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## REPORT TO ELECTORAL AREAS COMMITTEE MEETING OF WEDNESDAY, JUNE 08, 2022

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**SUBJECT**     **Southern Gulf Islands Transportation Integration Plan**

### **ISSUE SUMMARY**

Receipt of the *Southern Gulf Islands Transportation Integration Plan*, submitted by Watt Consulting Group (May, 2022), to present a business case for a new transportation service for the Southern Gulf Islands Electoral Area.

### **BACKGROUND**

In 2021, Watt Consulting was engaged to undertake a comprehensive *SGI Transportation Integration Plan* that included a business case for service model options and quantified costs, as well as a standalone Active Transportation Plan for SGI. The process was grounded in an in-depth community engagement and stakeholder consultation program.

The SGI Transportation Integration Plan (SGI TIP) presents a business case for a new CRD transportation service for the Southern Gulf Islands Electoral Area (SGI EA). The primary objective of an SGI transportation service would be to provide financial and coordination support to the active transportation, community public transit, and water-based mobility initiatives that have been—and would continue to be—led by local non-profit and private organizations on the islands. The CRD service would support transportation by filling gaps in the existing local transportation framework: providing supplemental funding in the way of grants to non-profit transportation providers; holding tenure as required by the Ministry of Transportation in the Road Right of Way; acting as the sponsoring local government when required for transportation infrastructure investment and funding applications to higher levels of government; and, providing coordination for a transportation network that is integrated across the different modes and different islands of the SGI EA. The SGI transportation service would be guided by an SGI Transportation Commission made up of local representatives from each island.

This report is companion to a subsequent report for consideration of Bylaw 4485, to establish an integrated transportation service for the Southern Gulf Islands Electoral Area, which is also on the Electoral Areas Committee and CRD Board agendas of June 8, 2022.

### **ALTERNATIVES**

#### *Alternative 1*

There is no recommendation. This report is for information only.

#### *Alternative 2*

The Electoral Areas Committee requests the *Southern Gulf Islands Transportation Integration Plan*, be referred back to staff for more information.

## **IMPLICATIONS**

### *Social Implications*

The proposal to establish a new transportation service for the SGI EA is supported by community and stakeholder input. Targeted outreach took place in spring 2021 and involved virtual workshops with the Transportation Advisory Groups (TAGs) (there was one TAG per transportation mode), agency stakeholder outreach, and information provided to the community via the CRD website, posters, and a media release. Community mapping events were held at tables that were part of farmers markets and other community events during late August and early September 2021, to gather public feedback on gaps and opportunities.

Round 1 engagement took place in fall 2021 and invited the public to provide feedback using Bang the Table, which included interactive mapping, quick polls, a survey, and an ideas forum. A mail out FAQ was sent to every SGI mailbox to encourage people to fill out the survey. During the Round 1 engagement, 2.5k people visited the online Get Involved (Bang the Table) site, and 695 surveys were submitted. This is very high engagement per capita by industry standards.

Overall, the theme heard repeatedly from the public and stakeholders was that there was a need to improve alternate transportation options on the Southern Gulf Islands, particularly due a lack of safety for users of the hilly, winding, and narrow road network. Improved transportation alternatives would:

- Better connect major origins and destinations on the islands;
- Provide alternatives to single occupancy vehicles;
- Reduce car dependency;
- Provide seniors and low-income populations with better travel options;
- Better enable kids the ability to travel safely and independently;
- Be more sustainable and better stewards for the environment.

In response to the feedback received, Watt prepared a range of service level options that would be possible according to four tax requisition levels, based on 2021 property assessment values. The options were costed using real numbers from operational costs provided by the community bus and trail societies, BC Transit, and actual staff costs within a range of classification levels:

1. “Option A- Status Quo” (no increase in requisition. No change in service level);
2. Option B – Basic Level,” (small grants to community bus and trail groups) - \$270,000 annual budget based on a requisition of up to \$7.49/ \$100,000 of assessed property value;
3. “Option C –Semi-Integrated Transportation System” (supports active transportation and community buses, with only minor support for water-based modes) - \$450,000 annual budget based on a requisition of up to \$12.34 per \$100,000 of assessed property value; and
4. “Option D - Fully Integrated Transportation Service,” that supports all three modes with an annual budget of \$675,000 annually based on up to \$18.51 per \$100,000 of assessed value.

Round 2 engagement took place in winter, 2022 and sought feedback on the level of support for the various funding options and the range of proposed transportation solutions. It involved an online survey and four virtual Q&A sessions (conducted over Zoom). A mail out FAQ was sent

to every SGI mailbox. This mail out explained the proposals and encouraged people to fill out the survey and attend the virtual meetings. During the Round 2 engagement, 1.5k people visited the Bang the Table site, and 365 surveys were submitted.

The Round 2 Engagement found the majority of people supported a tax requisition to increase transportation solutions in the islands. Eighty-five percent of respondents to the survey indicated a desire for change from the current level of transportation service on the islands. A fully integrated transportation system was the first preference for most participants, and a semi-integrated transportation system was the second preference for most participants.

In February 2022, the SGI Community Economic Sustainability Commission received the consultation results and passed a resolution recommending the CRD Board implement “Option D,” of the SGI Transportation Options.

### *Environmental & Climate Implications*

The CRD’s Regional Climate Action Strategy (“RCAS”) has identified on-road transportation as the region’s most significant source of greenhouse gas emissions (“GHGe”), and notes that the CRD needs to focus on mitigating impacts of transportation by “moving towards lower carbon emissions options such as walking, cycling, transit and electric vehicles” (RCAS, 2017). In 2019, the CRD declared a climate emergency and committed to reducing GHGe by 40% by 2030. An SGI Transportation service would enable the islands to advance low carbon transportation solutions.

### *Service Delivery Implications*

If approved by referendum and the CRD Board, the new service will be established for transportation improvements in the SGI EA and will be accompanied by the establishment of an SGI Transportation Advisory Commission. The Commission would include representation from each island, as well as representation by stakeholders in each of the three transportation modes.

The service options in the SGI TIP were put forward with the recognition that the SGI tax base alone would not be enough to afford the level of infrastructure required to achieve the ultimate vision heard from islanders. The role of the CRD in providing transportation solutions is therefore not to become a transportation service provider but rather to leverage more significant infrastructure funds and to be an enabler, supporting coordination and contributing funding for integrated services to be provided by 3rd parties and community organizations.

### *Financial Implications*

Bylaw 4485 is proposed for the CRD Board and the electorate to consider service establishment for a Southern Gulf Islands Transportation Service. The bylaw responds to the proposal for a fully integrated transportation service (Option D). The proposed service bylaw is based on the 2022 property assessments for the SGI EA to generate a maximum requisition equaling the greater of \$675,000 or \$0.1414 per \$1,000 of assessed value (this is a slightly different amount than was presented earlier due to the difference between the 2021 and 2022 property assessments). For communications purposes, the amount can also be expressed as \$14.10 per \$100,000 of assessed property value. Subject to CRD Board direction, Bylaw 4485 will be considered by a referendum question to coincide with the 2022 General Election on October 15, 2022.

*Alignment with Board & Corporate Priorities*

- 2018-22 Board Priority: Community Wellbeing (Transportation & Housing)
- 2019-22 Corporate Business Plan – 2e - EA transportation services

**CONCLUSION**

The SGI Transportation Integration Plan, developed by Watt Consulting Group, presents a business case for a new CRD transportation service for the Southern Gulf Islands Electoral Area. The plan includes a summary of community engagement, and presents service model options and quantified costs for the CRD to consider in the scope of an establishment bylaw for an SGI integrated transportation service.

**RECOMMENDATION**

There is no recommendation. This report is for information only.

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**ATTACHMENT(S)**

Appendix A: SGI Transportation Integration Plan, Watt Consulting Group, 2022.