

TransLink Governance Review



Appendix 1 - TransLink Governance History

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APPENDIX 1 - TRANSLINK GOVERNANCE HISTORY

1 CONTEXT

Transport governance as it has come to be understood in Metro Vancouver consists of the following functions:

- The planning, design, construction and operation of roads;
- The development, operation and financing of transit services, including bus services, SkyTrain, West Coast Express and HandyDart; and
- Transportation planning for individual services as well as the system as a whole, including programs to promote more efficient transportation choices than the solo use of the private auto.

Prior to the creation of TransLink in 1999, roads were the responsibility of provincial or local government, according to whether their functions served local or broader movement needs.

Originally, transit services were the responsibility of the BC Electric Company, which was nationalized by the Province in 1961 to form BC Hydro. In 1973 the Province's policy interests in respect to transit became the responsibility of the Bureau of Transit Services, with Hydro continuing to operate the system. In response to the growing recognition of the importance of transit in reaching regional planning goals as reflected in the Livable Region Plan in 1975, BC Hydro was relieved of its transit responsibilities in 1979 and the function was transferred to three entities:

- The Greater Vancouver Regional District (now Metro Vancouver), to be responsible for transit policy and planning;
- The Urban Transit Authority, a provincial crown corporation, to represent the financial and other interests of the Province in regional transit; and
- The Metro Transit Operating Company (MTOC), a separate crown corporation that took over the operational responsibilities of BC Hydro.

In 1983, the Province combined the Urban Transit Authority and MTOC into a new crown corporation, BC Transit, eliminated the role of the Greater Vancouver Regional District and established the Vancouver Regional Transit Commission comprising the mayor of Vancouver plus mayors of other municipalities identified in accordance with a regional formula set out in legislation.

2 CREATING OUR FUTURE, THE LIVABLE REGION STRATEGIC PLAN AND TRANSPORT 2021

In the late 1980s, the GVRD Board became concerned about the effects of rapid growth in the region, which had not been guided by regional plans for growth management or transit since these functions of the GVRD were eliminated by the Province in 1983. Under the leadership of then-Mayor Gordon Campbell of Vancouver as chair of the GVRD's Strategic Planning Committee, the GVRD conducted an extensive public consultation process that produced a comprehensive agenda for change known as **Creating Our Future**. The three elements of relevance to this discussion were:



- Development of an automobile-restrained regional transportation system;
- Achievement of control over transit by local government; and
- Development of a regional growth management plan based on the concept of a Green Zone that would identify and set aside land for which urban development would not be appropriate.

As work began on the regional growth management plan, the Province invited the GVRD and local municipalities to participate in a regional transportation planning process that became known as Transport 2021. In the event, the two projects were pursued in tandem and interactively, in recognition of the fact that land use decisions generate the need for transportation services and transportation services are an essential part of the locational attributes of land uses such as higher density development.

The resulting plans adopted in 1994 (Transport 2021) and 1996 (Livable Region Strategic Plan) were strongly mutually reinforcing:

- **Livable Region Strategic Plan:**
 1. Protect the Green Zone;
 2. Build complete communities;
 3. Achieve a compact metropolitan area; and
 4. Increase transportation choice.
- **Transport 2021** – Increase transportation choice by:
 1. Managing land use to reduce the need for transportation services;
 2. Managing transportation demand to encourage the choice of efficient modes and times of travel; and
 3. Managing the provision of transportation supply to support 1. and 2.

3 THE NEGOTIATIONS THAT LED TO THE CREATION OF TRANSLINK

As nicely integrated as the plans were, it was clear that the then-available forms of finance were insufficient to support the significant investment in transit, particularly the three new rapid transit lines that were a common element of both plans. While the Province was eager to build more rapid transit, it could not afford all three and challenged local government to consider a financial role. To this the GVRD responded that if local government funding were to be involved there should be commensurate changes to transit governance. The two parties agreed in 1997 to appoint negotiators to develop a solution for their consideration.

The local government objectives were:

1. **Financing** - to ensure, as a fundamental condition of any changes to transportation governance, that there was a stable and predictable means of financing transit and regionally significant roads and bridges through access by local government to revenue sources that are appropriate to the services being provided.
2. **Transit** - to put transit under local government control and provide a level of transit service by 2006 that will meet the objectives of the **Livable Region Strategic Plan** by:
 - More than doubling the bus transit service by 2006;

- Providing a wider range of transit services than currently available;
- Implementing the Broadway-Lougheed Highway-Coquitlam-New Westminster rapid transit system;
- Moving to implement a Richmond-Vancouver rapid transit line.

3. Roads

- To achieve re-formulation of the province's unilateral road declassification initiative;
- To establish an agreed network of roads and bridges that are regional in function and will meet the needs of the **Livable Region Strategic Plan**; and
- To develop a system of planning, constructing, maintaining, operating and financing this road network in a manner which recognizes that the network has many owners, including individual municipalities.

4. Transportation Demand Management

- To implement the regional transportation demand management strategy, beginning with a trip reduction service operated under GVRD supervision.

Although the provincial objectives were never made public, it appears that they included the following:

- Devolution of responsibility for transit;
- A means of building more rapid transit; and
- A cap on the provincial financial contribution to transit operations in the Vancouver region (about \$250 million per year at that point).

The negotiators produced an agreement in October 1997. After extensive consultation with municipalities and the public, the GVRD Board ratified the agreement in February 1998 and the Province ratified it shortly thereafter. Implementation legislation based on the agreement was passed in mid-1998 and the Greater Vancouver Transportation Authority opened for business on April 1, 1999. (The agreement is not described in detail here because the ultimate structure so closely followed the agreement and is described below).

4 **TRANSLINK I (GREATER VANCOUVER TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITY)**

TransLink's main functions were:

- Planning, development and operation of the regional transportation system, comprising transit services and the major road network, within the context of the Livable Region Strategic Plan and the region's air quality and economic objectives;
- Provision of transportation demand management programs; and
- Operation of the vehicle emission control program (AirCare).

TransLink's governance structure comprised a 15-member board of directors, of which 12 were locally-elected mayors and councillors appointed by the Board of the Greater Vancouver Regional District (now Metro Vancouver) in accordance with a formula for regional

representation set out in legislation, and 3 Provincial MLAs¹. The Board met in public except when certain defined confidential matters were under consideration.

TransLink was provided with the following revenue sources:

(i) Existing Sources

- Transit fares;
- Residential and commercial property taxes;
- Parking sales taxes;
- AirCare test fees (limited to recovering the cost of the AirCare program);
- Levies on BC Hydro residential electricity accounts; and
- Gasoline taxes (transferred from the Province).

(ii) New Sources

- Cost recovery tolls on improvements to parts of the Major Road Network;
- Charges on any owner or operator of a motor vehicle in the region (charges can be variable or different by specified class), as of October, 2001;
- A tax on non-residential parking lots by area and/or number of spaces;
- An additional local ad valorem tax of up to 21% on parking fees; and
- Taxes on properties within specified zones that benefit from nearby transportation stations or facilities that TransLink constructs or funds.

5 TRANSLINK II (SOUTH COAST BRITISH COLUMBIA TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITY)

Legislative amendments introduced in 2007 left TransLink's functions essentially unchanged; greater authority to purchase land in advance of need was made and provision was made for the agency to expand its transportation service area with the agreement of the areas affected, the GVRD and the Province.

The legislation altered the financial provisions governing TransLink by eliminating the parking tax and allowing TransLink to increase gasoline taxes if such increases were matched by increases in property taxes.

The biggest changes were in the governance structure:

- The Mayors' Council on Regional Transportation was established. It contains representatives from each of the 21 municipalities within the transportation service region, as well as Electoral Area 'A' and the Tsawwassen First Nation. It approves plans prepared by TransLink, including the transportation plan, regional funding and borrowing limits.
- TransLink's board of locally elected representatives appointed by Metro Vancouver was replaced by a board of independent directors responsible for overseeing the

¹ Although the legislation included provision for provincial members (MLAs or ministers) on the Board, these positions were not filled on a regular basis.

management of TransLink's affairs. They are appointed by the Mayor's Council from a list of qualified candidates identified through a Screening Panel's recruitment process.

- Oversight of TransLink's operations is provided by the TransLink Commissioner, who is appointed by the Mayors' Council. The Commissioner approves cash fare increases above inflation. The Commissioner also approves TransLink's plans for annual customer satisfaction surveys, its customer complaint process and any proposed sale of major assets. The Commissioner reports annually to the Mayors' Council on the Commissioner's decisions and the performance of TransLink.

Summary of Governance Milestones

Pre-1970 - Province/municipalities did roads and BC Electric did transit

1972 – BC Bureau of Transit Services established

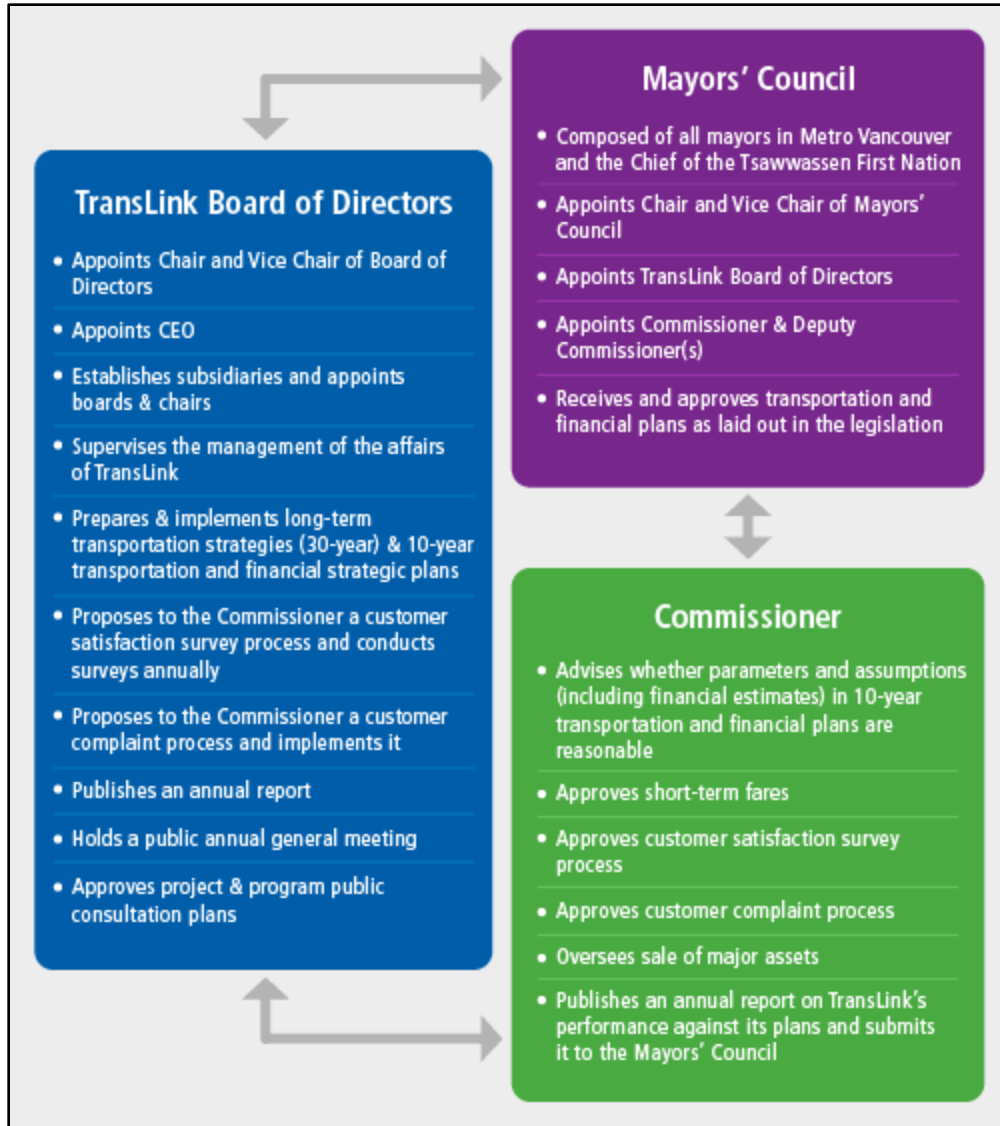
1975 - Livable Region Proposals identify key role of transit in livability and growth management

1979 – Urban Transit Authority, Metro Transit Operating Company, GVRD

1982 – BC Transit, Vancouver Regional Transit Commission

1999 – 'TransLink I' (major roads, transit, TDM, AirCare) under a board appointed by GVRD (now Metro)

2007 'TransLink II' (board of non-elected people; connections to the Metro board and growth management planning are severed)



Source: <http://www.translink.ca/en/About-Us/Governance-and-Board/Governance-Model.aspx>