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**REPORT TO COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE
MEETING OF WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 09, 2020**

SUBJECT **Transportation Gap Summary**

ISSUE SUMMARY

Response to Planning, Transportation and Protective Services Committee motion of October 21, 2020 for staff to provide a summary of gaps in regional transportation functions and options to address them using previously conducted work, for consideration by the Committee of the Whole.

BACKGROUND

The Capital Regional District (CRD) Board and the general public continue to identify transportation as a top regional priority. Staff have reviewed existing plans and studies, attempts to establish a transportation authority and existing transportation functions across jurisdictions. Based on the information reviewed, staff have identified opportunities and gaps, focus areas for further action and alternatives for the Committee's consideration.

Existing Plans and Studies

As shown in Appendix A, 15 transportation plans and studies have been undertaken since 2011 to define and identify solutions to two core transportation problems affecting the region:

1. Traffic congestion in the AM and PM peak periods increases travel time and decreases residents' quality of life; and
2. The regional road network is largely built out, constraining infrastructure solutions because of cost and geography; as a result, there is a need to focus on solutions that shift mode share.

The plans provide recommendations centered around four high-level actions that can be taken to address these problems, as follows:

1. Planning and policy to identify solutions to transportation problems;
2. Infrastructure investments to ensure safety and improve mode choice;
3. Land use decision making to achieve densities that can be efficiently served by transit and support active transportation; and
4. Behaviour change to promote mode shift (e.g., travel demand management, disruptive technologies).

The Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) identifies a multi-modal transportation network that is being implemented by multiple jurisdictions within existing authorities. The RTP is provided in Appendix F. Data shows that progress has been made to shift mode share and, more recently, attract provincial funding for infrastructure projects to improve public safety and mode choice. Implementation gaps remain as traffic volumes and travel times continue to increase. These gaps are:

1. No approved list of regional priorities to catalyse action or attract funding;
2. No single agency acts as a champion for regional priorities;
3. No funding mechanism to incentivise regional prioritization of infrastructure projects; and
4. There is no formal mechanism to consider the regional impacts of individual transportation decisions.

Attempts to Establish a Transportation Authority

Discussions regarding increasing the CRD's role in transportation through a service authority to catalyze action have been ongoing. Since 2011, there have been numerous unsuccessful attempts to increase the CRD's role in regional transportation. These attempts have largely failed due to concerns about loss of municipal control over transportation decisions and concerns about local cost impacts. Governance reviews, along with correspondence from the Premier's Office, indicate that the region needs to reach consensus around its transportation future at the CRD Board before it can take a leading role in regional transportation. Appendix B provides a timeline synopsis.

Transportation Functions in the Region

Responsibility for transportation functions is shared across a number of authorities in the region, each responsible for taking action on matters within their own jurisdiction. As shown in Appendix C, this creates a complex mode-based decision framework for transportation. The challenging outcome is that impacts of local transportation decisions are felt regionally while the responsibility for action lies within local or provincial authorities. Compounding this outcome is that there is no mechanism to collectively consider the regional impacts of municipal transportation decisions on the region as a whole.

Focus Areas for Future Action

Based on the above review, staff have identified three areas of focus within the CRD's existing service mandate to take action on transportation.

1. Identify and agree on regional multi-modal priorities.
2. Advocate for funding or action on approved priorities.
3. Formalize coordination across jurisdictions on matters such as infrastructure investments, transportation and land use policy and behaviour change.

ALTERNATIVES

Alternative 1

That the Committee of the Whole recommends to the Capital Regional District Board:
That staff work with jurisdictional partners to develop a list of potential transportation priorities that would be most beneficial to the region as a whole and report back to the Board for prioritization.

Alternative 2

That the Committee of the Whole recommends to the Capital Regional District (CRD) Board that:
The CRD continue to implement the Regional Transportation Plan through data and technical contributions to informal, project-based working groups led by partners, focused on their jurisdictional priorities.

Alternative 3

That the Transportation Gap Summary report be referred back to staff for additional information.

IMPLICATIONS

Environmental & Climate Implications

The CRD Board has declared a climate emergency. Road based transportation is responsible for 46% of all greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions in the region. Transportation solutions that shift mode share – get more people taking transit, walking and cycling – will help address traffic congestion and reduce GHG emissions.

Intergovernmental Implications

Responsibility for implementing the RTP is shared among multiple jurisdictions. In addition to achieving the regional outcomes set out in the RTP, each jurisdiction has its own transportation goals and objectives. This split responsibility for transportation functions has three significant impacts:

1. It has been challenging for the CRD to reach consensus on topics related to transportation as such requires both Board and municipal council support. Feedback from the various governance reviews strongly identifies that the CRD is not being heard as it is not presenting a unified message of priorities and needs.
2. Each partner jurisdiction develops transportation policies and implements projects with the objective to integrate RTP goals with jurisdictional priorities and authorities. At times, this approach means that jurisdictional priorities work at cross purposes. This is exacerbated by the alignment of jurisdictional authorities to functional transportation requirements, creating a systemic barrier to collaborative and integrated regional prioritization.
3. The region has no advocacy leverage with higher levels of government as there is no consensus on regional priorities.

Transportation infrastructure and policy projects continue to advance, led by municipal, provincial and agency partners. CRD staff currently provide data and technical expertise informally through working groups to these projects. In addition, CRD staff ensure that Board priorities related to achieving mode share targets and taking action on climate are integrated into these transportation projects. Appendix D provides a summary of project working groups in which staff participate.

Regional Growth Strategy Implications

The vital links between transportation and land use planning are clearly identified in the Regional Growth Strategy (RGS). A key transportation indicator in the RGS measures the percentage of total trips made by cycling, walking and transit in the growth management planning area. The mode share has increased from 22.4% in 2011 to 26.6% in 2017. The RGS target for 2038 is 42%.

The 2020 RGS Indicators Report highlights that recent growth in the region has largely gone to parts of the region that do not have a high active transportation and transit mode share.

Social Implications

The social implications of transportation continuing in its current ad hoc project based manner is likely to result in negative implications for residents and visitors through time spent in increased congestion. This is additional time spent away from families and diverted from social activities.

Financial Implications

The CRD does not requisition any dedicated funding towards transportation other than for regional trails, regional information services and the Traffic Safety Commission.

Up until 2014, the region received federal gas tax funding through the Regionally Significant Projects Fund on behalf of the municipalities, which the CRD Board dedicated towards transportation. The RTP was created with the understanding that this funding would be available to fund its actions and objectives. These funds are now distributed to municipalities directly and increasingly these funds are used on non-transportation projects such as water and recreation. The loss of these funds means there is no funding mechanism to incentivize regional prioritization of infrastructure projects.

Alignment with Board & Corporate Priorities

On October 21, 2020, the Planning, Transportation and Protective Service Committee requested that staff provide additional information about the planned initiatives in the 2021 service plan to deliver on Board priorities related to transportation.

The CRD Board has identified the following two transportation priorities:

1. Work with government/community partners to increase use of public transit, walking and cycling and to plan for and deliver an effective, long-term regional multi-modal transportation system.
2. Protect the E&N Corridor as a transportation corridor and participate in a provincial working group to come to agreement on the future use of the E&N corridor.

Both of the above Board priorities are cornerstones of the RTP. Participation in transportation project working groups delivers on the CRD Board priority initiative to work with government partners at an informal, staff level. Appendix D provides a summary of the working groups, and constitutes the work plan for achieving this priority initiative for 2021. Note that additional working groups may arise through the year, upon invitation by project partners. A technical study on the E&N was released by the Province in March 2020 and findings were incorporated into the South Island Transportation Strategy. With both of these studies completed, there is no formal provincial working group working on the future of the E&N Corridor. CRD staff continue to monitor for opportunities to protect the E&N Corridor for transportation in individual projects. The Board will continue to receive updates on how the CRD is advancing these priorities through the CAO quarterly report.

Alignment with Existing Plans & Strategies

As shown in Appendix D, CRD staff work collaboratively with many partners and stakeholders through informal project-based working groups to ensure alignment of the various plans and strategies with goals and objectives identified in CRD plans such as the Regional Transportation Plan, Regional Trails Management Plan and the Pedestrian and Cycling Master Plan. Furthermore staff work to ensure that the significance of the CRD climate emergency declaration is reflected in these plans. These working groups focus inwardly on individual projects and do not have the mandate to consider the broader context of regional priorities as such have not been identified.

Service Delivery

The CRD has the service authority to manage regional trails, collect and analyze transportation data and collaborate with partners to plan for the region's transportation needs. The CRD does not have a mandate to operate transit/ferries/rail, build road infrastructure, prioritize regional grant applications or dictate road standards. As a regional government, the CRD Board is in a unique position to advocate for regional priorities that would achieve objectives in its regional plans such as the RGS and the RTP. The CRD can take an effective advocacy position only once priorities have been identified and endorsed by the Board. Priority-setting can be achieved within the CRD's existing service authority.

Much of the CRD Board effort has focused on the development of a governance model that would increase CRD service levels on transportation matters, following a phased approach. The initial focus was to consolidate all existing transportation functions into one service and expand functions to include grant application support and transportation programming. Such focus has resulted in less attention on what outputs (e.g., infrastructure projects, transportation policy) the CRD would like to see prioritized and how these priorities could be achieved. As an outcome, the CRD has not committed to prioritizing and advocating for any specific initiative that would achieve regional objectives.

Regardless of these challenges, the region is progressing on many of the RTP objectives through collaborative partnerships with municipalities, electoral areas, BC Transit and the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure. Appendix E highlights recent and planned Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure transportation projects for the region. Similarly many municipalities have gone on to leverage the RTP and develop their own localized transportation plans that include a regional lens and align with regional objectives.

While modest mode share increases have been made, at this rate of change the region is unlikely to meet its 2038 mode share targets.

Process

Should the Committee approve the recommendation, the next steps are as follows:

1. Working at a staff level, CRD staff will engage partner jurisdictions to develop a list of regional transportation priorities as they relate to actions identified in the RTP.
2. CRD staff will collate the priorities into a list, focusing on how to achieve the regional outcome statements in the RTP, and circulate to local area administrators for comments.
3. CRD staff will bring forward the list for Board prioritization.

Staff can undertake this work under its existing service authority. The report will include consideration of different mechanisms that could be used to ensure that local-level decisions do not have negative regional impacts.

CONCLUSION

Sustainable integrated multi-modal transportation continues to be a major regional priority. This review of previously undertaken work shows that progress is being made toward implementing the regional multi-modal transportation network. There are gaps related to priority setting and advocacy at a regional level as well as formalizing policy and project coordination across the region. There is no singular voice for multi-modal sustainable transportation in the region and as such it is challenging to consider the collective impact of individual transportation projects as well as attract the needed attention and financial support from higher levels of government for major projects.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Committee of the Whole recommends to the Capital Regional District Board That staff work with jurisdictional partners to develop a list of potential transportation priorities that would be most beneficial to the region as a whole and report back to the Board for prioritization.

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ATTACHMENTS

- Appendix A: Transportation Related Plans
- Appendix B: Transportation Timeline
- Appendix C: Transportation Jurisdictional Roles and Responsibilities
- Appendix D: CRD involvement in external projects
- Appendix E: Recent and Planned MoTI Transportation Projects in the CRD
- Appendix F: Regional Transportation Plan