

**CAPITAL REGIONAL DISTRICT
Regional Planning Services Department**

Staff Report to the Regional Planning Committee
Meeting of Wednesday, March 16, 2005

SUBJECT:

Proposal to Establish a Regional Transportation Investment Fund and Regional Transportation Commission

BACKGROUND:

- Jan. 23, 2002 The CRD Board authorizes initiation of a project to prepare a regional transportation strategy.
- Sept. 17, 2003 The Regional Planning Committee directed staff to prepare a project description for a consultant study into transportation governance and funding options for the Capital Region, for review and discussion.
- Oct. 15, 2003 A proposed project description was reviewed by the Regional Planning Committee. Committee members concurred that such a study should wait until 2004 and the municipal review of the *TravelChoices* Strategy.
- Apr. 21, 2004 A discussion paper on Regional Transportation Governance was reviewed by the Regional Planning Committee and received as information.
- Oct. 20, 2004 The Board resolved “that the CRD supports the establishment of a Regional Transportation Investment Fund (RTIF) and Commission (RTIC) and directs staff to explore existing models and identifies issues and prepares a bylaw for sometime in the future.”

DISCUSSION:

This report is submitted in response to the Board’s direction in October 2004 and to significant announcements by the Federal Government and other competing agencies. This report recommends the Board establish a Transportation Investment Fund to receive monies from Federal and Provincial infrastructure programs. It is also recommended the Board establish a Regional Transportation Commission to advise the Board on the use of these monies for regional transportation priorities.

Funding

A key part of the TravelChoices Strategy is to establish a stable and secure funding source. With the Federal Government announcing a gas tax rebate program for 2005 that targets local municipalities and its regional districts, the region needs to decide how to use this long term funding source. Municipalities are expected to receive \$4 million and the CRD \$3.7 million. The announcement indicates that this revenue source will increase to \$25 million by 2010. Under the new deal, these funds can be used for a range of infrastructures, although transportation has been noted as a priority in the federal announcement. The gas tax rebate program is the only source of funding that is directly linked to auto use in this region and as such should be used to implement the TravelChoices Strategy. This strategy needs a sustainable funding source and an annual investment of \$10 to 20 million to be effective. All other infrastructure issues in the region have well established options to apply either user fees or taxes to achieve program changes.

Recently, the Greater Vancouver Regional District (GVRD) and Translink made a further commitment to achieve their regional transportation vision. On February 4, 2005, they approved two important policy items. They established a "*Canada, British Columbia, and Greater Vancouver Transportation Accord*". This policy framework document is intended to guide the federal new deal for cities and communities and also future funding from the province. It could bring to the GVRD \$100 million dollars annually starting in 2008. This accord has identified one regional transportation plan that all municipalities are committed to, a sustainable capital funding plan, an integrated approach to transportation and a communication program to market alternatives. The second policy item approved was that 100% of the gas tax rebate be used for transportation (Attachment A).

The GVRD is well positioned to lobby and receive transportation funding. Through these policy items, they have stated to the Federal and Provincial Governments that they are focused on achieving their transportation goals. The CRD also needs this level of commitment.

Regional Transportation Commission

Part of the Board direction from October 2004 was to examine alternative models to guide the implementation of the TravelChoices strategy. After considering the governance and administrative options outlined by consultant that developed the TravelChoices working papers, there was only one practical option that reflected the balanced involvement of the member municipalities and minimum effort in implementing at this time.

It is proposed that the Board establish a "Regional Transportation Commission (RTC)". This commission would be modeled after the "Regional Water Commission" as

established in 1997. This standing committee of the Board is comprised of 19 elected officials that are appointed by the Board to provide to the Board recommendations on short and long term water supply initiatives and annual programs.

The RTC would have a similar mandate; it would provide recommendations to the Board on the implementation of the TravelChoices Strategy and use of the transportation investment fund. The RTC will also be responsible to the Board to attract funding from senior levels of government and secure this region's fair share of transportation funding.

The Board would appoint Commission members from all participating municipalities. It would be comprised of 19 voting members similar to that of the Regional Water Supply Commission. The RTC would also need administrative support and input through an advisory committee. The advisory committee would include Board approved representatives of the business, environmental, community sectors and transportation agencies. Administrative support would be provided through Regional Planning Services.

Administrative Support

Regional Planning Services would provide the administrative and technical support to this Commission. Annual operating budgets would identify other resources needed to facilitate responding to the Commission mandate. Any additional technical or professional support would be related to developing capital programs based on Board approved priorities, and for undertaking related engineering works to act on annual implementation plans. The technical support will also be used to provide performance reviews on the effectiveness of the program.

The Board will need to establish a bylaw to establish the Regional Transportation Commission and an administrative bylaw to support and implement the program. Attachment B is the proposed establishment bylaw for the Regional Transportation Commission. Guidelines for preparation of an administrative bylaw are included in Attachment C.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

That Regional Planning Committee recommends to the Board that it

1. distribute the draft Regional Transportation Commission and Transportation Investment Fund Establishment Bylaw to the Regional Solicitor and member councils for review and comment; and
2. approve allocating 100% of the Federal Gas Tax rebate to implementing the TravelChoices Strategy;

RGS CONSISTENCY:

Yes. The regional transportation strategy was prepared as an implementation component of the Regional Growth Strategy. The proposals within the regional transportation strategy, referred to as *TravelChoices*, are intended to implement many of the RGS objectives.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATION:

The proposed service would be funded entirely from Federal and Provincial gas tax rebate and other funds, as set out in the attached draft establishment bylaw.

Larry Roberts
Manager, Transportation Planning,

Mark Hornell, MCIP
Director, Regional Planning Services

DIRECTOR OF FINANCE & CORPORATE SERVICES COMMENTS:

Diana E. Lokken, CMA
Director of Finance & Corporate Services

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S COMMENTS:

W.M. Jordan, Executive Director

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