



September 15, 2021

Open Letter to Party Leaders and Metro Vancouver candidates 2021 Federal Election and Metro Vancouver Transit & Transportation

Party leaders and local candidates,

As regional leaders in Metro Vancouver, the *Mayors' Council on Regional Transportation* has been watching the federal election closely. The outcomes of this election matter to our region.

When Metro Vancouver residents cast their ballots in the 2021 federal election, they need to know what each of the national parties will do to support the recovery and resiliency of our transit system, and their plans to keep our region moving. We want to give each party and all local candidates the opportunity to speak clearly to Metro Vancouver residents about how the commitments made in party platforms translate into action in our region after the election.

Federal partnership in Metro Vancouver Transit and Transportation

Prior to the pandemic, successive federal governments were key partners in our efforts to transform Metro Vancouver's transportation network, helping us build the Canada Line, the Evergreen Extension and the Broadway Subway, add hundreds of new train cars and modernize stations to improve the existing SkyTrain network, roll-out express Rapid Bus service across the region, and begin to transition our bus fleet to zero-emission technology.

During the pandemic, the federal government was again a vital partner, joining with the Province of B.C. to provide TransLink with \$644 million in emergency relief funding needed to keep transit service going at a time when ridership and revenue plummeted but critical front-line workers still relied on transit to get to work.

Building a sustainable transportation network in Canada's third-largest city region is too big a job for any one order of government to take on alone. It has always required partnership. Looking ahead, the federal role is more critical than ever given the ongoing challenge of recovering from the impacts of the pandemic at the same time as planning for future growth, making the region more livable and affordable, and supporting climate action.

COVID-19 and beyond

Although ongoing impacts of the pandemic on TransLink's ridership and revenues will inflict a further \$1 billion in losses over the next 6-8 years above and beyond federal/provincial relief funding already delivered, this setback is temporary and we must continue planning for a future knowing that transit will remain a critical component of our region's economy and quality of life.

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Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, TransLink's ridership was growing faster than anywhere in North America as Metro Vancouver residents increasingly turned to transit as a convenient, affordable and lower-emissions alternative to single occupancy vehicles. In partnership with the Provincial and Federal governments, we have made significant progress in delivering the smart, sustained investments in transportation that our region has needed to support growth and limit GHG emissions.

Our vision for the future

TransLink is nearing the completion of an update to our 30-year regional transportation strategy, [Transport 2050](#). During this public planning process, we have proposed a range of ambitious options to bring rapid transit to every corner of our region over the next 30 years relying on a mix of SkyTrain and affordable, fast and reliable Bus Rapid Transit to add 200-400 kilometres to our existing rapid transit network, as well as significant increases to our traditional bus routes and a huge expansion to our active transportation connections.

Although Transport 2050 will not be formally approved until early 2022, [detailed proposals that have already been consulted on extensively to date](#) paint a vivid portrait of our region's vision for a high quality, sustainable and reliable transportation network. This vision is one that Metro Vancouver must achieve if it hopes to welcome an additional 1 million people expected over the next 25 years while remaining competitive with its peers around the globe, meeting its climate change objectives and improving the accessibility and affordability of a region that is struggling with both challenges right now.

Our priorities for the next Government of Canada

Achieving our vision for the future of Metro Vancouver transit and transportation will require investments on par with or exceeding the levels delivered in our current and successful [10-Year Vision](#) which in 2016 set out to add \$7 billion in new transit and transportation capital between 2017 and 2026. To date, over the first two phases of the planned three-phase 10-Year Vision, \$7.65 billion has been invested in new transit service, marking a historic expansion to our region's transit system. This momentum will need to continue and accelerate.

In this federal election, the Mayors' Council is seeking commitments from all parties and local candidates to build upon the transit recovery planning already underway and to ensure TransLink is in a position to deliver the additional transit service that will be needed to support our growing population and meet the challenges of climate change and housing affordability in the coming decades in the following priority areas:

- Commit to a multi-year solution to pandemic-induced transit operating shortfalls** to protect shared investments in building out Metro Vancouver's transit networks. Otherwise, continuing shortfalls until ridership fully recovers later this decade will force TransLink to scale back service levels and/or job-creating capital improvements—disproportionately impacting the hundreds of thousands of Metro Vancouver residents and businesses who rely on transit to access essential services and participate in economic life.

- ☑ **Deliver a predictable, permanent transit fund** to reduce congestion, shorten commutes, and help create net-zero communities. This starts with maintaining stimulus transit funding between 2021 and 2025 and permanent annual capital funding starting in 2026-27 as committed in the 2021 federal budget, to support:
 - The Surrey-Langley SkyTrain project;
 - The rapid transition to a zero-emission bus fleet to support climate objectives.
 - Future transit expansion projects in every corner of Metro Vancouver to be confirmed in Transport 2050.

- ☑ **Complete the federal funding agreement for the Surrey-Langley SkyTrain**, announced by the Government of Canada on July 8, 2021 so the project remains on schedule and avoid further costly delays.

We have heard all parties recognize the importance of investing in transit and we welcome the policy commitments included in party platforms to date. However, what we have not yet heard from any party or local candidates is how platform commitments will translate into timely federal support for specific, near-term projects like the Surrey-Langley SkyTrain project and our transition to zero-emission buses, or our long-range Transport 2050 plan. **Given the urgency of our project development and planning work, it is critical that the next government hits the ground running, ready to transform platform promises into on-the-ground investments.**

As mayors and community leaders responsible for setting priorities for what the region needs from its transit and transportation system, we are asking those aspiring to form the next Government of Canada to clarify publicly their commitments to public transit and transportation projects in Metro Vancouver and their determination to get to work with us right away after the election.

Sincerely,



Mayor Jonathan X. Côté
Chair

cc: Premier of British Columbia, The Honourable John Horgan
Minister Responsible for TransLink, The Honourable George Heyman