

9th January 2018

Derek Corrigan
Mayor of the City of Burnaby
Chair of the Metro Vancouver Regional Mayors' Council on Transportation

Subject: Request to remove the Surrey-Newton-Guildford LRT from TransLink's 10-year vision

Dear Mayor Corrigan,

I represent a citizens' group encompassing over 3,500 Surrey, Langley and Metro Vancouver residents. We are writing to you on the urgent matter of rapid transit proposals in our region, and decisions to be made on these proposals in the coming year. It is from our understanding that you will be communicating with the provincial government regarding these major projects and the priority by which they should proceed. We also understand that you have expressed concerns about whether TransLink has the capacity to handle multiple projects at once.

As you are the incoming chair of the Regional Mayors' Council, I wish to forward to you a collective concern among supporters of our campaign. We have previously forwarded these concerns to TransLink, Surrey City Council and staff, and Langley City Council.

We, the undersigned, strongly urge you and the Mayors' Council to consider an amendment to the 10-year vision for Metro Vancouver that removes the Surrey-Newton-Guildford LRT.

The 'Phase 1' Surrey-Newton-Guildford Light Rail Transit (SNG LRT) project will do little to improve transit commutes for the people it would serve, and should not be in the 10-Year Vision.

It is paramount that this region invests in improved transit, but the right choices must be made with these investments. We believe that light rail is the wrong choice for rapid transit projects in Surrey and that the SNG LRT proposal should be cancelled outright and replaced.

Our campaign proposes that the SNG LRT be replaced with a superior project that could be built at a significantly lower cost. We have identified *Bus Rapid Transit (BRT)* - another option that has been considered by TransLink - as the best solution to immediately deliver reliable rapid transit service on the King George Blvd and 104th Avenue transit corridors in Surrey.

Given the lessened cost and faster implementation, BRT must be the option used on this vital transportation corridor. We do believe that a rail system may eventually be necessary on these corridors, but the street-level light rail system proposed in the 10-year vision suffers from several shortfalls in long-term capacity, design and features.

First, we believe that any rapid transit project on King George Blvd should extend along the full length of the corridor.

The currently-proposed SNG LRT project does not; it extends only between Downtown Surrey and Newton Exchange, requiring riders to transfer to and from other buses to reach South Surrey and White Rock. This offsets any travel-time savings for riders who are commuting from those areas.

For rapid transit on King George Blvd. to be successful, it must extend along the full length of the corridor. One of the reasons why we recommend bus rapid transit instead of LRT is because its lessened costs and complexity could translate into more coverage. For the same cost or less, a BRT system could immediately service the full length of King George Blvd.

Second, the cost-benefit metrics for a light rail system in Surrey are exceptionally dismal.

Numerous onlookers and experts across the country know that light rail transit was identified as one of the lowest-performing options for a Surrey rapid transit system.

In the 2012 Surrey Rapid Transit Study alternative analysis, the estimated cost-benefit ratio of the full Surrey LRT proposal is **0.69**. This means that for every dollar invested in the project, less than a dollar of benefit is realized, even when accounting for non-cash benefits such as travel time savings and environmental benefits. Furthermore, the 2012 analysis projected that if 'Phase 1' (SNG LRT) were pursued without a 'Phase 2' Surrey-Langley Line, it would return less than half of its cost in benefits, with a cost-benefit ratio of just **0.38**.

Third, we do not accept a rapid transit project that evidently puts developer interests ahead of those of transit riders seeking faster commutes.

We were alarmed to find that in recent TransLink board documents, the "South of Fraser Rapid Transit project" is being described solely as a "land use shaping initiative".

Surrey's flagrant economic development ambitions have placed regional transportation and mobility concerns as the project's second priority. This approach is being made even though real

estate development will continue at the current feverish pace in Surrey regardless of the technology chosen.

Light rail systems being pursued in other Canadian cities – such as Calgary, Ottawa, and Toronto – are fast, convenient and effective because they typically use extensive underground tunnelling and grade-separation, none of which the SNG LRT line will feature. These projects are more like our existing SkyTrain lines, while the SNG LRT is more like a streetcar.

To say that SNG LRT is a ‘rapid transit’ project is a severe overstatement. TransLink’s own data indicates that the travel time savings, compared to riding on B-Line buses, will be only two minutes for end-to-end commuters and only one minute for commuters to downtown Surrey.

Where billions of the region’s tax dollars are concerned, it is imperative that we are investing in effective projects that offer tangible transportation improvements.

This will be one of the slowest light rail systems in Canada if it gets built, and its average operating speed and carrying capacity will be only a fraction of what SkyTrain provides.

If the region is not prepared to pursue multiple rapid transit projects at once, then the Millennium Line/Broadway Extension would seem like the better investment of our regional tax dollars, given its superior cost-benefit ratio of 2.3 or higher. However, we do not wish for you or any other decision-makers to leave out South-of-Fraser cities from transit-related expenditures.

Converting the SNG LRT proposal to bus rapid transit addresses this challenge. With the reduced costs and complexity, it would be easier to pursue a BRT project alongside other major projects like the Millennium Line/Broadway Extension and a new Pattullo Bridge.

Furthermore, it could enable the region to fast-track the ‘Phase 2’ Surrey-Langley Line, which South of Fraser commuters will be waiting another 5 years for under the current Mayors’ plan.

As you are probably aware, our campaign is pushing for the ‘Phase 2’ Surrey-Langley Line to be built as an *extension of the existing Expo Line SkyTrain* from King George Station to Langley Centre. If this project is indeed pursued as SkyTrain, there is a massive potential to deliver congestion relief in Surrey and Langley and reduce commute times for transit riders.

TransLink’s 2012 alternatives analysis noted that SkyTrain on Fraser Hwy. would attract the most new transit riders and do the most to address rapid growth in vehicle use in Surrey and Langley.

It would also come closest to fulfilling TransLink's long-term goals to reduce vehicle usage and increase the sustainable mode-share throughout this region to 50% by 2045.

If it is allowed to proceed as-is, the 'phase 1' SNG LRT will be an expensive mistake on a scale significantly larger than BC Ferries' ill-fated FastCat program.

It is not too late to replace the SNG LRT with a bus rapid transit project. Much of the early works for the SNG LRT, including the Bear Creek bridge replacement and most of the alignment work and property acquisition, are compatible with BRT and could be used to support it.

Today there is a lively debate in Surrey and Langley among residents, business groups, decision-makers and others regarding which rapid transit technologies should be utilized in the South-of-Fraser. We anticipate that this dialogue will grow, given the onset of municipal elections in October where these issues will be discussed extensively.

We sincerely hope that you will make the right decision for this region's future by pushing for the cancellation of the Surrey-Newton-Guildford LRT.

Best regards,

Daryl Dela Cruz

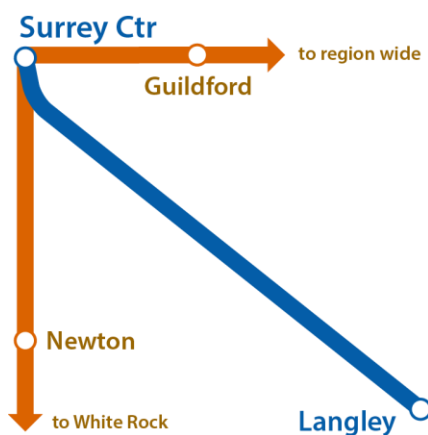
Founding Director of SkyTrain for Surrey

On behalf of 3,559 signed supporters on skytrainforsurrey.org

Campaign Mission Overview

SkyTrain for Surrey is calling on decision-makers to build a **16km extension of the Expo Line** as rapid transit studies for Surrey have consistently found SkyTrain to be the superior option. The extension would stretch from the terminus at King George Station to Langley Centre Station.

TransLink and the Ministry of Transportation, in cooperation with the City of Surrey and other partners, released the Surrey Rapid Transit Study Phase II alternatives analysis in 2012. One of the alternatives considered an **extension of the Expo Line and a BRT on the Surrey-Newton-Guildford Line corridor**. This alternative had the same capital cost as the light rail transit proposal and offered a superior business case, higher travel time savings and lower long-term operating debts.



More than 3,500 people have joined our call for the cancellation of Surrey's street-level LRT, in favour of restoring this plan to extend SkyTrain through Surrey and Langley and build BRT.

A street-level LRT in Surrey will cost billions of dollars yet offer little travel time savings and only a fraction of the speed and capacity that SkyTrain has. This LRT will become one of the most expensive mistakes in the region's history.