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REPORT TO TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE MEETING OF WEDNESDAY, JUNE 16, 2021

SUBJECT Transportation Priorities Implementation Strategies

ISSUE SUMMARY

To consider implementation strategies for each of the confirmed transportation priority areas and provide direction on next steps.

BACKGROUND

On May 12, 2021, the Capital Regional District (CRD) Board confirmed regional transportation priorities and directed staff to develop implementation strategies for each, including a consideration of cooperation mechanisms. These priorities seek to advance regional objectives to reduce congestion, improve mode share and take action on climate.

The approved priorities relate to:

Advocacy:

- Bus mass transit (RapidBus)
- Multi-modal and safe highways
- SSI/SGI connectivity
- General transit
- E&N corridor (protection, maintenance and upgrades)
- Westshore passenger ferry feasibility study

Action:

- Active Transportation
- Transportation Demand Management (TDM)
- Safety policy
- Strengthening land use
- Parking and access upgrades

Pivot:

- Governance (long-term authorities)
- Non-bus mass transit (light rail, passenger ferry)

Level of Impact and Implementation Strategies

The priorities reflect the urban, suburban, rural and remote makeup of the region and include a combination of large scale, region wide initiatives and smaller scale local serving initiatives. An analysis of the relative impact of each priority to achieve regional objectives is provided in Appendix A. Priorities could be advanced simultaneously without detracting from achieving regional objectives, as shown in the implementation strategies in Appendix B.

Equity

Staff have reviewed each of the priorities with a lens to social equity and accessibility and have identified throughout the report where known barriers to participation exist. Available data indicates that low income and visible minorities within the region generally have good access to transportation options. Additionally, there are numerous programs available to provide affordable or free transportation options for those in need particularly in relation to transit. A more fulsome investigation to barriers to access, along with the development of actions to improve equity, would be best addressed at the project, facility or service level with input from affected communities. Further analysis is difficult given the lack of data.

Governance – Short Term Coordination

Much of the Board’s previous transportation work has been focused on the establishment of a regional transportation service. Consensus for such a service was not achieved. The existing transportation governance structure gives strategic and operational decision-making authority to the jurisdiction responsible for a particular transportation mode and/or corridor. Each jurisdiction

has the mandate, expertise and service delivery capacity to advance the regional transportation priorities under their authority. Each implementation strategy identifies a lead and the potential role that the CRD could have under the existing governance structure and within the CRD's authority. This approach allows for the CRD to take action on impactful priorities before the end of the current Board term. Within the context of these current authorities, the most impactful first step would be to create a Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC) to support the significant levels of coordination required to progress work on the gaps.

The immediate gaps are: TDM, safety policy and implementation of a connected and consistent active transportation network. These are gaps as there is no clear mandate or lead authority. As shown in the implementation strategies, the CRD could take a leading role to fill these gaps.

Governance – Long Term Authorities

A review of governance structures suggests that metropolitan regions are most successful at achieving their goals when strategic and operational decisions about transportation and land use sit with one jurisdiction. Outside of consolidating authorities, the next best option is to formalize coordination at the technical and policy levels. Coordination mechanisms include staff-led technical advisory committees and multi-party agreements negotiated through funding at the time of major project planning. The governance structure scan is provided in Appendix C.

Recommended Actions

The implementation strategies identify the following CRD actions to advance the priority areas:

1. Advocate for senior government investment in infrastructure and delivery of high-quality transit service and develop all required materials to support this advocacy work.
2. Continue to provide data and technical expertise on individual infrastructure projects.
3. Prioritize the development of shovel-ready regional trail improvement projects to leverage spending within transit and highway corridors.
4. Amplify and encourage mode shift in partnership with municipalities, electoral areas, agencies and stakeholders.
5. Seek opportunities for funding, incentives and pilot projects to achieve regional growth management and transportation objectives.
6. Establish a TAC to:
 - a) prioritize planning and coordination to support development of a safe, connected and consistent active transportation network.
 - b) develop options, in coordination with municipal, electoral area and agency partners, to deliver region-led TDM and safety policy.

ALTERNATIVES

Alternative 1

The Transportation Committee recommends to the Capital Regional District (CRD) Board:

1. That staff be directed to form a Transportation Advisory Committee, reporting through the Transportation Committee, with senior staff representation from CRD, municipal, electoral area and agency partners to advise on regional transportation matters requiring coordination;
2. That staff be given the mandate to develop a region-wide approach to transportation demand management, safety policy and implementation of a connected and consistent regional trail network, working through the Transportation Advisory Committee; and
3. That staff be directed to advance advocacy and other implementation actions, as set out in Appendix B.

Alternative 2

That the Transportation Priorities Implementation Strategies report be referred back to staff for additional information based on Transportation Committee direction.

IMPLICATIONS

Environmental & Climate Implications

The CRD Board has declared a climate emergency. All priorities have been considered against climate criteria, measured as the priority's potential to decrease greenhouse gas emissions. Per senior government policy frameworks, emissions reductions will be realized by increasing the use of zero-emission vehicles, greening fuel sources and improving multi-modal transportation.

Leveraging multi-modal infrastructure spending within highway corridors is a cost-effective way for the region to achieve its climate objectives. Unless required through a demonstrable safety warrant, transit and active transportation investment within highway corridors will be prioritized over the construction of new general purpose travel lanes.

Intergovernmental Implications

Coordination through a TAC would allow for all jurisdictions to retain existing authorities. As shown in the governance structure scan, this approach ensures that technical and policy matters related to the proper functioning of a multi-modal transportation network are consistently evaluated and advanced at the senior staff level. This is the approach being used in the Regional District of Central Okanagan to implement their recently approved regional transportation plan. It is also the approach used to ensure alignment between TransLink and Metro Vancouver. The scope and terms of reference for a TAC reporting through the CRD would be informed by the findings of the governance scan and the specific contextual needs of the region. Coordination on matters requiring immediate action – TDM, safety policy and implementation of a connected, consistent active transportation network – would be a strong first step to build trust in this governance approach.

Significant legislative changes would be needed should the region wish to consolidate authorities. New authorities that further split strategic and operational decisions in the region would be at cross-purposes with the Board's priorities, as shown in the governance scan. It is important to note that although TransLink has authority over transit, emerging mobility technologies and second-tier roads, significant coordination is still required with Metro Vancouver. TransLink, reporting through both its Board and to the Mayors' Council, does not consolidate transportation authorities; strategic, long-range land use and transportation planning sits with Metro Vancouver through its authority for the Regional Growth Strategy (RGS).

Regional Growth Strategy Implications

Land use patterns that support transit and active transportation – the densification of designated centres and corridors – are needed to achieve mode share and climate change targets. The RGS sets out a settlement concept in Map 3(b) and policies to support such land use patterns. Realizing the desired land use patterns requires that growth be directed to designated locations and ongoing monitoring to track progress against objectives. The CRD will continue to provide monitoring and will explore opportunities to incent implementation of the RGS policy framework. The CRD does not have authority over local land use decisions.

Social Implications

A multi-modal transportation network supports equitable access to transportation options across the region. Different approaches, from infrastructure investment to TDM, are critical to delivering affordable and readily available transportation options. The regional priority areas reflect that different communities have different transportation needs.

In many large centres across Canada, there is a distinct disparity in access to quality multi-modal transportation infrastructure for residents with low income levels. This is not generally the case in the capital region where a majority of low income residents reside in areas where multi-modal transportation options are strongest.

Both the Province and BC Transit provide programs and policies aimed to remove barriers to transportation access. Programs such as heavily discounted or free transit passes target low income transit users, people with disabilities and more recently students and youth. Services such as dedicated handyDART and Taxi Saver programs are available for elder adults and residents with disabilities.

There are fewer policies and programs aimed at reducing barriers to access active transportation options. Consideration of accessibility needs is increasingly integrated in facility design, and is a principle driving the development of an all ages and abilities cycling network.

Financial Implications

Advancing the priority areas per the implementation strategies would increase service levels, requiring new staff and financial resources. Staff will identify resourcing requirements and seek approval through the annual service and financial planning process.

Service Delivery Implications

The impact analysis shows that the priority areas target interventions at different levels of action, from behaviour change at the individual level to investment and improvements at the policy and infrastructure levels. Action at each level is necessary to achieve regional objectives for reducing congestion, improving mode choice and taking action on climate. The impact analysis also shows that the CRD can be the most impactful by providing regional leadership on priority areas that do not currently fall under the authority of any one municipality or agency.

Infrastructure alone, which falls under the authority of municipal and agency partners, will not be sufficient for people to choose to make trips by walking, cycling or transit. The CRD is well positioned to add immediate value by focusing on TDM and safety policy initiatives that complement existing municipal, electoral area and agency streams of work, delivered within existing authorities. While options for such a program of work need to be developed in partnership, preliminary research through the implementation strategies suggest:

- a) Take an active travel planning approach for TDM, by working with key trip generators (e.g., Department of National Defense, universities, major retail centres); and
- b) Undertake an operational review of the Traffic Safety Commission to determine how it can best support CRD staff with development of safety policy.

In terms of advocacy, the most effective results will occur if the region can speak with one voice to secure senior government investment in active transportation and transit infrastructure, and accelerate delivery of high quality transit service. Such advocacy needs to happen in a coordinated and focused manner, through multiple channels. As set out in the Board's advocacy strategy, this includes taking formal action through the Board and Committee Chair as well as working with individual Directors and at senior staff levels.

Alignment with Board & Corporate Priorities

The implementation strategies identify actions that will continue to advance the 2019-2022 Board priorities for transportation – to 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.

Alignment with Existing Plans & Strategies

The regional transportation priorities are largely based on existing plans, strategies and bylaws at local, regional and provincial levels. At the regional level, priorities align with the RGS, Regional Transportation Plan and the Regional Trails Management Plan. The priorities also align to plans and policies from other agencies and senior governments, including the BC Transit Future Plan, BC Transit's RapidBus Strategy, the South Island Transportation Strategy and CleanBC.

CONCLUSION

Advancing the regional transportation priorities will take ongoing collaboration amongst the CRD and all municipal, electoral area and agency partners. Implementation strategies have been developed for each priority area and have identified a series of actions for the CRD. Actions related to advocacy, provision of technical expertise, optimization of regional trail infrastructure, partnership-based service delivery and exploration of options to incent plan implementation can be undertaken within existing service authorities and current operational mandate. Actions to deliver TDM, safety policy and improved coordination of active transportation infrastructure require a clear Board-endorsed mandate and a new coordination mechanism. With the creation of a TAC, additional governance authorities could be explored in the long term. Staff will report back to the Committee on budget implications through the annual service and financial planning processes. Recommendations support impactful actions that can be initiated prior to the end of the Board's term.

RECOMMENDATION

The Transportation Committee recommends to the Capital Regional District (CRD) Board:

1. That staff be directed to form a Transportation Advisory Committee, reporting through the Transportation Committee, with senior staff representation from CRD, municipal, electoral area and agency partners to advise on regional transportation matters requiring coordination;
2. That staff be given the mandate to develop a region-wide approach to transportation demand management, safety policy and implementation of a connected and consistent regional trail network, working through the Transportation Advisory Committee; and
3. That staff be directed to advance advocacy and other implementation actions, as set out in Appendix B.

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ATTACHMENTS

- Appendix A: Transportation Priority Area Impact Analysis
- Appendix B: Transportation Priority Area Implementation Strategies
- Appendix C: Transportation Governance Structure Scan