

# TransLink – Transport 2050 Submission

May 2020



In Partnership With:

DOS Logo	RMOW Logo	VOP Logo
Lil'wat Logo	Squamish Nation Logo	



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## Who we are

Located in southwestern BC, the Squamish-Lillooet Regional District (SLRD) is a local government federation consisting of four member municipalities (District of Lillooet, Village of Pemberton, Resort Municipality of Whistler, District of Squamish) and four unincorporated rural Electoral Areas (A, B, C, D). The SLRD is found within the traditional territories of the Líl'wat, Squamish and St'at'imc Nations.

Headquartered in Pemberton, BC, which is the approximate geographic centre of the region, the SLRD delivers a range of local, sub-regional and regional services to approximately 42,665 residents.

## Our Transit Vision

Sea to Sky communities are connected by efficient local and regional public transit networks that serve our unique climate, culture, and economy. Our transit system is safe, convenient, accessible, and reliable for residents and visitors of all ages and abilities.

## Our Transport 2050 Ideas

To make our vision a reality, we are proposing the following ideas, that we would like to see become part of the Transport 2050 strategy.

1. A reliable, convenient, highly integrated, high volume interregional transit service between Sea to Sky and Metro Vancouver is required to provide personal mobility.
2. A focus on the future of the interregional public transit system being carbon free.
3. Expansion of Sea to Sky Highway 99 should only be considered after all other mobility options have been implemented, and expansion should only be for transit lanes.
4. Focus on integrating mode shift targets within the plan as a tool to measure success.
5. Open to all modes of interregional public transit, including rail.
6. Require First Nations integration and involvement, including legislative changes to enable legal participation.
7. Supportive of new mobility pricing models, including the S2S being a potential test locale for any future Provincial or Metro Vancouver initiatives.

## **Idea 1: A reliable, convenient, highly integrated, high volume interregional transit service between Sea to Sky and Metro Vancouver is required to provide improved personal mobility.**

### **Summary:**

Connecting communities along the Sea to Sky Corridor with Metro Vancouver has been identified as a key priority by all Sea to Sky local governments through the Sea to Sky Transit Future Plan and the Sea to Sky Corridor Regional Transit Study. The Sea to Sky region needs a reliable, convenient, highly integrated, high volume interregional transit service between Sea to Sky and Metro Vancouver to improve personal mobility.

### **Why:**

- Considerable personal vehicle traffic congestion negatively affecting the social, environmental and economic and physical well-being of the region;
- Employment and labour market attraction and retention issues related to limited transportation options for current or prospective Sea to Sky residents who do not own a personal automobile;
- Impacts to social and physical well-being for Sea to Sky residents who are unable to drive and may need to rely on regional/interregional public transit to travel to medical care facilities beyond their place of residence;
- Impacts to public safety related to increased time spent driving and increased road congestion;
- Significant detrimental effects on the physical environment and an increased source of air pollution contributing to climate change.

### **Required for Implementation:**

Based on market demand analysis and public consultation feedback carried out through the Sea to Sky Regional/Interregional Transit Study, there is the potential for substantial regional/interregional public transit ridership along the Sea to Sky Corridor, with an estimated 575 average daily rides. In the short-term, eight buses and 15,100 annual service hours would be required to provide six round trips on weekdays and four round trips on weekend days along the segment between Whistler, Squamish, and Vancouver, and an additional two daily round trips on the segment between the Pemberton area and Whistler.

The local government partners and the Province must determine and confirm a stable, reliable and equitable source of funding for the service.

## **Idea 2: A focus on the future of the Interregional Public Transit System being Carbon Free**

### **Summary:**

Climate Change has been identified by all Sea to Sky local governments as an issue of strategic importance and concern. The Sea to Sky Region 's proposed regional/interregional transit service inherently seeks to address the Climate Change challenge through a reduced reliance on personal automobiles; however, our region further desires greater action and more meaningful commitments. The proposed Sea to Sky Regional Transit system aims to utilize carbon free, sustainable energy sources to power the vehicles and transit modes necessary to make this service a reality.

### **Why:**

- Help mitigate the impacts from climate change;
- Become less reliant on an expensive, volatile and polluting energy sources;
- Help the Region, Province and Country achieve climate change mitigation and emission reduction targets.

### **Required for Implementation:**

- Accelerate the introduction of low-carbon and carbon free vehicles through fostering regional/provincial public-private collaborations to encourage adoption of electric vehicles;
- Revisit transportation funding formulas to allocate more resources toward vehicles employing carbon-free technologies;
- Remove fuel tax exemptions for public transit vehicles (as may apply);
- Upgrade capital infrastructure at bus depots and terminals to ensure sufficient electricity or alternative energy capacity for charging/powering new carbon-free bus fleets;
- Update public procurement processes to prioritize and incentivise carbon-free vehicle technologies;
- Provide research, development and deployment assistance for new carbon-free modes and services.

### **Idea 3: Expansion of Sea to Sky Highway 99 should only be considered after all other mobility options have been implemented, and expansion should only be for transit lanes.**

#### Summary:

Numerous studies have shown that adding new road and highway lanes encourages more people to drive instead of using public transit or other forms of mobility, thus creating more congestion. The expansion of Sea to Sky Highway 99 would come at a tremendous financial cost and would not, at least in the long-term, relieve the traffic congestion already being experienced on many sections of the highway. Instead, the focus must be on reducing the amount of personal or single-occupancy vehicles on the highway through mode shift strategies, new mobility options, and demand-management planning. In the long-term, once new mobility options have been implemented and proven successful, Sea to Sky local governments would support highway expansion, but only to accommodate public transit and/or high-occupancy vehicles.

#### Why:

- Highway expansion incentivizes personal automobile use over public transit use, especially in the short-term;
- Highway expansion comes at a tremendous economic cost compared to public transit and other mode shift programs;
- Critical wildlife habitat and related environmental issues can be negatively impacted by unnecessary highway expansion;

#### Required for Implementation:

- Develop additional research and study materials specific to Sea-to-Sky Highway 99 describing a cost-benefit analysis respecting highway expansion vis a vis transit expansion;
- Engage key provincial officials and decision makers to reinforce the approach of prioritizing regional public transit along the Sea-to-Sky Highway 99 corridor in place of highway expansion;
- Intensively promote alternatives, particularly public transit, as a critical tool of demand management respecting personal automobile use of the highway encouraging drivers to make the choice to change transportation modes;
- Ensure planners and policy makers in Sea-to-Sky communities continue to employ and expand on policies of smart growth and walkable communities, incentivizing public transit use as a superior option to the personal automobile.

## **Idea 4: Focus on integrating Mode Shift Targets within the Plan as a tool to measure success.**

### **Summary:**

Every plan will benefit from achievable targets and goals as tools to measure progress and gauge the success of plan implementation. Essentially all transportation plans will seek to increase mode shifts as a key priority, as mode shifts distribute the transportation load more evenly across communities, thereby easing demand on high-use, high-polluting and congesting modes such as with personal vehicles. Attempting to complete mode shifts over short time periods is difficult to achieve and ill advisable as it may lead to missing targets and diminished credence. Instead, mode shifts must be achieved incrementally over longer timelines. Such incremental achievement is best accomplished by setting realistic targets and milestones that once hit can be used to gauge the success of the plan, and spur continuous adoption and evolution of the plan.

### **Why:**

- Offers an incentive for continued plan adoption while spurring various phases of plan evolution, development and growth;
- Provides data, statistics and newsworthy stories that can be reported on to the public as tools to celebrate success thereby continuing to drive mode shift systems;
- Allows for policy makers and transportation planners to be able to report back to decision making and governance bodies on the effectiveness of the plan.

### **Required for Implementation:**

- Establishment of baseline data describing the historical and current distribution of transportation modes within the Sea-to-Sky Corridor and how such modes interact with the data observed in Metro Vancouver;
- Planners, policy makers, key staff and elected officials to develop and agree upon both an effective distribution of transportation modes, and the strategies and policies that will be required to effect behavioural change facilitating a shift toward such a modal distribution while maintaining consistency with plans and policy established for Metro Vancouver;
- Reasonable, achievable targets to be developed for the short, medium- and long-term timelines as described in the plan.

## **Idea 5: Open to All Modes of interregional public transit, including rail.**

### **Summary:**

Transportation supply must not be confined to a single mode, and must be comprised of a varied distribution of transportation modes. While Sea-to-Sky communities have stressed the importance and priority of a regional/interregional publicly funded bus service linking the Sea-to-Sky corridor with Metro Vancouver, a publicly funded rail service between Metro Vancouver and the Sea-to-Sky corridor is also strongly supported and must not be overlooked as an important component in the distribution of transit modes.

### **Why:**

- Regional rail service provides a level of comfort that can exceed that offered by private vehicles, shared vehicles and buses. In general, trains offer passengers more seating space and allow greater freedom of movement (within and between cars), which can make travel time more productive and relaxing;
- Passenger rail eases the transportation burden on the region's highway system, extending highway life and reducing long-term highway maintenance costs;
- Passenger rail is generally considered to be one of the safest modes of transportation, improving public safety and reducing medical service and emergency response costs;
- Passenger rail compliments the ongoing development and revitalization of the urban and semi-urban cores, particularly in Vancouver which has retained a central train station.

### **Required for Implementation:**

- As the rail linkage between Metro Vancouver and the Sea-to-Sky corridor would rely on shared infrastructure with the freight-rail industry, policy makers, local government staff, transportation planners and elected officials would need to make a concerted, coordinated effort to engage with freight rail operators to begin to explore whether there would be any available openings in rail schedules to facilitate and accommodate passenger rail routes during key commuting periods that would allow for a passenger rail system to have any chance of success.
- In addition to exploring track availability, planners and policy makers would need to determine whether freight-rail operators could provide track usage at realistic fees and costs that would enable passenger rail operators to charge fares that would be competitive and aligned with costs associated with other transportation modes.
- Through enhanced community and capital asset planning efforts, Sea-to-Sky corridor local governments would need to consider impacts to their respective community cores to both address and facilitate revitalization activity that would coincide with rail and station infrastructure.

## **Idea 6: Require First Nations integration and involvement, including legislative changes to enable legal participation.**

### **Summary:**

Collaboration with and continued development and improvement of relationships with First Nations is a fundamental goal of every Sea-to-Sky community and local government. Including First Nations within transportation planning and governance is a critical component of the ongoing relationship building effort. Current legislative barriers prevent First Nations from participating as full and equal participants in transportation planning activities, and Sea-to-Sky local governments strongly request legislative amendments to include First Nations within all transportation planning and governance matters.

### **Why:**

- Full and equal participation by First Nations on transportation planning and governance matters is a basic and fundamental right. First Nations must not be precluded from participating in actions and decisions that have a profound and direct impact upon their well-being and livelihoods.
- First Nations in the Sea-to-Sky corridor are currently underserved with respect to transportation options. The provision of public transit and other modes of transportation to all members of society, including First Nations, will help continue to increase demand for modes outside of private vehicles, thereby escalating and perpetuating mode shifts.
- Many First Nation members are without access to any safe interregional transportation. Regional transit systems will connect those members in a safe and consistent way to amenities and services.
- First Nations communities in both the Sea-to-Sky Corridor and Metro Vancouver are closely linked to one another, in addition to being dependent on the amenities and services that each region offers. Enhancing the inclusion of First Nations within the transportation planning and governance efforts affecting these regions will only serve to improve and enhance the transportation options available between these First Nations communities.

### **Required for Implementation:**

- A coordinated and concerted effort by Sea-to-Sky corridor local governments and First Nations to encourage Provincial officials to pursue amendments to pertinent legislation that currently bars First Nations' involvement within public transportation planning and governance systems and processes;
- Continued effort to improve and develop relationships between First Nations and local governments, to align transportation-based goals and priorities;
- If and where determined to be appropriate, inclusion of First Nations cultural heritage within public transit branding, signage, route naming and related infrastructure;
- Continued development of cost and resource-sharing agreements and arrangements for transportation service and infrastructure between First Nations and local government partners.



## **Idea 7: Supportive of new Mobility Pricing models, including the S2S being a potential test locale for any future Provincial or Metro Vancouver initiatives.**

### Summary:

Sea-to-Sky corridor communities are supportive of new mobility pricing models being explored in Metro Vancouver, including both congestion and distance-based fees and charges. As Sea-to-Sky Communities struggle with the challenge of funding a regional/interregional public transit bus system connecting to Metro Vancouver, our local government organizations recognize that mobility pricing provides a consistent and stable revenue stream while simultaneously serving as a demand management strategy, reducing reliance on private vehicles and encouraging the adoption of mode shifts and the adoption of mass, public transit service options.

### Why:

- Mobility Pricing serves a dual purpose, acting as a demand management strategy concerning private vehicle use and highway congestion while also providing a stable and consistent source of revenue and funding for developing and expanding public transit networks;
- Mobility Pricing offers a comparatively new type or mechanism of funding, with recent technological developments allowing for its potential widespread adoption with relatively low implementation costs;
- The Sea-to-Sky Corridor, with its close proximity to Metro Vancouver and its “one road in, one road out” geography could serve as an easily controlled test locale for continued development and evolution of this new technology and funding mechanism.

### Required for Implementation:

- Detailed research and study of legislative changes that would be required to introduce mobility pricing outside the Metro Vancouver region;
- Coordinated effort between Sea-to-Sky corridor local governments and Metro Vancouver and TransLink in determining potential Mobility Pricing implementation synergies and opportunities;
- Broad, intensive communication and consultation campaign with Sea-to-Sky residents and constituents as to the general desire for and tolerance of a mobility pricing model;
- Extensive demonstration and presentation of the requisite technology with Sea-to-Sky corridor local government and First Nations transit partners;