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## REPORT TO TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE MEETING OF WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 18, 2023

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### **SUBJECT**     Update on Transportation Priorities

### **ISSUE SUMMARY**

To report back on progress made towards advancing the regional transportation priorities.

### **BACKGROUND**

On May 12, 2021, the Capital Regional District (CRD) Board confirmed regional transportation priorities and directed staff to develop implementation strategies for each. These priorities seek to advance regional objectives to reduce congestion, improve mode share and take action on climate change. The approved priorities are as follows:

#### **Advocacy:**

- Bus mass transit (RapidBus)
- Multi-modal and safe highways
- Salt Spring Island (SSI)/Southern Gulf Islands (SGI) connectivity
- General Transit

#### **Action:**

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

#### **Pivot:**

- Governance (long-term authorities)
- Island Rail Corridor (E&N corridor, protection, maintenance and upgrades)
- Westshore passenger ferry feasibility

On July 14, 2021, the CRD Board directed staff to advance advocacy and implementation actions developed for each of the priorities, including the creation of a Regional Transportation Working Group. In doing so, the Board provided a clear mandate to develop a region-wide approach to TDM and safety policy, as well as to take regional action on the creation of a connected and consistent regional trail network.

### **Progress Update**

Strong progress is being made to deliver on approved regional transportation priorities. Appendix A summarizes progress towards each of the regional transportation priorities. Of the 12 priorities, 10 are proceeding as planned and two are experiencing delays outside of local government control:

- Westshore passenger ferry feasibility study: Delayed. as the Province is prioritizing transit recovery and expansion, transit projects that support RapidBus and implementation of the South Island Transportation Strategy.
- Governance: Paused due to an increase in focus on matters related to the Island Rail Corridor and the roll out of the collaborative partnership approach through the Transportation Working Group.

More information on the future of the Island Rail Corridor will be forthcoming in March 2023, when the federal government is expected to indicate whether it wishes to restore and fund improvements. The Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure (MoTI) is currently undertaking a technical analysis of transportation needs along the corridor, preparing a freight study and supporting the Island Corridor Foundation (ICF) to work with affected First Nations. MoTI is actively sharing this information with the federal government in advance of the March 2023 deadline for a federal decision. The ICF indicates this support is delivering the coordinated approach requested through advocacy.

### **Priority Work Streams**

Three key streams of CRD work advance the regional transportation priorities.

#### **1. Research, data and analysis**

Staff undertake research, data collection and analysis to inform evidence-based decision making and reporting. This work stream is foundational to each of the priorities and is part of the CRD's core service delivery. The CRD bicycle count program and the CRD Origin and Destination Household Travel Survey (O&D Survey) generate data that support local governments and partner agencies make policy, program and infrastructure decisions across the region. Shared data is a cornerstone of a connected, consistent regional transportation system, enabling jurisdictions to make decisions based on the same information.

#### **2. Partnerships**

Local governments, agencies and the Province are each responsible for different aspects of the region's multi-modal transportation system. Coordination is needed among these jurisdictions so that projects are initiated, phased, planned and delivered in support of achieving regional priorities. The CRD supports partnerships in two ways:

- a) **Regional Transportation Working Group:** The working group advises on regional transportation matters requiring coordination and reports through the CRD Transportation Committee. The CRD convenes the working group and provides administrative support. Senior staff from the CRD, local governments, electoral areas and agency partners make up the working group. The work program through 2022 aligned plans, policies and bylaws to support a connected and consistent active travel network and confirmed the CRD could support TDM efforts by scaling its role in active travel planning. Safety will be a focus area for 2023 as several local governments are undertaking policy work. The working group will review this policy work and consider how to achieve regional consistency.
- b) **Project-Specific Technical Advice:** CRD departments, local governments, MoTI and BC Transit regularly undertake planning, engineering, design and construction of multi-modal infrastructure projects around the region. CRD staff provide policy and technical input on a project-specific basis when regional impacts are anticipated. Projects include the recently completed BC Transit queue jumpers on Highway 17 at Mount Newton Cross Road, the City of Victoria and District of Saanich's methodology development for monitoring greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, and corridor planning. Internally, Regional and Strategic Planning and Regional Parks staff meet each month to advance shared priorities related to active travel.

#### **3. Advocacy**

As reported in the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) quarterly update and the advocacy dashboard, the CRD has advocated to the provincial and federal governments for improved funding for active travel, including for the regional trail network, protection of the island rail corridor

and transit improvements. Such advocacy has included correspondence and meetings with the MoTI, federal ministers and members of parliament, as well as senior government and agency executives.

In response to previous advocacy on transportation, other levels of government have made it clear that regional unity is critical to advance the positions being advocated. Through 2023, staff anticipate being able to report on whether advocacy efforts are having a positive impact on funding requests and policy changes.

## **IMPLICATIONS**

### *Environmental & Climate Implications*

Transportation is responsible for 46% of GHG emissions regionally. Quantifying GHG emissions savings from transportation projects continues to be an important work stream for climate action and transportation staff across the region. Work is ongoing to improve data collection and reporting on GHG emissions, which will support implementation of the regional transportation priorities and efforts to reduce emissions from the transportation sector.

### *Intergovernmental Implications*

The region's partners have diverse transportation needs; be they urban, suburban, rural or remote. Each partner, whether an electoral area, a local government, MoTI or an agency like BC Transit, is responsible for different transportation functions. As the CRD advances the regional transportation priorities, a guiding principle to the work is ensuring policy, funding or infrastructure approaches are robust enough to achieve common goals while being applicable to different local contexts around the region. The CRD has been effective at building consensus and relies on partners to make decisions that are consistent with regional priorities. Ultimately, unless in relation to regional trails, the CRD is not the decision-making authority for road-based, transit or active modes of transportation.

### *Regional Growth Strategy (RGS) Implications*

Regional, municipal, electoral area and partner agency action on regional transportation priorities supports RGS implementation. As noted in the 2021 RGS Indicator Report, ongoing effort is needed from local governments and the Juan de Fuca Electoral Area to direct new development to locations that are well served by active travel and transit. Staff will continue to provide this input as local governments update Official Community Plans.

### *Financial Implications*

Work to advance the transportation priorities is being done within the existing core budget, and in relation to regional trail improvements, through grant applications. Any new direction may require a reevaluation of existing resources.

### *Service Delivery Implications*

The CRD is responsible for regional transportation planning, data collection and analysis, regional trails and transit and transportation on SSI. Through the Traffic Safety Commission, the CRD also takes a leading role in transportation safety education. The priority work streams described above advance service delivery at pace and will be ongoing through this Board term. The matter of exploring transportation governance options, referred by the previous Board, will be considered as part of the Board strategic planning process. Local governments and agency partners are responsible for making the local policy, planning and infrastructure decisions required to advance priorities related to road-based, transit and active modes.

*Alignment with Board & Corporate Priorities*

Through the 2019-2022 Board term, Board Priority Initiative 1(a) was to work in partnership to deliver an effective multi-modal transportation system. Implementation of the regional transportation priorities through the regional transportation working group and the above work streams operationalized this priority into core service delivery. As noted above, work to implement the regional transportation priorities will be ongoing through this Board term. The current CRD Board is considering transportation as a regional priority through the Board strategic planning process.

*Alignment with Existing Plans & Strategies*

Advancing the regional transportation priorities aligns to the RGS, Regional Transportation Plan, Interim Regional Parks and Trails Strategic Plan and Regional Trails Management Plan.

**NEXT STEPS**

Staff will continue to advance the approved transportation priorities through the three work streams of research, data and analysis, partnerships and advocacy. Through the strategic planning process, the Board will be asked to confirm whether transportation should remain a priority through this term and to agree on the desired outcomes it wishes to work towards. If this process changes the regional transportation priorities, staff have the capacity to adapt and amend work plans as needed. The strategic planning process will continue through Q1 2023.

**CONCLUSION**

Transportation is a key priority for the CRD Board and residents of the region. Transportation's impact on affordability, climate change and general livability is well documented. The CRD is working with local government, electoral area and agency partners to collaboratively advance its regional transportation priorities through a variety of work streams. This approach enables the CRD to focus attention on areas where it can efficiently make the most impact within its existing service mandate. Staff have developed work plans to ensure these priority actions continue to advance. If Board priorities change through the strategic planning process, staff will adjust work plans accordingly. The priority work streams advance service delivery.

**RECOMMENDATION**

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

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**ATTACHMENTS**

Appendix A - Regional Transportation Priorities Tracker