

To Mayor and Council

## **Sea to Sky Road Congestion Problems/Solutions (and impact on our GHG reduction strategies)**

Adding to the discussion:

As experienced by all of us in Whistler and commented on by many on social media, the past 3 weeks have been somewhat of an adventure on our roads. As a resident of Cheakamus Crossing, frequently commuting to the Village as Village Host and Ski Instructor, and frequent commuter to the Lower mainland, and having experienced numerous multi hour commutes, (car and bus), these are my observations.

To me, the problem is largely passenger vehicle volume issue, made worse by the heavy snowfall. Anecdotally, my view of the Village Stroll as a Village Host indicates we have many more non-skier day visitors to Whistler now, particularly on weekends as opposed to 3 or 4 years ago. Added to the regular ski visitors (perhaps even more with the reduced season ticket pricing), and all the snow has made it a much more difficult travel situation. I don't think it's going to get any better in the future if we continue with the way it is now.

### **Suggestions:**

Put aside the 4 lane highway expansion and traffic circle suggestions which don't fit with an aggressive GHG reduction push, not to mention the capital costs and time frame. Likewise, the high-speed train pitches, which would be very expensive and take years to make happen.

#### **1. Highway Maintenance Standards:**

- a. Raise the highway maintenance standards to something beyond what is perceived to be a secondary highway that happens to run through our Village standard.
- b. Raise the level of cooperative relationship between the Muni and the Ministry of Transportation Highway relating to local maintenance issues, snow clearing, and summer paving. The relationship should be an ongoing, proactive joint discussion relationship, not the Muni being beholden to the whims of the Province.

2. **Snow Tire Requirements:** Raise the winter tire requirements to full Snow level, with much more enforcement and communication. Removing the vehicles with marginal tires that struggle with the snow conditions will improve traffic flow and reduce volume.

3. **Regional Transit:** (already well discussed but needs to happen)

4. **Local Transit:** Continue to improve and work to offer more frequent and perhaps weekend free service. (Not that it helps during traffic gridlock as happened to me on numerous occasions I would prefer to be in a warm car that at a bus stop for extended periods of time waiting in a snow storm for a traffic impeded bus)

5. **Aggressive shift from passenger car to bus transport from the Lower Mainland:** Implement a very aggressive strategy to change the paradigm of getting to Whistler from a passenger car mode to a bus mode.

- a. Aggressive bus transportation options for the lower mainland, heaving marketed and bundled into accommodation, skiday and season passes, and sightseeing ticket sales.
- b. Bus pickup and park and ride locations in convenient locations around the lower mainland. Downtown, North Van, PNE, Surrey, Squamish etc.

6. **Congestion toll:** As is done in downtown Singapore and London, and with National Park daily passes, implement a Sea to Sky Corridor congestion toll that applies to all vehicles registered outside of the Sea to Sky Corridor. Use a system like the new provincial park pass registration, requiring all non-Sea to Sky passenger vehicles to purchase a day pass for each day in the corridor. Enforcement via the current parking lot licence plate scanner technology (assuming ICBC will allow access to licence plate registration addresses). A \$5 or \$10 per day pass revenue could be used to supplement the Regional Transit and the commercial bus options.

These suggestions are largely out of the jurisdiction of the Municipality of Whistler, but as the Municipality has the most at stake, we need to take the lead, to the degree we can influence. As this gets into Provincial Government jurisdiction, Regional Districts, Vail, bus companies, ICBC, RCMP, etc, etc and the very thorny issues of taxes and tolls, ideally a very senior individual/team should be tasked by the provincial government to work with all parties to implement the solutions.

Whether this is driven by the ongoing road/traffic issues, or the bigger picture GHG reduction strategies, a BOLD gesture at the Provincial Government level to try to do something different involving multiple jurisdictions is really needed.

Thanks and Regards

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