

**CAPITAL REGIONAL DISTRICT
Regional Planning Services Department**

Staff Report to the Regional Planning Committee
Special Meeting of Wednesday, May 11, 2005

SUBJECT:

Proposal to Establish a Regional Transportation Investment Fund and Commission

BACKGROUND:

- Jan. 23, 2002 The Board authorizes initiation of a project to prepare a regional transportation strategy.
- Sept. 17, 2003 Regional Planning Committee (RPC) directs staff to prepare a project description for a study into transportation governance and funding options for the Capital Region, for review and discussion.
- Oct. 15, 2003 RPC reviews a project description and directed that the study should wait until 2004 following the municipal review of the *TravelChoices* Strategy.
- Apr. 21, 2004 RPC reviews and receives for information a discussion paper on Regional Transportation Governance.
- Oct. 20, 2004 The Board resolves “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.”
- Mar. 16, 2005 RPC defers a staff report on a Proposal to Establish a Regional Transportation Investment Fund and Regional Transportation Commission to the next committee meeting.
- Apr. 13, 2005 The Board adopts *TravelChoices: A Long-Term Transportation Strategy for the Capital Region*, and directs staff to invite a representative of UBCM to speak to the gas tax transfer matter at the next RPC meeting.
- Apr. 15, 2005 UBCM, the Province and the Federal Government sign an agreement in principle (AIP) on the transfer of federal gas tax revenues under the new deal for cities and communities.

DISCUSSION:

In response to the Board's direction and to the signing of the AIP, this report introduces for discussion the proposal that the Board establish a Regional Transportation Investment Fund, and a Commission to advise the Board on the use of these monies for regional transportation priorities.

Funding

Key to the success of the recently adopted TravelChoices Strategy will be the establishment of stable and secure capital and operational funding. The signing of the AIP presents the CRD and its partners with a unique opportunity to secure a long term funding source for TravelChoices, the implementation of which directly addresses two of the AIP's three priority outcomes, specifically, the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions and cleaner air. Furthermore, under the AIP, public transit and transportation initiatives that encourage a reduction in car dependency are specifically identified as a priority investment category – exactly the focus of TravelChoices.

According to recent announcements, Capital Region municipalities and electoral areas are expected to receive in the order of \$4 million in the first year, with a similar amount available through a strategic priorities fund on an application basis. The announcement indicates that this revenue source will increase to \$25 million by 2010. TravelChoices needs a sustainable funding source and an annual investment of in the order of \$10 - 20 million to be effective.

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 put forward for discussion, a proposed, "*Canada, British Columbia, and Greater Vancouver Transportation Accord*". This proposed policy framework is intended to guide the federal new deal for cities and communities and also future funding from the province. If accepted by the federal government and the province, it could bring to the GVRD \$100 million dollars annually starting in 2008. This proposed 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. The second policy recommendation approved by the GVRD was that 100% of the gas tax rebate be used for transportation (Attachment A). This has been echoed in the AIP with the identification of the GVRD as a "Tier 3" jurisdiction, where the GVRD is eligible for up to 100% of the strategic priorities fund allocation.

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. To be effective, TravelChoices also needs this level of commitment.

A Proposed 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 project consultants Urban Systems, it became clear that at this time, perhaps as an interim step, a limited form of transportation coordination that focused on the allocation of new capital funding to priority projects consistent with TravelChoices, where the jurisdiction of existing transportation agencies and local governments remained unchanged, was a feasible option to begin early implementation of TravelChoices.

This report proposes that the Board consider establishing a "Regional Transportation Commission (RTC)" as a standing committee of the Board, modeled on the "Regional Water

Commission". The proposed RTC would have a similar mandate: to provide recommendations to the Board on the implementation of the TravelChoices Strategy and the disposition of the transportation investment fund. The RTC would also be charged with the task of attracting other funding from senior levels of government to secure this region's fair share of available transportation funding.

The RTC would need administrative support and input through an advisory committee. The advisory committee would include Board approved representatives of business, environmental, community and transportation stakeholders.

Administrative, Technical and Policy Support

Regional Planning Services (RPS) could provide support to the RTC through its current transportation planning mandate. 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.

Attachment B sets out a proposed establishment bylaw for the Transportation Investment Fund and Commission. Guidelines for the preparation of an administrative bylaw are included in Attachment C.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

That Regional Planning Committee recommend to the Board that it:

1. receive this report for information;
2. distribute the draft Regional Transportation Commission and Transportation Investment Fund Establishment Bylaw to the Regional Solicitor and member councils for review and comment; and,
3. give first priority to TravelChoices Strategy implementation, in the allocation of funds that may become available through the Federal Gas Tax rebate program.

RGS CONSISTENCY:

Yes. TravelChoices was prepared as an implementation initiative of the Regional Growth Strategy.

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.

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