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WWW.INSTPP.CA

Want to do something about traffic congestion on the North Shore? A most helpful something at this point is to do the following:

- 1) Type the URL headline of this column into your computer browser and hit "enter";
- 2) Scroll down a quarter of a page to where it says "DOWNLOAD THE FULL INSTPP REPORT" and hit "enter" again;
- 3) Then, I recommend reading the INSTPP report. It should take no longer than 20 minutes – shorter than the time it takes to get down the Cut most weekday afternoons after 3:00 p.m.

INSTPP is the acronym for the Integrated North Shore Transportation Planning Project which released a much-anticipated 45-page report last week.

Full disclosure: I'm the Federal government's representative on the 8-member INSTPP Steering Committee. But my conviction that the report is a thoughtful must-read primer for anyone concerned about the North Shore's intolerable state of traffic congestion is based on the following considerations.

First, in the words of the report, "These efforts represent the first time that key public transportation agencies on the North Shore, including seven governments, have been able to collectively establish a comprehensive understanding of the transportation challenges that North Shore communities face, and produce a unified and actionable approach for moving forward as a region."

Second, the report and its recommendations are the result of evidence-based decision-making and have been informed by the analysis of real traffic data and the application of modern, urban transportation planning best practices.

And third, this is not a "let's plan to do more planning" report. It lays out a recommended series of actions over the next two years that includes an inter-agency governance structure to ensure ongoing coordination and collaboration, and targeted improvements to transit, roads, cycling and pedestrian travel.

In the near term, those improvements include expedited incident clearing from North Shore bridges, an express bus service via the Ironworkers Memorial Bridge to connect with Skytrain in Burnaby, and bus priority measures including signal coordination and access to bridgeheads.

Among the items in the report's careful analysis of the North Shore's unique transportation challenges is an "incomplete road network" as it relates to east-west travel – essentially only two routes: Highway 1 and Marine Drive. The report recommends expedited completion of the Lower Level Road connecting West 1st Street to the Park Royal area and Marine Drive in West Vancouver and to evaluate the potential to connect further east by providing a new major east-west connection – the Barrow-Spicer corridor.

The INSTPP report takes off the table a number of long-discussed options evaluated as not feasible – such as adding more lanes to the Lions Gate and Second Narrows bridges (structural limitations), creating bus-only lanes on the bridges (would create more congestion than they relieve), and adapting the CN Rail bridge to include transit and cycling (it's most often in the raised position to accommodate marine traffic).

The report highlights some positives. One of the first initiatives I tackled after being elected in 2015 was to garner additional federal funding to enhance plans for improvements to the Lower Lynn exchange on Highway 1 by adding a dedicated corridor for drivers travelling east-west – which the report says will significantly reduce travel time. Translink's new Marine-Main B-line planned for next year, and SeaBus service every 10 minutes during peak times are also noted for their positive impact.

The report also commends the North Shore's three municipalities for land use policies in their Official Community Plans that promote "compact, complete and vibrant urban centres with a range of housing options serviced by active transportation networks and well-connected by transit."

The INSTPP report does not pretend to provide a single golden solution to the complex web of challenges that comprise the North Shore's congestion issue – because there isn't one.

But the report's real value is that it represents an unprecedented and long overdue level of cooperation, collaboration and commitment among all levels of government and agencies charged with fixing the gridlock that I am hopeful will continue and extend beyond transportation to the range of issues affecting continued liveability on the North Shore.

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