

21st October 2020

Subject: Surrey-Langley SkyTrain is a higher priority than the Massey tunnel replacement

ATTN: B.C. Liberal Party, Andrew Wilkinson (Leader)

CC: BC Liberal Candidates in Surrey and Langley: Dave Hans (Surrey-Guildford), Dilraj Atwal (Surrey-Green Timbers), Garry Thind (Surrey-Fleetwood), Gulzar Cheema (Surrey-Panorama), Margaret Kunst (Langley East), Marvin Hunt (Surrey-Cloverdale), Mary Polak (Langley), Paul Boparai (Surrey-Newton), Shaukhat Khan (Surrey-Whalley), Stephanie Cadieux (Surrey South), Trevor Halford (Surrey-White Rock)

To the B.C. Liberal Party and Andrew Wilkinson,

I am writing to you about the urgent need to build the full 16-kilometre Surrey-Langley SkyTrain. For the last 8 years, starting during a time when the B.C. Liberals were in power, my organization (SkyTrain for Surrey) has conducted a citizen advocacy campaign calling for the construction of this extension, most recently our issue advocacy during the 2018 municipal elections, which had a strong impact as SkyTrain expansion became a top issue. This project is now at an urgent turning point with much of the first phase (King George Station to Fleetwood at 166 St) design work completed.

Before the election, a commitment had not been outlined to deliver the **second phase (166 St to Langley City)**, nor any commitment to deliver both lines **in a single phase**, as we strongly urge. It is my understanding that the B.C. Liberals intend to continue existing infrastructure projects under its Rebuild B.C. Plan and that new infrastructure projects will be targeted with \$4.5 billion in new funding. If the B.C. Liberals form the government, a portion of this funding must be allocated towards the provincial funding share of the second phase Surrey-Langley SkyTrain, and we also ask for your support in enabling the construction of the entire line in a single phase—which, as noted by TransLink CEO Kevin Desmond, is possible if all funding is in place by the end of this year.

Today the need for a full 16-kilometre extension from King George Station to Langley City is clearer than ever. To date, [public consultations](#), [opinion polls](#), a [trip data study](#) and a [strong business case](#) have all strongly indicated the need for a full 16km Surrey-Langley SkyTrain built in a single phase. Your party may not already be aware of some recent developments, such as a proposal for a [10,000 seat multipurpose indoor stadium](#) in downtown Surrey, which highlights the urgent need to complete this extension. Just as B.C. Place and Rogers Arena rely on the Expo Line to bring in spectators, a downtown Surrey sports complex needs SkyTrain and its high capacity.

I understand that the B.C. Liberals have strong concerns about transportation projects in our region that have been paused or pushed down in the list of priorities. In many areas we do share that concern; it was only recently that proposals for a Surrey-Langley SkyTrain were set back by the local municipal government, which preferred a surface light rail transit system. While a switch-over back to a SkyTrain expansion proposal has cost some additional time, we wish to reiterate that the **Surrey-Langley SkyTrain is the region's highest transportation priority** and that means that it is ahead of a Massey tunnel replacement in line.

We understand that the George Massey tunnel replacement project solves one of the biggest traffic bottlenecks in western Canada and that there are many residents, including some Surrey residents in the south part of the city, that are poised to benefit significantly. However, we believe the lack of rapid transit investment connecting Surrey and the Langleys presents a far bigger long-term problem than the current capacity restrictions on the Massey tunnel corridor.

For one, the impacts of the shortfall in transit investment south of the Fraser River are stated very clearly in the recent TransLink trip data: **73.3% of commute trips in Surrey and 84.6% of commute trips in Langley Township are made by car**. This includes many trips made on the Highway 99 corridor to access our region. Surrey and Langley's residents need useful transit alternatives so that they can get around both within their cities and to the rest of the region now, which means major rapid transit investment in Surrey and Langley must come ahead of another Fraser River highway bridge.

I want to exemplify this further by noting that the costs of owning and operating a vehicle immensely restrict the South-of-Fraser economy by **placing a large burden on residents' incomes**. In areas of east Surrey (Clayton) and near Langley City, households face average annual combined transportation costs over \$15,000—compared to lower costs of between \$5,000 and \$10,000 in areas of the region, north of the Fraser River, that are well served by SkyTrain, including the Canada Line corridor. This is money that should be spent in the local economy, particularly in supporting local businesses, but it is instead spent on commuting by car because this has become necessary in our cities.

Our organization has some key concerns that we hope your party will be able to address before the election or after the election has taken place in the event the B.C. Liberals form the government. In the recent online forum held by Moving in a Livable Region, the representative for your party (George Affleck) noted that the majority of the new \$4.5 billion transportation funding outlined in Rebuild B.C. is being allocated towards the Massey tunnel replacement and towards widening the Fraser Valley Highway 1. We understand that the B.C. Liberals also have several road expansion commitments, including delivering the Lougheed Highway/Harris Road interchange in Pitt Meadows and additional improvements on Highway 99; however, have not outlined any **specific transit commitments** that will

receive funding in the Rebuild B.C. Plan. We are concerned that these commitments may not leave much headroom for the Surrey-Langley SkyTrain from 166 Street to Langley City Centre.

We have also seen the recent voters' guide released by the Regional Mayors' Council, in which it was noted that the B.C. Liberals did not have a response to a question concerning finalizing funding for the Surrey-Langley SkyTrain's first phase (to 166 Street). While this is an area of great concern to us, we want to highlight the opportunity for the B.C. Liberals to **reiterate a strong will to build infrastructure** by committing the full Surrey-Langley SkyTrain while there is still time.

The most recent budget releases by the Regional Mayors' Council indicate that the total funding share needed to support the Surrey-Langley SkyTrain under the current framework will be in the area of \$525 million in year-of-expenditure dollars, not all of which would necessarily need to be released over the next three years. We believe this is a reasonable commitment to include in the Rebuild B.C. plan to ensure that the full extension is built in a single phase.

We understand that the B.C. Liberals have always been supportive of extending SkyTrain to Surrey and Langley, particularly when the bold proposals to complete the line were made by Premier Gordon Campbell a decade ago. Expanding SkyTrain is crucial to reducing congestion and maintaining high-quality connectivity between our economic sub-regions, and we hope to see that demonstrated with a B.C. Liberal commitment to **completing the full 16-kilometre Surrey-Langley SkyTrain alongside the replacement of the George Massey Tunnel** and supported in the same round of funding.

Best regards,

Daryl Dela Cruz
Founding Director of SkyTrain for Surrey

