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METRO VANCOUVER RELEASES IMPACT ASSESSMENT OF GEORGE MASSEY TUNNEL REPLACEMENT PROJECT

Collaboration Needed to Find Viable Solutions to Solve Congestion

The Metro Vancouver Board seeks to work with the Province, TransLink and other stakeholders to find mutually acceptable solutions to reduce congestion on the Highway 99 corridor in an economically and environmentally sustainable manner.

“History has demonstrated the world over, you can’t reduce congestion by simply building more roads,” said Greg Moore, Chair of Metro Vancouver. “This project represents an expansion of car-oriented infrastructure and diverts crucial funds from transportation projects that support the regional growth strategy.”

Metro Vancouver understands the congestion issues facing Highway 99 and the George Massey tunnel, but is unable to support the George Massey Tunnel Replacement Project as proposed based on an evaluation of potential impacts to regional assets, infrastructure and legislative responsibilities.

“We recognize the necessity to enhance the movement of people and goods on Highway 99 and throughout the region, but the magnitude of a ten-lane bridge estimated at \$3.5 billion, has not been demonstrated and cannot be justified,” adds Moore.

Released today, a Metro Vancouver report identifies key areas of concern, including the direct, indirect and cumulative regional impacts of the proposed bridge:

- Insufficient consideration of alternatives to a ten-lane bridge
- Lack of integration into the regional growth strategy and transportation network
- Ecological disruption to the Fraser River estuary, an important habitat for salmon and birds
- Impacts on Metro Vancouver infrastructure, including water mains and sewer lines
- Recreational and ecological disruption on Deas Island Regional Park
- Downloading of major expenditures onto local governments for road improvements
- Negative effects on transit ridership and affordability
- Insufficient consideration to climate change and air quality
- Lack of transparency and consultation with respect to design and business case

Metro Vancouver is participating in the provincial environmental review process, and has requested that the Minister of Environment and Climate Change order a federal environmental assessment review process through which Metro Vancouver and other key stakeholders would participate.

The regional growth strategy, Metro 2040: Shaping Our Future, promotes compact transit-oriented development, the efficient use of land and a transportation network that reduces energy consumption, greenhouse gas emissions and improves air quality.

“We are genuinely concerned about the possible impacts of bridge construction, roadway improvements, tunnel removal and possible future dredging which could impact between \$500-million to \$1-billion in regional infrastructure and assets,” said Darrell Mussatto, Chair of Metro Vancouver’s Utilities Committee.

The Fraser River estuary is the single most important area of aquatic bird and raptor habitat in BC, and the intertidal marshes provide critical rearing areas for juvenile salmon. Metro Vancouver has a legislative responsibility to consider the cumulative impacts of projects on the region’s ecology. The potential environmental disruption on the ecologically rich land and sensitive marine environment including the Fraser River and Deas Island Regional Park is a significant risk.

“There is a need to improve sustainable transportation options throughout the region by adding capacity for more efficient public transit, HOV lanes, cycling and pedestrians,” added Mussatto. “A ten-lane bridge would simply shift congestion elsewhere, further exacerbating the issue of single-occupancy vehicles. Other solutions may be considered that are in alignment with the regional growth strategy, as identified in the Mayors’ Council ten-year transportation plan.”

Metro Vancouver also raised concerns about the lack of a meaningful public consultation process, and incomplete information relating to project details and alternatives.

Metro Vancouver will send a letter communicating its analysis, position and concerns with respect to the project to the BC Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure, the BC Environmental Assessment Office, the BC Premier, and the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change.

“Transportation and housing affordability are the most urgent challenges impacting the livability of the region, and they are inextricably linked. We urge the Province to work with us to develop viable alternatives to the George Massey Tunnel Replacement Project as currently proposed and commit to funding the Mayors’ Council ten-year transportation plan,” said Chair Moore.

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Metro Vancouver is a partnership of 21 municipalities, one Electoral Area and one Treaty First Nation that collaboratively plans for and delivers regional-scale services. Its core services are drinking water, wastewater treatment and solid waste management. Metro Vancouver also regulates air quality, plans for urban growth, manages a regional parks system and provides affordable housing. The regional district is governed by a Board of Directors of elected officials from each local authority.