

TO: Mayors' Council on Regional Transportation

FROM: Mike Buda, Executive Director, Mayors' Council Secretariat

DATE: February 20, 2025 (presented at March 13, 2025 meeting of the Mayors' Council)

SUBJECT: **2025 Mayors' Council Budget**

RECOMMENDATIONS:

The Public Affairs Committee recommends that the Mayors' Council on Regional Transportation:

1. Allocate \$965,253 towards projected 2025 expenditures, out of an estimated total 2025 budget envelope of \$1.831 million, leaving \$866,030 unallocated unless otherwise directed;
2. Direct the Chair and Vice-Chair to oversee the 2025 Mayors' Council budget, and report back on plans and results as needed to the Mayors' Council;
3. Determines that all costs and expenses approved by the Mayors' Council Executive Director, Chair or Vice-Chair are necessary for the Mayors' Council on Regional Transportation to perform its duties under the *South Coast British Columbia Transportation Authority Act*;
4. Release this report publicly upon approval;
5. Receive this report;

APPROVED – March 6, 2025

PURPOSE:

This report provides a brief summary of the Mayors' Council 2024 expenditures and proposes a 2025 budget to support the priorities in a 2025 workplan. Given the intergovernmental and personnel issues to be discussed, the report is presented in-camera, with to be released publicly upon approval.

BACKGROUND:

Each year, the Mayors' Council is allocated a budget ("budget allocation") from TransLink as set by [South Coast British Columbia Transportation Authority Act](#) (SCBCTA Act) at 0.07% of TransLink's gross revenues in the previous year. This annual budget allocation goes to fund:

- A. Mandated or basic costs that the Mayors' Council must budget for every year:
 1. Meeting expenses (facility costs, A/V services, food and refreshments, Recording Secretary)
 2. Members' meeting remuneration, which is [set by provincial legislation](#), and grows annually by Vancouver's CPI.
 3. Statutory responsibilities (costs related to research support, associated with oversight of long-term strategies, investment plans, and executive compensation).
- B. More discretionary expenses that are related to delivering on the Mayors' Council's broader aims and objectives around improving transit and transportation in Metro Vancouver:
 1. *Secretariat and office expenses:* The Mayors' Council has engaged the services of a full time Executive Director to oversee the operations of the Mayors' Council Secretariat and provide advice and support to the mayors. This position, along with a Coordinator position to support meetings and committees, represents an ongoing expense.

2. *Consulting support for strategic projects:* The Mayors' Council has, from time to time, engaged consultants to assist with its work, undertaking projects in past years that included the development and implementation of a high-profile provincial and federal election outreach and engagement strategy, and communications activities in support of investment plans. In 2024, this work, much more expansive than in 2020 and 2021, was focused on the Access for Everyone and provincial election public engagement campaign.
3. *Travel, accommodation and meals:* In 2024, limited travel was undertaken in support of the Access for Everyone campaign, particularly for meetings in Ottawa.
4. *Website:* The Mayors' Council website (www.mayorscouncil.ca) was established in 2014 to support the release of the 10-year plan. Modest management costs for running this site (server and software costs, hosting fees, etc.) were covered by TransLink for the first year and are now born by the Mayors' Council at a nominal cost.

At the beginning of each year, the Mayors' Council has adopted a strategic work plan to focus on its highest priorities in the coming year. While a range of secondary issues will also require the resources and time of the Mayors' Council through the year, it is these strategic priorities that drive its agenda and where energy and therefore budget allocation is focused.

The Mayors' Council 2024 Work Plan included the following key elements:

1. **Develop two Investment Plans:** The focus of 2024-25 is to develop and approve Investment Plans in mid-2024 and mid-2025 as a two-step approach to completing TransLink's post-pandemic financial recovery and deliver the first phase of the Access for Everyone Plan. The negotiation of a new funding agreement with the provincial government and securing new federal funding from the Canada Public Transit Fund will be required elements of this objective.
2. **Public affairs and advocacy:** Deliver a comprehensive public affairs strategy in 2023-24 to generate public and senior government support to fund and approve the Access for Everyone Plan and a new funding agreement. In 2024, the primary focus of the strategy is to secure commitments to AFE from all parties running in the provincial election. In addition, a National Transit Strategy will be organized, led by the Mayors' Council and in cooperation with out transit agencies and stakeholders.

DISCUSSION

2024 Budget

As set by the [South Coast British Columbia Transportation Authority Act](#) (SCBCTA Act), in 2024, the Mayors' Council budget allocation from TransLink was \$1.832 million, which was based on 0.07% of TransLink's gross revenue in the previous fiscal year.

The 2024 Mayors' Council budget allocated \$1,510,336 to projected expenditures (including \$575,000 allocated to deliver a public engagement campaign in the lead up to the provincial election, and the National Transit Summit) leaving \$322,549 unallocated. See Table 1 below for 2024 expenditures.

Table 1 shows that 2024 expenditures were \$12,295 under budget. This variance was driven by higher than anticipated member remuneration costs related to a higher cadence of meetings and workshops than originally anticipated (although these costs are lower than 2023), and the timing of public affairs expenditures reflecting mid-campaign revisions to the Access for Everyone campaign. A [report](#) on the Access for Everyone campaign was presented at the October 31, 2024 meeting of the Mayors' Council.

Mayors' Council remuneration reflects the fee set by provincial legislation (\$670 per day in 2024), multiplied by the number of full Mayors' Council meetings/workshops and committee meetings that are scheduled and members attend (most members participate on one committee). Generally, more meetings/workshops and committee meetings are required in the lead up to new Investment Plans (i.e. 2018, 2022, 2024 and 2025) to support the body's deliberation on priorities for transit expansion and the public and intergovernmental engagement campaigns to secure the necessary new funding, while fewer meetings and workshops are required in those years without significant new Investment Plans (i.e. 2019 to 2021). It is anticipated that Mayors' Council remuneration will be one-third lower in 2025 compared to 2023-24, and similar to levels in 2021 and 2022, given that Investment Plan deliberations are expected to be complete by the end of the first quarter 2025; the following Investment Plan is not expected until early-2028. All Mayors' Council remuneration and expenses are published in TransLink's annual *Financial Information Act Filing and Remuneration Report*.

Meeting support costs – facility rental, catering, A/V support – for meetings of the full Mayors' Council or Joint Meetings with the Board were slightly lower than anticipated given a higher proportion of videoconference-only Mayors' Council meetings than was projected (8 in-person meetings and 6 video conference meetings). Facility and A/V rental costs for these in-person meetings totalled \$49,300, while catering was \$3,389. These costs are similar whether the meeting is held at Metro Vancouver – as has been the practice since 2023 – or at TransLink. The Mayors' Council's 3 committees and 1 joint working group each meet 4-8 times annually via videoconference only and incur no meeting support costs.

The Mayors' Council used 82% of its allocation from TransLink in 2024, above the average of 65%, reflecting the resources dedicated to the Access for Everyone campaign during a provincial election.

TABLE 1: 2024 Budget Report

| Item | 2023 Actuals | 2024 Budget | 2024 Expenditures | \$ Variance, budget to actuals |
|---|-------------------------|------------------------|------------------------------|---|
| Total budget envelope from TransLink | \$1,492,953 | \$1,832,885 | \$1,832,885 | |
| Expenses: | | | | |
| Meeting costs (facilities, A/V, etc.) | \$70,091 | \$80,350 | \$54,385 | \$25,965 |
| Staff support (ED, Coordinator, Rec. Sec.) | \$373,803 | \$392,493 | \$396,665 | -\$4,172 |
| Consulting Services (research, legal) | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 |
| Member meeting remuneration | \$485,750 | \$420,753 | \$472,218 | -\$51,465 |
| Administrative costs (supplies, etc.) | \$153 | \$500 | \$2,483 | -\$1,983 |
| Travel and accommodations | \$40,994 | \$26,200 | \$23,975 | \$2,225 |
| Website management | \$8,348 | \$15,000 | \$707 | \$14,293 |
| Public Affairs | \$518,718 | \$575,040 | \$547,608 | \$27,432 |
| Total expenses: | \$1,497,857 | \$1,510,336 | \$1,498,041 | \$12,295 |
| Unallocated budget envelope: | -\$4,904 | \$322,549 | \$334,844 | |
| Expenses as % of total TransLink budget envelope | 100.3% | 82.4% | 81.7% | |

2025 Workplan and Budget

The Mayors’ Council’s budget allocation is based on TransLink 2024 gross revenue figure. The current estimate of the 2024 gross revenue figure is \$2.616 billion, which translates to a \$1.831 million maximum budget allocation to the Mayors’ Council.

The 2025 Budget is designed to support the following key elements of the 2025 Workplan:

1. **Access for Everyone Plan:** April 30, 2025 is targeted for approval of an Investment Plan that will address TransLink’s structural deficit and fund the first phase of Access for Everyone Plan. The lead up to this plan will require substantial engagement with the province, public and Mayors’ Council on the scope of new projects and services to be included in this first phase, as well as the development of a new funding agreement to address TransLink’s structural deficit and fund AFE.
2. **Public Engagement and Intergovernmental Relations:** The 2025 Investment Plan will require substantial engagement with the public and provincial and federal governments to generate the support required for final approval. The final, more limited phases of the Access for Everyone Campaign originally launched in 2023 will be delivered. With a federal election and likely change in government expected a focus on building a relationship with the new government will be important.

It is proposed that **\$965,253** be budgeted out of the \$1.831 million budget allocation to support the Mayors’ Council 2025 Work Plan. This is a **36% reduction** compared to 2024 expenditures, reflecting lower public affairs activities and fewer meetings following approval of the 2025 Investment Plan. Just **53%** of the maximum allocation from TransLink has been budgeted, well below the average of 60-65%.

TABLE 2: 2025 Proposed Budget

| Item | 2024 Expenditures | 2025 Budget | \$ Variance |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| Total budget envelope from TransLink | \$1,832,885 | \$1,831,283 | -\$1,602 |
| Expenses: | | | |
| Meeting costs (facilities, A/V, livestreaming) | \$54,385 | \$47,250 | -\$7,135 |
| Staff support (ED, Coordinator, Recording Sec.) | \$396,665 | \$408,531 | \$11,866 |
| Consulting Services (policy research, legal) | \$0 | \$71,000 | \$71,000 |
| Member meeting remuneration | \$472,218 | \$283,272 | -\$188,946 |
| Administrative costs (office supplies and equipment, agenda software, etc.) | \$2,483 | \$2,000 | -\$483 |
| Travel and accommodations | \$23,975 | \$6,000 | -\$17,975 |
| Website maintenance | \$707 | \$700 | -\$7 |
| Public affairs | \$547,608 | \$146,500 | -\$401,108 |
| Total expenses: | \$1,498,041 | \$965,253 | -\$532,788 |
| Unallocated budget envelope: | \$334,844 | \$866,030 | |
| Expenses as % of total TransLink budget envelope | 81.7% | 52.7% | |

The 2025 budget proposed in Table 2 assumes the following:

- Total meeting remuneration is projected to be **40% lower** in 2025, reflecting a fee of \$696 per day in 2025 ([as set out in legislation](#)) and 10 meetings and workshops of the full Mayors' Council, three delegates to the TransLink Board, plus 2-6 meetings of each of the three Mayors' Council committees and one joint working group.
- A **73% reduction** in public affairs costs, reflecting a more limited Access for Everyone campaign to engage governments, stakeholders and the public in advance of the 2025 Investment Plan and the 2025 federal election.
- Costs to organize 7 in-person meetings, including the use of Metro Vancouver's Boardroom, as well as A/V and livestreaming services.
- Consulting services to support public policy research related to the economic impacts of the Access for Everyone campaign, as well as governance-related research and analysis.
- Executive Director and Coordinator salary and benefits, and a contracted Recording Secretary retained for the meetings noted above.
- Limited travel and accommodation costs are anticipated to support federal advocacy.
- Website support costs to maintain current level of service.

As has been past practice, it is recommended that the Executive Director, and the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Mayors' Council be delegated authority to approve expenditures incurred on behalf of the Mayors' Council according to TransLink's existing financial control policies.

NEXT STEPS

Budget updates will be provided to the Mayors' Council as requested through the year. Proposals to allocate a portion of the currently unallocated budget envelope for new initiatives not assumed in this budget must first be reviewed by the Chair before being considered by the Mayors' Council.