

TransLink Governance Review



Appendix 2 – Roles and Relationships in Urban Transport Governance

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APPENDIX 2 – ROLES AND RELATIONSHIPS IN URBAN TRANSPORT GOVERNANCE

1 INSTITUTIONAL AND GOVERNANCE CONTEXT

A discussion on the roles and relationships of transportation governance requires the identification of the various transportation-related institutions and their linkages with each other. From the perspective of TransLink¹, the key institutions influencing its governance are local and senior government organizations. **Figure 1** provides a schematic representation of the institutional agencies and their relational links with TransLink, with the key agencies being:

- Local Municipalities
- Metro Vancouver (GVRD)
- Provincial Government (and indirectly the Transportation Investment Corporation); and
- Federal Government

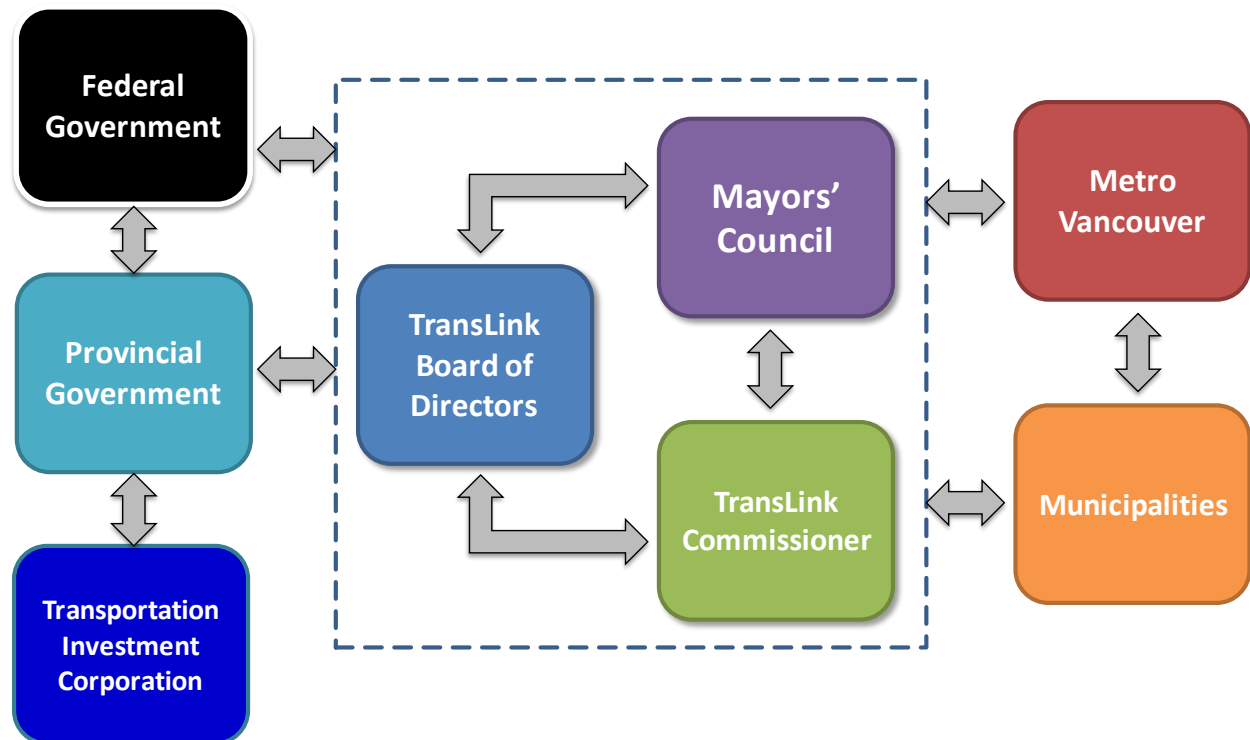


Figure 1. Institutional Context of Urban Transportation in the Greater Vancouver Region

¹ Formally known as "South Coast British Columbia Transportation Authority" (SCBCTA)

It is noted that the actual governance structure² of TransLink itself is comprised of three parts:

- TransLink Board of Directors;
- Mayors' Council; and
- TransLink Commissioner.

The legislative mandate and duties defining TransLink's governance range from appointing the head officer of TransLink (CEO) and boards and chairs of its subsidiaries, overseeing management of the affairs of TransLink, approving fare increases, and approval of plans as per legislative requirements.

The need for connection between environmental, social, economic domains is implicit in the mandate of TransLink, as well as the need to identify and implement adequate funding sources required to sustain development and operational plans. Furthermore, the transportation planning process requires alignment to the land use and development plans and policies of the region.

For these and other reasons, the decisions made at the governance level also require policy discussions and commitments related to issues such as the affordability of the transportation system to the residents of the region, which is a question related to "value for money" in relation to the transportation needs and rights of residents. Governance and funding are key matters that can either propel or hold back the potential of the region's transportation system.

*"The strategic planning process also showed that in order to position transit for the future we need to revise legislation, governance structures, and revenue constraints. In the past, these constraints have hindered transit's development; in the future, they will only further impede its success."*³ – John F. Meligrana, Associate Professor, Queens University

² Refer to "<http://www.translink.ca/en/About-Us/Governance-and-Board/Governance-Model.aspx>" for more details regarding TransLink's governance model

³ Meligrana, J.F. "Toward regional transportation governance: A case study of Greater Vancouver", *Transportation* 26: 359-380, 1999

2 THE HUMAN ELEMENT

Institutions are created for a purpose and mandated to accomplish the goals of that purpose. Practically, institutions are an aggregation of people—elected officials, professionals, staff, etc.—who direct and carry out the work of the institution. Therefore, a key principle is the need to recognize the human element behind institutions. Nobel Prize winning Professor of Economics, Douglass C. North, defined institutions from a human perspective as:

“...humanly devised constraints that structure political, economic and social interactions...with their major role in a society to reduce uncertainty by establishing a stable (but not necessarily efficient) structure to human interactions.”⁴

In their seminal work in the field of public choice, James Buchanan and Gordon Tullock introduced the analytical approach of methodological individualism that defines collective action (i.e. by governments) as based on the actions of individuals choosing from a group setting.⁵

From these definitions, institutions can be considered as the collective embodiment of the wishes of society (mandate), and the sequence of decisions (governance) and implementation (administration and operations) to achieve those wishes. Similarly, it can be considered that institutions start and end with human interactions. As the relationships between institutions matter, so do the individual relationships between the officers representing those institutions. It can then be concluded that governance, as much as it is about structure and authority, is equally about relationships—and specifically the human relationships—between the champions, leaders, and officers within and between the various organizations who play critical roles in the structure and context of institutional governance.

2.1 Importance of Champions and Culture

The critical role of champions and leaders at all levels of a governance structure, including the administrative layer, is then important in setting the standard or influencing the normalization of institutional behaviour, or what is commonly referred to as “corporate or organizational culture.” Organizational culture is the aggregate of individual behaviours, highly influenced by the organizational heads who set the tone of how things get done, how people are treated, and how relationships both internally and externally are established and maintained. It is the human element that ignites innovation and positive progress; conversely it is the same human element that can destroy relationships and erase any gains with one swipe.

An extreme, yet often-cited example highlighting the importance of organizational culture was documented during the investigations of NASA's organization in which symptoms of “groupthink” and a toxic organizational culture were considered key factors that led to the

⁴ North, C. D. “Institutions, Institutional Change and Economic Performance”, 1990 Cambridge University Press, 2011

⁵ Buchanan, J.M., Tullock, G. “*The Calculus of Consent*”, 1962 Ann Arbor: Liberty Fund Inc., 2004

Columbia Shuttle disaster.⁶ Post-disaster investigations identified difficulties in obtaining formal copies of documents regarding critical technical points and research findings, posing systemic issues of accountability. Issues of “illusions of unanimity,” “false consensus,” and “administrative evil” symbolized the overriding of known safety issues for the sake of political agendas and timelines. Therefore, it was not necessarily a technical matter that solely caused the Columbia disaster, but issues of dysfunctional human relationships that allowed a sequence of decisions resulting in the fatal outcome. Ultimately, the champions and leaders at NASA were accountable for this unfortunate event and the results of the investigation recommended that the leadership align their corporate culture to their mandate.

2.2 The Need to Protect Functional Decision Processes

Significant public decisions, no matter how technically based, typically reside in a political context, and rightly so, as decisions on major transportation infrastructure investments require discussions and deliberations beyond merely the (limited) technical knowledge and information that is presented by staff and experts. However, it is when political and professional judgement become intermixed, and not kept transparent and separate, can decisions go awry. When human desire (politics) conflicts with human understanding (professional judgement), the human element can instantly turn from a bridge to a barrier to positive progress. Indications of the tainting of professional decisions with political desires were noted during interviews of officials and politicians associated with TransLink, with one specific comment stating:

“Very often senior bureaucrats play more politics than politicians.”⁷

There is a need for the champions and leaders of institutions to establish a functional decision process that allows for the best information to be provided by qualified professionals to decision makers and the public to allow for healthy discussion, dialogue and debate. The more significant the decision, the more intense the debate should be. However, institutional champions must ensure the political aspects of decision-making do not influence or manipulate the technical process in any way. As a jar of oil and water can co-exist together yet stay separate, so too should the political and technical aspects of decision-making.

The transportation system is a complex web of demand and competition for “service and space,” and the challenge for transport institutions is the delivery of the efficient and cost-effective supply of “services and space.” Within this system, the cause of both the demands and problems of congestion and incidents is mainly human-related. Effective actions require an understanding of both the needs and limitations of the human users, to ensure solutions are appropriate and context-sensitive. It should then come as no surprise that a human-centric perspective in defining effective governance structures and processes is required, with the sober awareness that in the complex chain of decision making the human element can either help or hinder intended outcomes.

⁶ Bailey, L. “Toxic Cultures of Organizations: NASA and the Columbia Shuttle Disaster”, University of Southern Indiana, Indiana Journal of Political Science, Volume 12, 2009 | 2010, p.69

⁷ From interviews with key figures associated with TransLink in the past and present.

3 COLLABORATION ON COMMON GOALS AND CHALLENGES

Positive relationships are a pre-requisite to achieving the sustainability goals commonly adopted across all levels of governments. J. Herriman et al. argue for the need to realize the connection between good relationships and effective sustainability in local government, and suggest that a good deal of project success is contingent upon the development of positive relationships. The authors propose that “for sustainability outcomes to be met, we need to generate a shared understanding of situations and aspirations, and we can only do that through quality relationships...Relationships help extend our boundaries of care.”⁸

Formalization of relationships for the purposes of achieving common goals and intended outcomes is an exercise in collaboration. For institutions to collaborate on common goals is to extend themselves beyond their corporate walls and towards a holistic framework of action which allows them to align with sustainability principles and perceive solutions from a triple-bottom line of economic, social, and environmental well-being. The converse is a silo-approach that typically produces piece-meal solutions of limited effectiveness and can result in unintended consequences.

“Sustainability is not a ‘solitary game,’ nor can it be achieved in isolation as by definition sustainability is all encompassing.”⁹

3.1 Multi-Modal Transportation in Natural Urban Ecosystems

Cities are extremely open urban ecosystems that interact with other ecosystems both near and far. Urban regions are a natural extension and inclusion of neighbouring cities, such that citizens engage their urban environments in a “borderless” mindset. Solutions to urban problems lie in designing for and allowing ecosystems to work “naturally,” rather than merely opting for technological or “intervening” solutions. Furthermore, cookie-cutter solutions can result in limited success over the long-term. What is needed are consistent policy adaptations on a jurisdiction-by-jurisdiction basis.¹⁰

The endeavour towards sustainable cities is meaningless if other jurisdictions in the region trump any of the advances. As part of a regional ecosystem, each jurisdiction must not only do its part, but act in tandem and cooperation. The quality of relationships between jurisdictions within a shared region is essential in achieving sustainability.

In order to undertake the challenge in meeting the goals of sustainable transportation and the creation of livable communities, a team-approach is required amongst various institutional organizations that oversee functions such as of planning, transit operations, traffic management,

⁸ Herriman, J., Storey, H., Smith, P., Collier, G. “Working Relationships for Sustainability: Improving Work-Based Relationships in Local Government to Bring About Sustainability Goals”, Commonwealth Journal of Local Governance, Issue 10: December 2011- June 2012

⁹ “Regional Growth Strategy – Transportation & Mobility Discussion Paper”, Regional District of the Central Okanagan, July 2012.

¹⁰ “Pathways to Urban Sustainability: Research and Development on Urban Systems”, National Academic press, Washington, DC, 2010

road operations, emergency services, and capital planning in a coordinated manner. The complex nature of a multi-modal transportation system further necessitates the need for institutional coordination in all aspects ranging from strategic planning, to design, and the upkeep, operations and monitoring of the system. A multi-modal system within a multi-jurisdictional environment where the stewardship of transportation infrastructure and operations is spread across a number of institutions further exacerbates the challenge of providing a coordinated and efficient transport system for its various users. Without functional inter-agency collaboration, plans and intentions can fail before they start.

Complex initiatives such as Transport Demand Management (TDM) and Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) require increasingly high-degrees of coordination, especially with increasing numbers of institutional organizations partaking in regional-level coalitions. Regional and institutional collaborations are also essential in the creation of a “competitive economic ecosystem”, as a healthy economy provides a solid foundation from which sustainable transportation systems and stable funding can be established. Furthermore, through institutional coordination, a “unified voice” is advantageous when advocating and competing for limited federal government funding.

“Collaborative processes are needed to help transportation partners along with other stakeholders plan and work across modes, disciplines and traditional 'silos' to build effective multi-modal transportation solutions.”¹¹ - National Policy Consensus Center

“...most current problems are created by a failure to understand transportation as a system that interacts with most other activities in cities....Without Level I [holistic] planning, cities can seldom achieve satisfactory levels of efficiency and livability. The increasing efforts to achieve more sustainable forms of urban development will further increase the need for such planning.” - V.R. Vuchic, Professor, University of Pennsylvania¹²

3.2 Friction from Wicked Problems

The attempt to make decisions within a complex multi-dimensional environment with competing, and often, conflicting goals such as that of economic, social, and environmental well-being, is by no means an easy task. The setting of priorities within a purview of multiple interests is further hampered if priorities are not in a concerted alignment. Decisions as to what is affordable to a society where the economic divide is ever-increasing, need to be made at the same table to ensure the equity maximized in one domain does not reduce the equity in adjacent domains.

¹¹ “Transportation Collaboration in the States”, Prepared by National Policy Consensus Center for the Federal Highway Administration Office of Project Development and Environmental Review, June, 2006

¹² Vuchic, V.R. “Transportation for Livable Cities”, Center for Urban Policy Research, Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, New Brunswick, New Jersey, 1999, pp. 82-87.

3.2.1 Natural Friction Points

In simple terms a sustainable transportation system, whether at the regional scale or at the level of a specific facility or corridor, is one that meets mutually reinforcing economic, social and environmental objectives; it achieves financial and efficiency targets; adequately addresses users' needs; and is environmentally sound.

However, due to the multi-dimensional and interconnected nature of a framework based on the spheres of environment, society, and economy, a number of “friction” or conflict points can occur within such a system at the interface between spheres. Such is the case when economic growth is in conflict with environmental preservation. Although both are desired and beneficial to society, the political decision can be one of short-term vs. long-term goals which, more commonly than not, can be in conflict. Furthermore, conflicts within individual spheres can occur as in the case of the competitive funding between roads and transit towards the goal of increasing economic vitality and livability.

Likewise, these points of interaction can produce synergistic opportunities where greater value can be produced if such opportunities are identified and exploited. In a manner similar to the eastern concept of “yin and yang”, the combination of natural conflict and synergy between the various elements of a system, viewed in the lens of sustainability, is what produces the “correcting” of the system towards an optimum, balanced—and ultimately—sustainable state of equilibrium. However, without a thorough understanding of these issues and interactions, unintended consequences may arise from the implementation of well-intended, yet prematurely developed, policies.

In the challenge of complex decisions, there are usually no ways around the friction points of competing interests. And as friction increases, sparks can fly. It should therefore be expected that degrees of parochialism would naturally be expected from a body of local officials. The healthy approach to such “friction points” is to mutually acknowledge the existence of similar and competing interests to be dealt with fairly and respectfully through established rules of engagement regardless of how controversial the issues may be. A publically-open “debate and decide” approach should be expected with the level of debate expected to naturally increase in relation to the increased significance and importance of the decision at hand. The converse, being quick decisions on matters of utmost significance conducted in private, can indicate the possibility of political interference and symptoms of groupthink that may not serve the best interests of society.

3.2.2 Wicked Problems

“Wicked problem” is a phrase originally used in social planning to describe a problem that is difficult or impossible to solve because of incomplete, contradictory, and changing requirements that are often difficult to recognize. The concept was originally proposed by H. W. J. Rittel and M. M. Webber, both urban planners at the University of California, Berkeley, USA in 1973.¹³ The term ‘wicked’ is used, not in the sense of evil but rather its resistance to resolution.

¹³ Rittel, H.W.J., Webber, M.M. “Dilemmas in a General Theory of Planning”, Policy Sciences, Vol. 4, No. 2, June 1973, pp. 155–69.

Moreover, because of complex interdependencies, the effort to solve one aspect of a wicked problem may reveal or create other problems.¹⁴

In 2007, the Australian Public Service Commission outlined eight key features of “wicked problems”:¹⁵

1. Difficult to clearly define
2. Many interdependencies and multi-causal aspects
3. Proposed measures may have unforeseen effects
4. Problems may be unstable and continue evolving
5. No clear and correct solution
6. Problems are socially complex with many stakeholders
7. Responsibility stretches across many organisations
8. Solutions may require behavioural changes by citizens and stakeholder groups.

Compared to “tame” problems, which are generally simple and resolvable through traditional means, “wicked” policy problems are in the orders-of-magnitude more complex and require collaboration typically between numerous societal actors covering a range of disciplinary paradigms. “Wicked problems” are characterized by the need for multiple institutions and organizations to tackle together as the inherent causes of these problems go beyond the capacity of a single institution. Examples of policy problems with wicked tendencies are climate change, health, homelessness and urban and regional planning.

As a subset of urban and regional planning, urban transportation planning can be considered a “wicked problem” given the multi-modal nature of transportation choice and typical involvement of a number of institutions and operators covering multiple jurisdictions. The range of variables within the transportation domain, and inter-linkages to other domains within a holistic sustainability context, creates uncertainties that make the “wickedness” of transportation so apparently intractable.

Researchers Koppenjan & Klijn identified three different types of uncertainty: substantive, strategic, and institutional:¹⁶

- **Substantive Uncertainty:** related to gaps and conflicting understandings in the knowledge base, resulting in no or limited agreement or clear understanding of the nature of wicked problems.
- **Strategic Uncertainty:** related to the fact that many actors with different preferences are involved within the context of the problem, and the nature of their perspectives and interests makes interaction between actors unpredictable or in conflict.

¹⁴ "Tackling Wicked Problems: A Public Policy Perspective". Australian Public Service Commission. 25 October 2007.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Koppenjan, F.J.M. and Klijn, E.H. (2004). *Managing Uncertainties in Networks*. London: Routledge.

- **Institutional Uncertainty:** describes the fact that relevant actors are attached to a variety of organisational locations, networks and regulatory regimes, so that processes for reaching decisions concerning wicked problems are likely to be messy and uncoordinated.

Therefore, in order to address the “wicked problem” of transportation, an approach is to break down the problem into these three types of uncertainties in order to find tangible means of address such as:

- Increase the evidence base, improve the methods of analysis, and define more complete evaluation frameworks from which credible information and clear understanding can be had when facing difficult and complex decisions.
- Establishing an environment that encourages innovation and flexible approaches, allowing for consultation, open discussions and the sharing of ideas in order to hone-in towards functional strategies and solutions deliberated by all parties involved, including stakeholders and citizens.
- Identify and clearly state both the common and conflicting goals of all actors involved, with terms or rules of engagement defined to allow for respectful and productive discussion and debate.
- Accept that progress in overcoming “wicked problems” will likely be in the form of marginal gains established by a range of strategies vs. complete resolution by a “silver bullet.”

3.3 Collaboration by Design

In order to achieve intended goals within a complex and “wicked problem” such as urban transportation, collaboration has to be equally intentional. In fact, collaboration is a key tenet in a number of legislative acts established by the Province.

Paul Kadota’s recent summary¹⁷ of the evolution of regional governance in B.C. identifies the request from then Premier Mike Harcourt to Minister of Municipal Affairs Darlene Marzari, to investigate more unified win-win solutions between transportation planning and growth management spurred by debate amongst elected officials regarding priority between rapid transit developments within Greater Vancouver. Minister Marzari took an interest in the GVRD’s draft of the Livable Region Strategic Plan¹⁸ which influenced the establishment of the Growth Strategies Act in 1995. The regard for collaborative work was significant enough that Minister

¹⁷ Paul Kadota, “*Evolution of Regional Governance in British Columbia*”, Local Government Institute, University of Victoria, B.C., April 22, 2010.

¹⁸ “*Livable Region Strategic Plan*”. Strategic Planning Department, Greater Vancouver Regional District, Burnaby: GVRD, 1996. For the background on the development of the plan and Minister Marzari’s role, see Mike Harcourt, Ken Cameron and Sean Rossiter, “*City Making in Paradise: Nine Decisions that Saved Vancouver*”, Douglas & McIntyre, Vancouver, 2007, pp. 128-148.

Marzari originally had written within the Growth Strategies Statutes Amendment Act the following principles (British Columbia Ministry of Municipal Affairs, 1995):¹⁹

- **No new institutions** – rather than create a special purpose vehicle or a new level of government, existing local and regional government structures, systems, networks, and staff should be strengthened.
- **Voluntary participation** . . . most of the time – this recognizes that planning works best with voluntary buy-in, with the understanding that Provincial Cabinet has the clout to require regional strategies when local governments are unable to work cooperatively.
- **Compatibility** . . . a bias towards agreement – this identifies the need for official community plans and the regional growth strategy to be consistent and that the regional plan does not hold greater weight than other plans.
- **Dispute resolution** . . . as a last resort – this encourages parties to negotiate resolution of differences, but lays out a process for dispute if needed.
- **Broad-based consultation** . . . early and often – to hear from those most affected by regional and community plans on an ongoing basis. This involves municipalities, community groups, and other interested parties.
- **Regional diversity / regional flexibility** – any rules of the growth legislation must recognize that each region is different geographically with its own unique economy, objectives, and set of issues. Accommodating diversity will be a key principle.
- **Provincial direction and support** – expectations of the provincial government must be clear, free of hidden agendas.
- **Early provincial involvement** – inclusion of provincial ministries at the start and throughout a regionally led planning process should result in more effective regional growth strategies.
- **Provincial commitment** – regional growth strategies provide a link to provincial actions and investment decisions that are consistent with intentions of local government.²⁰

In summary, open, honest, respectful, and intentional collaboration led by institutional champions with support from senior levels of government are key principles of productive and progressive collaboration. Collaboration is founded both on common goals and shared challenges. However, collaboration is difficult to establish when institutions differ in their paradigm, or world-view, beliefs, and perceptions. The challenge then is to find the “common ground” in which collaborative relationships can be anchored.

¹⁹ Growth strategies legislation is contained in Part 25 of the Local Government Act.

²⁰ *ibid.* 17.

4 ENGAGING GOOD GOVERNANCE

The preceding chapters have identified a number of fundamental elements and concepts that should be considered in order for a region to begin to endeavour achieving a sustainable transportation system. Key considerations are the need for an integrated and multi-modal approach, regional coordination and inter-agency cooperatives, and a planning framework that encompasses the broad and strategic scope of sustainability, yet provides a sound process from which desired and intended outcomes can be realized.

The context within which these tenets of sustainable transportation are superimposed is the current institutional roles and arrangements, comprising provincial, regional, and municipal government agencies. Given the number of institutions involved in transportation in the Lower Mainland, one of the most significant issues, and the one requiring foremost attention, is that of transportation governance. A key question is whether the current institutional arrangements and roles can overcome current and future transportation issues, provide for stable and adequate funding, and establish, maintain, and develop a transportation system that supports the goals and ultimate vision of Metro Vancouver. If not, then the question is “what is the best institutional arrangement in order to achieve the region’s sustainability and livability goals?”, or at the very least “what does good governance look like?”

4.1 Good Governance

Governance is important as it represents the pinnacle of an organization. To illustrate its importance, the system of governance can perhaps be seen as resembling the rudder on a ship: a relatively small component, but absolutely critical to reaching a desired destination or set of outcomes, particularly over the longer term.

Governance can also be thought of as the “DNA” of a transportation system’s development and operations, and as such, establishing the kernel of an organization with sound principles and clear intentions will allow for the overall structure and culture to be similarly robust. Based on a partnership form, the strength of the structure lies in a foundation of trust, cooperation, equity, and the sharing of common goals. Furthermore, it will take champions and leadership at all levels to fortify this governance structure and ensure an unwavering vision towards the region’s sustainable transportation future.

The importance of good governance is stated by CCH of Australia as follows:

“Good governance is not an end in itself. The reason governance is important is that good governance helps an organisation achieve its objectives. On the other hand, poor governance can bring about the decline or even demise of an organisation.”²¹

Exactly what is meant by the word “governance?” One definition which is commonly cited in the literature is a definition from the Canada Institute on Governance:²²

²¹ CCH, “Public Sector Governance”, Australia, Sydney, 2004, p.10–101

²² Graham, J., Amos, B., Plumtre, T. “Principles for Good Governance in the 21st Century”, Policy Brief No. 15, Institute on Governance, Ottawa, August 2003.



“Governance is a process whereby societies or organizations make their important decisions, determine whom they involve in the process and how they render account.”

In Australia, public sector governance is defined as:²³

“...the set of responsibilities and practices, policies and procedures, exercised by an agency's executive, to provide strategic direction, ensure objectives are achieved, manage risks and use resources responsibly and with accountability.”

In raising the discussion for the need to improve the way regional transportation is governed in the Portland area, the City Club of Portland defined “Transportation Governance” as:²⁴

“Transportation governance includes how transportation decisions are made, the balance between local, state and federal jurisdictions, the sources of funding, and how projects are prioritized. It raises controversial issues like local control, public participation in decision making, appropriate transportation objectives and their relation to land use planning principles, taxation and social equity.”

In applying these definitions of governance, it is helpful to define more specifically the dimensions that constitute “good governance.

4.1.1 Dimensions of Governance

Within the context of transportation, there are several dimensions of governance that can be considered. From interviews of key people involved with TransLink and review of literature on governance, the various dimensions of governance may substantially be captured in six criteria:

- **Accountability** - Degree to which the governance structure has political, administrative, environmental and social accountability linkages
- **Transparency** - Accessibility of information to those affected by decisions and visibility of governance process
- **Responsiveness** - Extent of citizen orientation, public friendliness in decision-making and redress if needed
- **Clarity of Purpose** - Degree to which the prime agency understands and acts on its direct and indirect purposes
- **Advocacy** - Speaking out, leading and encouraging public dialogue on major relevant public policy issues
- **Productive Relationships** - Relative strength of relationships and recognition of dependencies with other entities

²³ “Implementation of Programme and Policy Initiatives: Making Implementation Matter, Better Practice Guide”, ANAO and Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra, 2006, p.13.

²⁴ “Moving Forward: A Better Way to Govern Regional Transportation”, City Club of Portland Bulletin, Vol. 96, No. 32, March 5, 2010.

Collectively these may be seen as reflecting the overall “fitness for purpose” of the governance system or framework. It may be helpful to see these as a series of interlocking gears in a “Governance machine” that ideally are all fully engaged, functional and synchronized for optimum results (**Figure 2**).



Figure 2. The “Gears of Governance”

4.2 Defining Appropriate Roles

Governance models identify the key actors and individuals that represent constituents, provide expertise and administration, or are charged to implement actions to reach intended goals and objectives. Defining the roles for each of these players is then crucial in defining both the structure and process of governance, establishing clear leadership, and clarifying lines of accountability.

4.2.1 Governance Structure and Roles

From discussions with local experts and a review of international best practices through interviews by the consulting team, the following optimal “division of labour” among levels of governance was identified between the various elements of a governance system:

- Strategic decision-making on policies, plans, funding and relationships to broader plans and public purposes is the responsibility of elected representatives;
- Management policy is the responsibility of persons and/or bodies skilled in management, administration, service provision and financial control, including the selection of service delivery modes and structures; and
- Implementation is the responsibility of staff or contractors hired and paid for this purpose.

Figure 3 provides a schematic of these levels of governance.

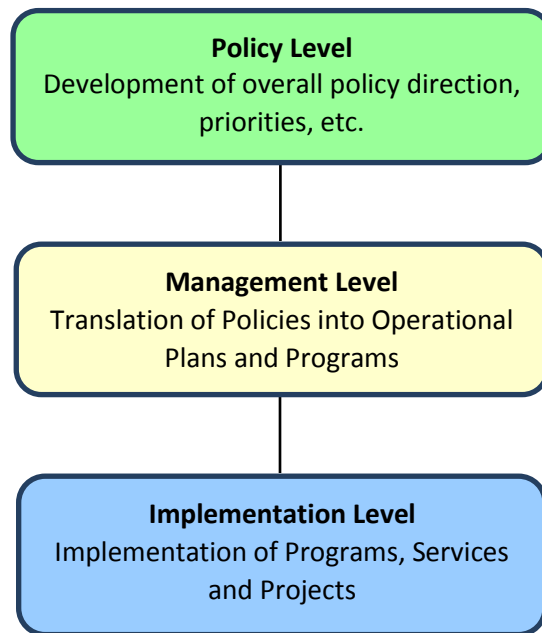


Figure 3. Levels of Governance

From the interviews, a clear separation between policy and administration (management and implementation) was noted as a requirement relating to defining roles that are clear and accountable, with the board of a transport agency focused on policy and holding administration accountable through metrics related to the achievement of policy objectives. Specifically, in relation to decisions that are of policy-nature, it was felt that only those that are elected should be able to make decisions that are related to overall direction, funding, and priority-setting. As elected representatives of their constituents, they are charged by the people to make value-based decisions and would be held accountable for their decisions by the people they represent.

Having professional voices and opinions at the “decision table” to provide stability and clarity in factual matters was also considered valuable, and the challenge in combining both elected accountability with expert leadership can be considered a key issue should TransLink’s governance structure be revisited.

Regardless of the structure and roles of governance, determining “who drives, who navigates, who pays for gas, and who buys the car” will need to be clarified. On matters of funding, this may raise the need to involve senior levels of government and other external partners in the overall governance structure.

4.2.2 External Partner Roles

As illustrated earlier in **Figure 1**, there are a number of stakeholders external to TransLink that have special relationships or influence that affect TransLink’s overall governance process. Considered, for all intents and purposes, as external partners to TransLink, local governments (including Metro Vancouver), the provincial government, and federal government all play key

roles in TransLink's governance. These transport partners directly influence TransLink's mandate and direction (Province), funding (local, provincial, and federal governments), and implementation (provincial and local governments).

Historically, significant capital projects such as rapid transit, highways, and water crossings tend to test the roles and relationships between partnering organizations world-wide. Within the Lower Mainland, the coordination of transportation planning has varied in roles and processes, specifically in regard to the identification and priority of major capital infrastructure investments. During interviews with local experts and transport agencies in other regions, it was clear that commitment to more formal definitions of roles, responsibilities, and accountabilities would help to reduce the conflicts that arise in defining, planning, and prioritization of major infrastructure projects. Research on good governance conducted by the Australian National Audit Office concluded that:

"Relationships with stakeholders need to be reflected formally in governance structures to provide adequate communication flows and manage possible conflicts of interest".²⁵

Furthermore, the Australian government advocates the principle of "whole-of-government," which it states is key to its current and future governance challenges and connection to the global community:

"Whole of government denotes public service agencies working across portfolio boundaries to achieve a shared goal and an integrated government response to particular issues. Approaches can be formal and informal. They can focus on policy development, programme management and service delivery... Whole of government is the public administration of the future. It offers links and connections to the global community of ideas, knowledge and understanding essential for the APS to face the governance challenges of the 21st century. It extols team-based approaches to solving the wicked problems that are endemic to public policy."²⁶

4.3 Formalizing and Maintaining Productive Relationships

Although desired outcomes can be achieved within ad-hoc relationships, the formalization of relationships can provide a number of benefits. These include, but are not limited to:²⁷

- **Clarity:** of mandate and purpose, and the identification of roles, responsibilities, and accountabilities of all parties involved.

²⁵ "Public Sector Governance, Volumes 1 & 2: Better Practice Guide", ANAO, Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra, 2003, p. 17.

²⁶ "The Australian Government Business Process Interoperability Framework", AGIMO, Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra, 2007, p. 12.

²⁷ Lim, C., Rock, C. "Sustainable Transportation Governance in the Central Okanagan: Discussion Paper", City of Kelowna, October 2010.

- **Positive relations:** amiable cooperation between various public agencies and private sector in varying degrees of partnership, and healthy engagement of the public, including increased public confidence in agencies.
- **Co-operative synergies:** efficiencies in the sharing of resources, expertise, information, and available funding.
- **Increased funding:** the potential to combine funding to attract more funding from other levels of government or other sources.
- **Dedicated leadership:** identification of dedicated champions and leaders at all levels.

4.3.1 Examples of Productive Relationships

A study of transportation agencies across North America was conducted for the Institute of Transportation Engineers in 2001 to investigate best practices in organizational structures. Some of the innovative structures involved multi-agency co-operatives that adopted unique governance and organizational structures. Among the findings, examples of success revolved around clear and dedicated leadership and intentional inter-agency relationship-building. The study identified some of the practices and benefits of investing in productive inter-agency relationships from regions such as Maricopa County (MAG Regional Council), Houston Texas (TranStar), and New York/New Jersey/Connecticut (TRANSCOM). These were listed as follows:²⁸

Leadership and Decision-Making

- **Importance of a Champion** – Political and senior-level government champions were essential for progressive change. As an example, Bob Lanier, Mayor of Houston, championed the vision of TranStar through to establishment, engaged personnel, hired the first TranStar staff through the City, and protected funds for TranStar within the City's budget.
- **Leadership by Top-Level Executives** – Motivated leaders with authority to enact decisions removed debilitating authorization requirements and allowed for efficient decision-to-action processes.
- **Strong and Effective Policy Guidance** – The establishment of policies, with specific linkages to goals and performance measures, were found to be central in drafting partnership agreements.
- **Decision Making by Consensus** – Although formal agreements were established that included voting protocols, consensus decision was sought in most jurisdictions, which was found to reduce internal conflicts and provide for a stronger and complete team-approach.

Approval and Support

- **Public Support Through Engagement** – Extensive consultative process was found to be key in approvals and funding support.

²⁸ "Organizing for Regional Transportation Operations: An Executive Guide", Booz Allen & Hamilton, for Federal Highway Administration & Institute of Transportation Engineers, FHWA-OP-01-137, July 2001.

- **Private Partnership Support** – Strong contributions and support by the business community proved effective in advocating change.
- **Performance Measures and Evaluation Criteria** – Monitoring and evaluation of progress provided processes of accountability that established understandable and demonstrated progress. In some jurisdictions, this was required by legislation.
- **Interlocal Agreements** – The creation of contractual agreements can provide clarity and confidence concerning the primary functions of the organization, staffing, budgeting procedures, facility ownership rights, and the division of responsibilities and funding commitments among parties.

Co-operation and Benefits By Design

- **Physical Co-location** – Employees from different agencies working side-by-side on a regular basis created the groundwork for positive relationships that extended between their respective agencies.
- **Reduced Cost of Information Sharing** – Opportunities to share resources and funds to compile and distribute information in a standardised manner reduced overall costs to the public.
- **Sharing of Resources and Expertise** – Sharing of resources and staff contributed to overall public dollar cost-savings and the proliferation of best practices.
- **Leverage Partner Strengths** - In framing the partnership, TranStar founders sought to leverage the strengths of each partner while balancing responsibilities equitably, creating buy-in and interdependency among the partners.
- **Shared Responsibilities and Funding** – When TxDOT experienced funding shortfalls for operations of its automated vehicle identification project, the TranStar partners provided the additional funding necessary to keep the project operational as project benefits were mutually shared among jurisdictions.

4.3.2 Instruments of Formal Arrangements

In order to establish formal partnership arrangements, written protocols or instruments are required to formally establish these arrangements. Examples of common formal instruments are:

- Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs)
- Letters of expectations
- Binding agreements
- Legislation

The contents of these protocol documents can include elements such as the identification of all parties involved, their roles, responsibilities and accountabilities, clarity of purpose and mandate, meeting and decision making protocols, expectations regarding capacity and implementation levels, and protocols framing responsiveness and communications.

Although these instruments provide a degree of clarity and accountability, as was established in Chapter 2, these institutional arrangements are comprised of people working together. An element of human interaction in a meaningful context can aid in developing resilient relationships based on mutual trust, shared ownership, and shared success.

4.4 Monitoring and Evaluation: the Quantification of Accountability

Accountability was identified as one of the main issues in relation to the current governance structure of TransLink. However, what does it mean to be accountable and what is the process involved in ensuring accountability? Simply, to be accountable can be stated as being held to the expected outcomes charged upon an individual or agency. The resulting consequences can vary in relation to the severity of the outcome.

Outcomes therefore require accounting, or assessment based on stated or accepted standards. The approach, method, and resources expended in the assessment of outcomes are therefore important elements in the process of accountability. In transportation, this concept is commonly defined as “monitoring and evaluation.”

The establishment of policy is one of the main responsibilities of decision makers at the highest level of governance. The significance of policies and their guidance within an organization is demonstrated in the investment of public funds. Pro-transit policies can create an environment where billions of dollars are funneled to transit-related infrastructure and services. Therefore, the accountability of those decisions requires an accounting of the progress made by the dollars spent.

Typically, the normalized measure of progress in the investment in specific modes is “mode share,” and “transit mode share”—as a result of the significance of the levels of investments made in transit—has become common nomenclature in public discussions and debates concerning the priorities, costs, and affordability of transportation decisions. Targets of mode share can be established and used to hold to account the decision makers at the helm of transportation agencies. It is critical then how mode share is measured and furthermore, the methodologies used, the quality of measurements (i.e. data) and abilities/capacity (expertise), and the degree of transparency and independence under which the results were determined.

The process of monitoring and evaluation is a tedious but necessary process required to complete the “full circle” of accountability within a transportation planning environment. This concept should be no more foreign to the planning process than the balancing of books is required in generally accepted accounting principles (GAAP). Monitoring and evaluation not only provides the verification of outcomes, but conducted on a consistent basis, allows for correction of implementation to increase the likelihood of achieving desired outcomes. At the very least, the resulting evidence can be used in post-mortem planning studies to investigate and learn from sub-optimal results.

Therefore with sound monitoring and evaluation, accountability can be strengthened, and the possibility of good governance becomes more certain.