

Delivering on a transportation promise

During the 2015 election campaign – in a column written in this newspaper - I raised concern that the 55 year old Lynn Creek Bridge and its approaches form a bottleneck on Highway #1 that was not adequately addressed in the overpass redesign announced in 2014 by the previous federal government and the Province.

There was no provision for a widened bridge deck with separate lanes for east/west North Shore traffic that would avoid tie-ups with north-south bridge traffic. The overpass redesign also included no provision for motorists coming down Mountain Highway to get onto #1 southbound without being forced all the way to Keith Road.

Since the election, I and my two North Shore MP colleagues have been working with the District of North Vancouver and the Province on a redesign initiative that would address these shortcomings. Based on progress to date, I am optimistic that an agreement on a new design and additional funding is likely to be achieved in the near future.

More to be done

However, while this redesign of Highway #1 at The Cut is very important, we should have no illusions that this will, in and of itself, be a complete cure for the intolerable congestion that is choking our community's environment, economy and quality of life.

We need political leadership that fosters a broad range of action on transportation – with a particular emphasis on public transit options.

Our government's first budget included an initial investment of \$3.4 billion over three years to improve public transportation systems across Canada. For the Lower Mainland, \$370 million is earmarked to fund Phase One of the the 10-year Mayors' Council Transit and Transportation Plan approved in November. The federal government will also partner on a Phase Two investment for implementation of the full regional plan.

For the North Shore, the plan will deliver improvements that include:

Seabus

- Starting this month, service on Sundays and Holidays will expand from 30 minute intervals to every 15 minutes between 10 am and 7 pm
- By the end of 2017, service will move to 15 minute intervals all day, every day
- A third SeaBus will be acquired by 2019 - service will be every 10 minutes during peak hours and 15 minutes during off-peak

Bus and Other

- A new B-line service from Dunderave to Phibbs via Marine Drive/Main St/3rd St will be implemented by 2019
- Another B-line service from Lynn Valley Centre to Downtown Vancouver via 29th Street, Lonsdale Avenue and Marine Drive will be added.
- This year, nine bus routes will see service improvements as will HandyDART service
- Beginning this year, Lonsdale Quay and Phibbs transit exchanges will be upgraded to improve customer experience and accessibility
- A number of walking paths and cycling lanes will be created.

The longer term

As welcome as these incremental steps may be, they are largely focused on the short and medium term. Comprehensive long term transportation solutions will require close and continuing collaboration between all levels of government. In that regard, I'm very pleased to note that the North Shore's MP's, MLA's and Mayors have begun meeting regularly and a key focus is transportation.

In addition to collaboration, boldness of vision will be required. I believe such a vision must include consideration of a range of possible options – one of which should be examination of the eventual feasibility of a rapid transit link between Vancouver and the North Shore. What, for example, is the population density tipping point required for the economics of a rapid transit option to make sense?

This is the kind of discussion I intend to pursue in concert with my federal, provincial and municipal colleagues in the months ahead.

Let's build wisely on momentum that is developing through important steps forward like addressing the bottleneck at the Lynn Creek Bridge and the Phase 1 and 2 investments in improving public transit options. And let us all commit to working towards the comprehensive solutions that will be required for an enduring and sustainable transportation network on the North Shore.