

CAPITAL REGIONAL DISTRICT
Regional Planning Services Department

Staff Report to the Regional Planning Committee
Meeting of Wednesday, April 21, 2004

SUBJECT:

Municipal Review of the Travel Choices Strategy Report

BACKGROUND:

- Oct. 18, 2000 Regional Planning Committee (RPC) reviews preliminary project descriptions and implementation options for regional strategies for transportation, economic development and housing affordability. The Committee directs staff to initiate discussions with prospective partners in the three strategic initiatives and report back to the Committee beginning in January 2001.
- Nov. 15, 2000: RPC directs staff to send a letter to BC transit requesting their assistance in the development of an outline of a collaborative and inclusive process to prepare a regional transportation strategy. Project management structure, budget, funding and timelines required to conduct the process are also to be developed.
- Jan. 17, 2001 BC Transit presents a status report to the Regional Planning Committee outlining the anticipated scope of work and identifying potential funding options and project management strategies. The Committee receives the report as information and clarifies that it wishes BC transit to take the lead role in the process.
- Feb. 23, 2001 Inter-municipal Planning Advisory Committee (IMPAC) is provided with a status report on the Regional Transportation Strategy. The Committee expresses support for the project and the terms of reference.
- Mar. 21, 2001: Regional Planning Committee is provided with a draft project description and funding plan. The Committee approves project initiation and a budget allocation from CRD as well as a planning grant application.
- Mar. 27, 2002: Board approves initiating the Regional Transportation Strategy (TS) project, referred to as the *TravelChoices Strategy*.

- July 17, 2002: Regional Planning Committee receives the first of 10 transportation working papers produced for the *TravelChoices* project. The first working paper, “Goals and Objectives for the Travel Choices Strategy”, outlined the transportation issues facing the region. The report was circulated to staff at all member municipalities.
- Mar. 19, 2003: Additional working papers, on commercial vehicles and cycling, are reviewed by the Regional Planning Committee.
- May 21, 2003: The project consultant from Urban Systems and the project management team from BC transit review the eight working papers completed to date and discuss the critical next steps needed to achieve the goals of the strategy. All of the working papers were developed by Urban Systems (Vancouver) with input from the project team, IMPAC, and the project stakeholder and technical committees.
- July 16, 2003: The draft regional transportation strategy, *TravelChoices*, and the associated short-term implementation and recommendation strategy is presented to the Regional Planning Committee. The Committee recommended that the reports Draft *TravelChoices* Strategy and the Implementation and Recommendation Strategy be endorsed in principle; that comments raised in the discussion be incorporated into the document; and that the reports (as amended) be circulated to the councils of member municipalities and provincial agencies for review and comment.
- Feb. 2004 Three evening information sessions are held for municipal elected officials on the *TravelChoices* Strategy

DISCUSSION

The *TravelChoices Strategy* (TCS) is an implementation component of the Regional Growth Strategy. The TCS establishes a long-term direction and a short term set of priorities for improving transportation options across the region. The objective of the Travel Choices Strategy is to increase the proportion of walking, cycling, transit, ridesharing and use of other alternatives to driving alone.

The goals of the strategy are to:

1. Coordinate land use and transportation
2. Encourage use of alternative modes
3. Provide access to commercial activities
4. Maintain a safe transportation system

5. Keep transportation affordable
6. Preserve options such as the LRT for the future.

The *TravelChoices* project deliverables included: 1) a series of working papers on key elements of regional transportation, 2) a long-term *TravelChoices* Strategy, and 3) a short-term (5-year) implementation strategy. (A summary of the recommended implementation actions is included as *Attachment A* to this report.)

The strategy was developed by the consulting firm, Urban Systems, with project management services provided by BC Transit. The content and direction of the Strategy was developed with guidance from a large stakeholder committee, a technical committee (municipal planners and engineers), the Inter-Municipal Advisory Committee (municipal and provincial planning staff), and input from the Regional Planning Committee.

The *TravelChoices Strategy* was distributed to the municipalities for comment in October 2003. Three information sessions were held during the first week of February to provide an opportunity for elected officials and municipal staff to receive information from the consultants and members of the project team. Few elected officials attended these sessions.

Summary Of Municipal Comments Received To Date:

Copies of the comments received are included as Attachment B.

1) Cost of Implementation

- Reports lack detail on costs and funding strategies. (several municipalities)
- Where is the “value for money” notion in this document? (Highlands)
- If full implementation were to occur (of Travel Choices and the Housing Strategy) current staff resources would not be sufficient to accommodate such substantial increases in workload. (Sidney)
- Funding the Strategy should be focused on an increased share of fuel tax revenues and not on property taxation. (North Saanich)

2) LRT and Rail

- Should consider commuter rail as a viable alternative for transportation in the future.
- Need to investigate the potential for other LRT routes to service such major destinations as BC Ferry terminal, Victoria Airport, the Keating Business Park, University of Victoria, etc. (Central Saanich)
- The E&N corridor should be considered as part of the Strategy. Recognise the importance of the West Rail Trail project to the region’s eco-tourism (Victoria Advisory Committee)

3) CRD Roles & Responsibilities:

- Is the CRD just trying to make more work for itself? (several municipalities)
- It would appear that the CRD may be vying for control of inter-municipal road networks and the funding and allocation of resources for these road networks. If this is the case it is uncertain how the competing municipal demands would be resolved and accommodated (Sidney)

4) Areas of Emphasis:

- Very focused on downtown Victoria and to a lesser extent, downtown Langford
- Not enough emphasis on the Peninsula, particularly travel to and from the Airport and Ferry terminal (Sidney)
- Too much focus on the downtown core areas; need to more fully consider transportation opportunities on the Saanich Peninsula. No reference to express bus connections to Central Saanich. No reference to Park and Ride facilities or service to Keating Business Park. (Central Saanich)
- Strategy should consider park & ride facilities and car-pooling opportunities in the Electoral Area (JDFA)

5) Traffic Analysis:

- Not enough consideration of increasing traffic from Cowichan Valley, especially Mill Bay and Cobble Hill
- Need to assess transportation implications of additional growth at University of Victoria, Royal Roads, and Camosun College (Oak Bay)

6) Targets:

- The targets for reducing single-occupancy vehicles may be too conservative (Central Saanich)

7) Governance and Funding:

- Need to clearly assess costs and benefits associated with any alternative. (Highlands)
- The creation of more government organization and bureaucracy is unlikely to facilitate or initiate inter-municipal roadway cooperation. (Sidney)
- Encourage priority implementation of recommendation 8.1, relating to funding and managing regional transportation facilities, services and programs. (Victoria)

8) Auto-Use and Parking:

- Report should acknowledge that cars are still needed by many people (Highlands)
- Efforts to increase the cost, and/or decrease the availability, of parking may have the negative effect of discouraging shoppers from areas such as the downtown core.

9) Highway 17:

- The Strategy should not be seen to be giving approval or endorsement to any of the proposals outlined in the Highway 17 Visions Study, prepared by Earth Tech for the Ministry of Transportation in May 2001. (Central Saanich)

CONCLUSION:

The comments received to date from member municipalities range from no support to recommendations that the *TravelChoices* initiatives go further. There has not been sufficient input received from member municipalities to draw any conclusions regarding the next steps to take on this project.

Regional Planning Services is seeking some direction from RPC members on how to address the regional transportation needs, and the needs of the project partners, given the limited input from the member municipalities at this point. It would be difficult to tailor the report to address their concerns without receiving more information from them on what aspects of the draft strategy are problematic.

While concerns regarding cost and resource implications of implementation are understandable, there would be merit in achieving a level of consensus among the member municipalities of the overall goals, objectives and priority needs for region-wide transportation improvements – contained in the main strategy document (as opposed to the short-term implementation plan). This document could provide the Regional Board as the overall strategic plan for future funding partnerships and infrastructure grants associated with green infrastructure, smart growth, community energy planning and the federal “opportunities fund”.

The implementation plan could subject to further discussion with the member municipalities to identify and address outstanding concerns.

It is suggested that the RPC consider a number of options for moving forward, such as:

- Recommend revisions to the *TravelChoices Strategy* and the *Recommended Implementation Strategy* to respond to the feedback received to date and re-refer the report to member municipalities for acceptance.
- Recommend revisions to the *TravelChoices Strategy* and the *Recommended Implementation Strategy* to respond to the feedback received to date and refer the report to the Regional Board for adoption.
- Recommend revisions required to the *Travel Choices Strategy* and refer the report to the Regional Board for adoption. The *Recommended Implementation Strategy* could come forward at a later date pending more input from the member municipalities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Regional Planning Committee provide direction to Regional Planning Services on the next steps for the *TravelChoices Strategy*.

RGS CONSISTENCY:

The proposed *TravelChoices Strategy* is an implementation component of the RGS and responds to its land use, environmental and transportation objectives.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATION:

N/A

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EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S COMMENTS:

W.M. Jordan, Executive Director

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