

Light rail mindset has stagnated transit improvement

Daryl Dela Cruz . Chilliwack Times ; Chilliwack, B.C. [Chilliwack, B.C]07 Apr 2016: A.9.

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FULL TEXT

Editor: The public should be careful before putting its trust in Rail for the Valley (RftV) to be a voice for better transit.

First thing's first: Rail for the Valley needs to reconsider its exclusive support for the B.C.E.R. Interurban Line. The Interurban line may still exist, but it was built in a time when rail was the Fraser Valley's only option for long-distance transportation. It is winding and indirect, and was designed to run passenger trains only three times per day (RftV wants them to run three times per hour). As Rail for the Valley confirmed in their own study, hundreds of millions of dollars would still be required to retrofit the Interurban for a viable modern railway operation.

It could make more sense to just build new rail in the Highway 1 median-a shorter, straighter, more rail-friendly alignment that's also government-owned and more direct in reaching today's population centres.

Secondly, Coun. Sam Waddington's comments make one of my suspicions clear: Rail for the Valley was not a participant in BC Transit's public engagement process for the Fraser Valley Express. Up to now the organization hasn't offered a single comment on the FVX.

RftV could have helped get this rapid bus delivered sooner and with better amenities, but has insisted on pushing for inter-urban light rail only. This light rail-exclusive mindset has delayed and stagnated transit improvements to the valley, and it is rather hypocritical that RftV is now trying to frame the success of the FVX bus as the reason to (eventually) build light rail.

Lastly, some of Rail for the Valley's overarching transit views are out of place. As the charade of blog posts on their website suggests, it would appear that Rail for the Valley is more about opposing SkyTrain expansion in the Metro and less about delivering a valley transit improvement. No wonder the answer to their proposals has constantly been "no."

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Credit: Daryl Dela Cruz; The Times

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