

**CAPITAL REGIONAL DISTRICT
Regional Planning Services Department**

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

SUBJECT:

TravelChoices: A Long-Term Transportation Strategy for the Capital Region

BACKGROUND:

- Oct. 18, 2000 Regional Planning Committee (RPC) directs staff to initiate discussions with prospective partners in the three strategic initiatives and report back to the Committee.
- Jan. 17, 2001 BC Transit outlines the anticipated scope of work and identifies potential funding options and project management strategies.
- Mar. 27, 2002 Board approves initiating the Regional Transportation Strategy (TS) project, referred to as the *TravelChoices Strategy*.
- July 16, 2003 The draft regional transportation strategy, *TravelChoices*, and the associated short-term implementation and recommendation strategy are presented to the Regional Planning Committee.
- February 2004 Three evening information sessions are held for municipal elected officials on the *TravelChoices Strategy*.
- April 21, 2004 Regional Planning Committee reviewed a report on the municipal responses to the *TravelChoices Strategy*.
- Oct. 27, 2004 The CRD Board reviewed a staff report on Travel Choices Strategy that outlined a concept to exclude any decisions on the issues of management, funding and implementation. The Board approved in principle the guiding principles, goals and objective of the draft strategy. Based on this decision, the department initiated preparing a final strategy.

DISCUSSION

This report is submitted in response to the direction of Regional Planning Committee at its meeting in April 2004 and the October 2004 direction of the CRD Board where the Board approved in-principle the goals and objectives of the Travel Choices Strategy, subject to removal of the implementation strategy component including re-drafting to improve its clarity and focus on the vision and long-term strategy. It is recommended the Board adopt the TravelChoices Strategy.

Approval of the attached TravelChoices Strategy is intended to provide a general strategic direction for the region and its member municipalities and a vision for the future. Its mission statement is simple that is: *to significantly increase the proportion of people walking, cycling, using transit, ride-sharing or using other alternatives to driving alone.*

This strategy focuses on changing our attitudes towards using the car. It also recognizes that the automobile will continue to be an important element of our society. By 2026, travel demand by all modes is expected to increase by another 400,000 person-trips per day from the current 1,200,000 daily trips. It is a goal of the strategy that through a coordinated effort by all parties to shift at least 300,000 of these trips to walking, cycling, using transit or ride-sharing.

Need to Act

This region and its member municipalities need to send a clear message to stakeholders, the Province and the Federal Government of its long-term transportation objectives. By adopting the strategy, the region can begin to raise its profile and seek a fairer share of the provincial and federal funding programs.

The region needs a collective voice to be competitive with other agencies seeking provincial and federal funding. For example, the Greater Vancouver Regional District (GVRD) recently approved a mandate to seek \$100 million dollars annually from the gas tax rebate program. The "*Canada, British Columbia, and Greater Vancouver Transportation Accord*" is a GVRD policy framework document intended to guide the federal new deal for cities and communities and also future funding from the province. This accord identifies 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. This accord also recommends 100% of the gas tax rebate be used for transportation.

The Federal Government has just announced a \$600 million program of gas tax rebates for Canadian provinces to allocate to municipalities and regions for 2005, increasing to over \$2 billion by 2010. Other programs, such as the new Kyoto program and potential provincial support are anticipated. This region needs to be in a position to act on these opportunities. By adopting the TravelChoices Strategy which is consistent with the goals and objectives of these programs, the region then will be in a better position to be more competitive with other agencies that seek financial support to respond to regional transportation goals.

Next Steps

Once the strategy is adopted, the Board will need a sustainable funding plan and an implementation plan for the strategy. These two issues are discussed in the accompanying staff report.

With the recent announcement by the Federal Government of a gas tax rebate, the potential funding source for the TravelChoices Strategy has become a reality. 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 region and its member municipalities need to clarify the amount to be allocated for transportation, only then can a realistic implementation plan be prepared.

It is proposed that as part of the 2005 work plan, Regional Planning Services act on the adoption of the strategy by developing a process to bring ideas from all agencies for potential options that could allow for implementing *TravelChoices*. This work plan will include identifying the major transportation priorities for each municipality that should be considered within the next five to ten years within the context of TravelChoices.

RECOMMENDATIONS

That Regional Planning Committee recommend to the Board that:

1. The TravelChoices Strategy be adopted and distributed to all municipalities;
2. Regional Planning Services prepare a work plan for completion in 2005 that will provide the Board with options to implement the strategy; and
3. Regional Planning Services include in the interim update of the Regional Growth Strategy, amendments to Section 4 – Transportation, to give the TravelChoices Strategy effect.

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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