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From: Wong, Elaine
Sent: July-09-15 5:25 PM
To: Clerks
Subject: FW: Towards a Plan 'B' for Transit

SECTION 2 COUNCIL CORRESPONDENCE
City Manager
Dir. Engineering
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From: John Thornton [SMTP: [REDACTED]]
Sent: Thursday, July 09, 2015 4:44:29 PM
To: Mayor
Subject: Towards a Plan 'B' for Transit
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Dear Mayor Corrigan and Burnaby Councillors,

Most Metro Vancouver citizens see the transit referendum just completed as a waste of resources. I agree with that view mainly because the simple 'yes' or 'no' question leaves our decision makers with a very ambiguous result – nobody can say for sure what the voters meant by 'no'. If Jordan Bateman's call for an on-going referendum requirement for any future TransLink tax increase holds true, then I hope future referenda are structured more like questionnaires, to provide clear information and direction to the transit planning authorities.

In the aftermath of the referendum, I wish to offer a few thoughts that may contribute to a sensible way forward. In the interests of brevity I will focus on items that have not been covered widely in the media. Here are a few things that I would suggest:

1. standardize tolling for all river and inlet crossings. It does not make sense to have some bridges tolled and underutilized while non-tolled crossings are jammed. The Port Mann Treo tolling system works well in my experience.
2. plan for a third crossing of Burrard Inlet via a tunnel. News in the middle of the referendum that indicated there is no clear plan to relieve the Lions Gate bottleneck seriously undermined the credibility of The Mayors' \$7.5B plan. Pushing a second causeway through Stanley Park to a twinned Lions Gate bridge would be a colossal mistake. Admittedly, the idea of a new multi-billion dollar project to bore a big tunnel will be as welcome as a cold shower, but the issue will be more manageable if funds are gathered in advance and the construction is dealt with in a planned way.
3. provide more passenger drop off/pick up zones near SkyTrain stations and bus exchanges. In addition, provide more secure parking for bicycles, mopeds and, if space permits under guideways, subcompact cars. Stop viewing private vehicles as an evil competing system and instead view them as an independent feeder system. Yes, the bus system will lose riders but the core TransLink system will benefit by being more readily accessible, meter revenues could be collected, and private vehicles will be drawn off the streets.

4. pursue the possibility of a transit surcharge on provincial income tax for Metro Vancouver residents as a source of funding. It is an alternative I would have favoured over the increased sales tax.
5. pursue the possibility of a municipal capital tax on newcomers to Metro Vancouver. The ten year program envisioned in the referendum was beyond what could be funded from current sources, and it was driven by the anticipated one million-person expansion of the Metro Vancouver population. It seems unfair that current residents of Metro Vancouver have to pay for accelerated infrastructure construction over what "historic" or "natural" growth requires, to meet the needs of an influx of newcomers. In fact, it seems sensible to apply this principle to all infrastructure - firefighting, water, sewer, bridges, street lighting, etc. - not only transit. Perhaps the municipal level of government needs proper recognition under the constitutional laws of Canada in order to have the tools to deal with this situation. If so, let us make this constitutional defect an issue in the upcoming federal election. As an example, does Immigration Canada contribute to municipal infrastructure funding when settling refugees and immigrants?
6. suspend real estate development where necessary for as long as necessary until proper public transit service can be provided.

There are of course other issues such as TransLink governance, suitability of ground-level light rail for Surrey, political relationships, mobility pricing, the need to increase ridership to combat climate change, and so forth, which are all well covered by our media, which I will not mention here but which do need to be considered in the overall Plan B.

I will end by saying The Mayors and Councils enjoy my confidence as pragmatic managers who will stickhandle our transit issues through this period of constrained funding. I can only suggest the obvious: allocate the scarce funds to most efficiently meet the most demand out of existing infrastructure.

Thanks for your kind attention,

John W. Thornton
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