



16th December, 2015

MLA: Hon. Peter Fassbender
Surrey-Fleetwood, Minister Responsible for TransLink
301A – 15930 Fraser Highway
Surrey, BC V4N 0X8

To Minister Fassbender,

I am writing today on behalf of SkyTrain for Surrey, an organization I created to gather residents on important transit matters. We are concerned about the continued push by the City of Surrey to build an at-grade Light Rail Transit (LRT) system instead of an extension of the Expo Line SkyTrain, and feel that this needs to be overruled immediately.

Last year, regional Mayors agreed to include an on-street Light Rail Transit system in Surrey as part of the regional vision. This went against the results of the commissioned Surrey Rapid Transit Study – in which the consultant had concluded that extending the Expo Line and building Bus Rapid Transit would bring the most ridership and the most quantifiable benefits.

It is time to switch the plan to this previously studied SkyTrain alternative. Extending SkyTrain is the only reasonable choice to proceed with rail rapid transit expansion south of the Fraser.

A slow, street-level, on-street LRT with more stops would bring more problems than ridership. It would fall short in every aspect where SkyTrain has found immense success. There would be fewer customers, slower growth around transit, more suburban sprawl and more congestion.

Major issues my organization has identified have not been addressed by the City of Surrey. As an example, the City says that LRT will improve our transit situation, but the 104 Ave/King George “L Line” LRT is expected to have a 25-minute end-to-end travel time – only 1 minute faster than the current 96 B-Line and *slower* than other frequent express routes such as the #337 Fraser Heights.

Supporters of LRT insist that because building an LRT will offer more kilometres of rail than SkyTrain, it is more attractive for riders and is better for shaping development. This is an irresponsible view that doesn’t fairly consider the cost-benefits and trade-offs for the community. It has left stakeholders and our leaders in support of something that’s not fully understood. Issues have been side-stepped, and in many cases stakeholders in the city have been completely misled.

The City of Surrey, for one, has refused to properly consider the transportation outcome, centering the argument for an on-street light rail on the idea of “shaping growth” instead and avoiding any



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elaboration on the project's transportation outcome in studies, presentations and discussions with city residents. This is highly irresponsible; as previous projects like the Canada Line have demonstrated how critical transportation outcome is to the success of a P3 transit project.

The city is now pushing for the inclusion of at least 3 additional stops on Fraser Highway over the initial plan: 156 St, 188 St, and 196 St. While there is the argument that this will improve local access, it will increase travel times (especially from Langley) and undermine the role a Fraser Highway line will have as a regional trunk transit corridor for the next 100 years. It should be noted that all 3 locations are within 450m (a ~5 min. walk) of other stations in either direction.

We understand that recently, you mentioned that a "Fraser Highway extension of SkyTrain" was a provincial priority in an interview with Voice of BC, and some people speculated that this meant a switch to a SkyTrain extension and technology. We encourage you to work with the province – and TransLink, whom I presented to last week – to follow through with a switch from LRT to SkyTrain.

SkyTrain has proven its economic gains with the creation of many pedestrian and transit-friendly communities around its stations, and a ridership that is higher – both in sheer numbers, and per kilometre – than any Light Rail Transit system in Canada and the USA.

The benefits of a SkyTrain extension, combined with a Bus Rapid Transit system on King George Blvd. and 104 Ave, would include: faster and more reliable service, capacity for future growth, no transfers to existing SkyTrain, higher ridership and lower operating deficits. An extension of SkyTrain down the Fraser Highway can extend the use of existing resources such as staff, maintenance crew, equipment, and other things in order to reduce the long-term costs.

With a SkyTrain extension and BRT there would be less property acquisition, less construction inconveniences on the "L Line" corridor, no loss of existing traffic lanes, no interruptions from road accidents and vehicle-train collisions, and less impact on Green Timbers Urban Forest.

We urge you, in coordination with the Province and TransLink, to take the leadership in overruling the choice for LRT. Provincial funding should be refused for a Surrey rapid transit project if the City of Surrey is not willing to accept a SkyTrain alternative.

Best regards,

Daryl Dela Cruz

Campaign Chair – SkyTrain for Surrey

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Campaign directors: Daryl Dela Cruz (*Surrey, chair*), Benedic Dasalla (*Surrey*), Jacky Au (*Surrey*), Spencer Whitney (*Langley*)



Appendix A: Additional footnotes

1. We would encourage you to read our review of the “Surrey LRT Economic Benefits Study” <http://skytrainforsurrey.org/2015/05/16/review-surrey-lrt-study-ignores-transportation-outcome/>
2. The Surrey Rapid Transit Study estimated a \$22 million operating deficit for an LRT system. To date there has been no explanation from anyone of how this will be funded over the long term. (A SkyTrain extension would have a lower deficit of just \$6 million).

FINAL EVALUATION REPORT

Exhibit 3B.21 - Cost-Effectiveness

TRANS LINK/MOTI
SURREY RAPID TRANSIT ALTERNATIVES ANALYSIS

| Alternative | BRT 1 | LRT 1 | RRT 1 | RRT 1A |
|--------------------|-------|-------|-------|--------|
| Benefit/Cost Ratio | 1.30 | 0.69 | 1.55 | 1.45 |

Average Costs

Average Annual Costs (Undiscounted Annualized Capital Costs plus Operating Cost in future year of operations)

| | | | | |
|---|-------|---------|---------|---------|
| Capital Cost (Undiscounted) | \$900 | \$2,180 | \$1,800 | \$2,220 |
| Average Asset Life (Construction, Vehicles, Property) | 48 | 41 | 61 | 59 |
| Annualization Factor (6% over asset life of components) | 0.068 | 0.070 | 0.066 | 0.066 |
| Annualized Capital + Renewals Cost | \$ 61 | \$ 154 | \$ 118 | \$ 146 |
| 2021 Net Operating Cost (Op.Cost -Revenue) | \$ 22 | \$ 22 | \$ 6 | \$ 19 |
| 2021 Total Annualized Cost (\$M) | \$ 83 | \$ 176 | \$ 124 | \$ 165 |
| 2041 Net Operating Cost (Op.Cost -Revenue) | \$ 35 | \$ 28 | \$ 3 | \$ 23 |
| 2041 Total Annualized Cost (\$M) | \$ 96 | \$ 182 | \$ 121 | \$ 169 |

*"RRT1" represents a SkyTrain extension to Langley. "RRT1A" represents that extension combined with BRT on 104 Ave and King George Blvd. The operations costs for this BRT are already being funded as the 96 B-Line (introduced 2013)

All numbers were measured in 2010 dollars.

3. This operating deficit is **40% of the cost to operate all South of Fraser buses today**
* Based on the added cost of all South of Fraser bus routes (300 series, 500 series, C shuttles on TransLink's Transit System Performance Review and adjusted for inflation <http://www.translink.ca/en/Plans-and-Projects/Managing-the-Transit-Network/Transit-System-Performance.aspx>
4. SkyTrain's superior ridership success is demonstrated on the next page (Appendix B)
5. Additional details on the Surrey LRT proposal from the City's Rapid Transit Projects manager (incl. plan for additional stations) were published by 24 Hours newspaper: <http://vancouver.24hrs.ca/2015/04/09/lrt-101-surrey-lays-out-its-concept>



Appendix B

SkyTrain ridership/km vs. light rail transit systems

Data is from the [American Public Transit Association](#) (Q3 2014) unless stated

| City | System name (type) | Weekday daily boardings | Daily boardings per mile |
|------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Vancouver | SkyTrain (driverless) | 377,900 (highest) | 8,870 (highest) |
| Calgary | C-Train (LRT) | 310,700 | 8,510 |
| Boston | MBTA light rail (LRT) | 214,500 | 8,250 |
| Edmonton | Light Rail Transit (LRT) | 98,144* | 7,550 |
| Toronto | Streetcar (on-street) | 281,900 | 5,525 |
| San Francisco | Muni Metro (LRT) | 145,500 | 4,076 |
| Houston | METRORail (LRT) | 45,700 | 3,571 |
| Newark | Newark/Hudson Bergen LRT | 72,939** | 3,143 |
| Minneapolis | METRO Light Rail (LRT) | 64,500 | 2,938 |
| Los Angeles | Metro Rail (LRT) | 203,400 | 2,892 |
| Seattle | Link Light Rail (LRT) | 40,300 | 2,330 |
| Portland | MAX, Streetcar (LRT) | 113,900 | 2,330 |
| San Diego | Trolley (LRT) | 124,100 | 2,320 |
| Phoenix | Valley Metro (LRT) | 41,200 | 2,060 |

* Q3 numbers were not reported. Data from Edmonton Transit, collected during the same period, is used instead. See: www.edmonton.ca/transportation/RoadsTraffic/2014LRT_PassengerCountReport.pdf

** Q3 numbers were not reported. NJ Transit's own FY2014 data is used instead (same number is reported in APTA's Q4 ridership report). See: <https://www.njtransit.com/pdf/FactsAtAGlance.pdf>