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REPORT TO TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE MEETING OF WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 17, 2021

SUBJECT Regional Transportation Plan Report Card

ISSUE SUMMARY

Provide the Transportation Committee with an update on the progress made towards the goals and objectives of the Regional Transportation Plan.

BACKGROUND

The Capital Regional District (CRD) Board approved the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) in 2014. The RTP established a vision for transportation in the region and outlined outcomes and actions needed for the CRD to achieve this vision. The RTP also established a mode share target of 42% for active transportation and transit combined for the region by 2038.

The RTP was drafted under the premise that the CRD would establish a transportation authority and that the Federal Gas Tax Fund would provide stable funding. Since adoption of the RTP, the CRD lost its source of funding when administration of the Federal Gas Tax Fund was redirected from regional districts and the grant expanded in scope to allow for funds to be spent in areas outside of transportation. In 2018, the CRD Board directed staff to cease work on the establishment of a transportation service when there was no consensus to proceed.

Through collaboration at local government and agency levels many RTP actions have advanced despite the lack of a regional transportation authority or stable funding source. Appendix A reports on how the CRD is advancing the eight core outcome areas of the RTP and evaluates progress toward achieving RTP priority actions.

An analysis of the RTP priority actions and outcomes shows that much progress has been made to build out the Regional Multi-modal Transportation Network. Significant achievements include alignment of municipal and electoral area transportation planning documents with the RTP and the integration of multi-modal facilities in key infrastructure projects around the region. There are notable gaps in progress related to directing growth to key centres and corridors along the regional network as well as to the development of travel demand management policies and programs.

It is important to note that the long term impacts on mode shift resulting from the pandemic are unknown at this stage. What is known is that behaviour change as a result of the pandemic has had a very significant impact on transit ridership and that the shift to working from home and online learning in the tertiary sectors has reduced traffic congestion. These longer term impacts could have a disruptive effect to traditional assumptions related to transportation and the economy, presenting both opportunities and challenges to achieving the region's mode share target.

The region's mode share is currently 26.6%. Additional investment in coordinated policy, programming and infrastructure needs to demonstrate how it will help the region achieve its 42% mode share target. The Committee will consider how to best direct this investment when findings from the regional transportation priority setting process are brought forward.

ALTERNATIVES

Alternative 1

The Transportation Committee recommends to the Capital Regional District Board:
That the Regional Transportation Plan Report Card report be received for information.

Alternative 2

That the Regional Transportation Plan Report Card report be referred back to staff for additional information based on Transportation Committee direction.

IMPLICATIONS

Environmental & Climate Implications

Since the approval of the RTP the CRD Board has declared a climate emergency adding additional impetus and urgency to implementing the actions identified in the RTP. Transportation in the region is responsible for 46% of all greenhouse gas emissions. The review of RTP implementation shows that actions that shift mode share toward transit and active transportation contributes to lowering greenhouse gas emissions. Significant changes to travel behavior and technologies, led through a coordinated effort by partners with jurisdiction over different transportation and land use functions, is still needed in order for the region to achieve both its climate change and mode shift targets.

The RTP's emphasis on regional multi-modal travel and its mode share target aligns with policy documents introduced by senior levels of government, such as CleanBC and the Pan-Canadian Framework on Clean Growth and Climate Change. Actions that align to these policy documents may provide scope for the CRD and its partners to access funding and resources in the future.

Intergovernmental Implications

Advancement towards meeting the actions, outcomes and vision of the RTP has only been possible through collaboration and relationships amongst local government and electoral area partners, the CRD and transportation agencies. Needs across the region differ substantially, particularly between rural and remote areas and the more densely populated centres. As such a one size fits all approach to mode shift and congestion reduction is unlikely to succeed. The RTP recognizes this context and encourages alignment to outcomes that meet both regional and local needs. Remaining outcomes-focused is a key principle in the priority setting process.

Regional Growth Strategy Implication

The concentration of population along key corridors and centres is vital for the success of large scale transit investment. As shown in Appendix A, actions that relate to land use have had limited success in advancing at a regional scale. The 2020 Regional Growth Strategy Indicator Report identified that only 20% of growth is occurring in areas that can be efficiently serviced by transit. Behaviour change and disruption arising from the pandemic may position the region to leverage existing growth patterns and achieve mode shift results through active transportation.

Service Delivery Implications

CRD staff work collaboratively with local government and agency staff to advance the actions of the RTP. CRD staff sit on many project specific transportation working and technical groups and supply a range of data and modelling products and analysis to inform decision making. Numerous divisions across the CRD work on transportation initiatives, including Regional Parks (Regional Trails), Regional Housing (access to housing and land development potential at mobility hubs),

Environmental Protection (regional climate action on initiatives such as supporting electric vehicle policy and community education campaigns) and Regional and Strategic Planning (transportation planning and data).

Financial Implications

The only addition to the CRD's financial contribution for transportation since the approval of the RTP has been CRD funding for active school travel planning. Regional trail improvements outside of general maintenance are predominately funded through grants which do not offer a secure source of funding. Regional climate action related programming has been funded through existing Climate Action service budgets and grants.

Alignment with Board & Corporate Priorities

The 2019-2022 Board Priorities identify two priority transportation initiatives:

- a. work with government/community partners to plan for and deliver an effective, long-term regional multi-modal transportation system and to increase use of public transit, walking and cycling; and
- b. to protect the E&N Corridor as a transportation corridor.

Both of the above priorities inform staff's continued implementation of the RTP.

Alignment with Existing Plans & Strategies

Since the adoption of the RTP numerous partner local governments have developed and adopted localized transportation plans that align with the RTP. BC Transit has also recently developed a RapidBus Strategy that aligns with the RTP while the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure relied heavily on the RTP when developing its recently released South Island Transportation Strategy.

CONCLUSION

Much progress has been made towards implementing the RTP since its adoption in 2014. This progress is a result of collaborative and individual efforts of the CRD, CRD members and agency partners. This work has been achieved despite there being no regional transportation governance authority or dedicated funding source as envisioned at the time the RTP was approved. Additional investment in coordinated policy, programming and infrastructure needs to demonstrate how it will help the region achieve its 42% mode share target. The Committee will consider how to best direct this investment when findings from the regional transportation priority setting process are brought forward.

RECOMMENDATION

The Transportation Committee recommends to the Capital Regional District Board:
That the Regional Transportation Plan Report Card report be received for information.

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ATTACHMENT

Appendix A: Regional Transportation Plan Report Card