

**Report to the Planning & Protective Services Committee
Meeting of Wednesday, March 22, 2006**

SUBJECT

TravelChoices Strategy: Douglas Street Corridor Transit Improvement Project

PURPOSE

To request Board support for BC Transit's application to UBCM for funding under the Strategic Fund portion of the Federal Gas Tax rebate program.

BACKGROUND

BC Transit has requested support from the CRD for its application for funding under the federal gas tax rebate program for the Douglas Street Transit Priority project (Attachment A).

In the agreement with the Federal Government, projects that are regionally significant are eligible for funding under the Strategic Fund. This is a pooled fund where regions (including regional districts), municipalities and non-profit groups can apply. Projects that have the support of the regional district will have an advantage over individual agency requests.

BC Transit has been a major partner and supporter in the development of the TravelChoices Strategy. After adoption of the strategy the Capital Regional District and BC Transit entered into a partnership agreement intended to advance the goals of TravelChoices.

Their Douglas Street Corridor Project has been identified in the region's TravelChoices Inventory as a priority. This project has a number of phases that include signal improvements, busway construction and service expansion. The works proposed at this time focus on traffic signal system upgrades to reduce delays.

The project involves changes to traffic signals along Douglas Street from downtown Victoria to Admirals Road on Highway 1. This is the primary corridor for most of the

transit services to Saanich and the West Shore and the majority of the routes returning to Victoria

ALTERNATIVES

1. That the Committee recommend that the Board resolve to support an application from BC Transit's for strategic investment funding under the federal gas tax rebate program.
2. That the Committee recommend that the Board table consideration of BC Transit's request for support until phase 1 (Inventory) of the TravelChoices Implementation and Investment Plan process is complete.
3. That the Committee recommend that the Board defer consideration of BC Transit's request for support until the TravelChoices Implementation and Investment Plan is approved.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no direct financial implications to the CRD of this request for support.

TRAVELCHOICES STRATEGY IMPLICATIONS

Attracting more daily trips to transit is a primary goal of the TravelChoices Strategy, which seeks to attract more than 10% of daily travel to transit by 2026 (between 160,000 and 220,000 people daily). To reach this goal, TravelChoices calls for the implementation of high capacity, frequent and fast transit service between the West Shore, the Peninsula and Victoria. This would include coordinating new transit priority measures such as queue jumpers at key intersections and dedicated bus-only lanes on major corridors. TravelChoices further identifies the downtown Victoria, Douglas Street corridor as a key base for high capacity transit corridors connecting other major centres in the region.

The BC Transit proposal is consistent with the goals of the TravelChoices Strategy. The application for funding through UBCM and Federal Government Gas Tax rebate program offers an early opportunity to set in motion a key component of TravelChoices Strategy implementation.

SUMMARY/CONCLUSIONS

Rapid transit system development in the Douglas Street corridor will be a key priority of any final TravelChoices implementation and investment plan. Given the potential for

early release of Strategic Funds by UBCM, Board support for BC Transit's application for funding has the potential to assist initiation of this priority project, without compromising applications for funding of a completed TravelChoices implementation plan at a later date.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Committee recommend to the Board that it support BC Transit's application for funding for the Douglas Street Transit Priority Project under the Strategic Fund portion of the UBCM and Federal Government Gas Tax Rebate program.

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