CleanBC, 2018. https://blog.gov.bc.ca/app/uploads/sites/436/2019/02/CleanBC_Full_Report_Updated_Mar2019.pdf

¹³ TransLink. Transport 2050 Phase 1 Report, 2019. <https://view.publitas.com/translink/transport-2050-phase-1-report-stakeholders/page/28-29>