About Metro 2050

Metro Vancouver is updating Metro Vancouver 2040: Shaping our Future (Metro 2040), the regional growth strategy. Since its adoption in 2011, Metro 2040 has been a strong and effective tool representing the regional federation’s collective vision for livability and managing growth anticipated to come to our region over the long term.

Having a regional growth strategy allows Metro Vancouver and member jurisdictions to prevent urban sprawl by focusing growth (i.e., new homes and new jobs) in transit-oriented locations to support the development of livable neighbourhoods, with a range of housing, jobs, and amenities. The strategy also protects the region’s vital agricultural, ecologically important, and industrial lands. These efforts support the provision of affordable housing, a diverse economy, and mobility for all, and they help prepare the region for the impacts of climate change.

Metro 2040 was co-created and supported by all municipalities in the region, Tsawwassen First Nation, TransLink, adjacent regional districts, and the Metro Vancouver Board. The direction provided by the strategy recognizes the region’s collective vision for the future and the importance of cooperation among member jurisdictions to create that future together.

The regional growth strategy is being updated. Though many of the goals, actions, and tools that are working well in Metro 2040 will remain unchanged, updates will extend the strategy to the year 2050 and allow the region to better respond to critical and emerging issues such as climate change, social equity, resilience, and housing affordability. Updates will also align the strategy with Transport 2050 (TransLink’s new regional transportation strategy) and implement policy improvements in a number of areas. The updated strategy, anticipated to be completed in 2022, will be called Metro 2050.

Policy Review Summaries

Content for Metro 2050 is being developed through a series of 11 themed Policy Reviews scoped to address specific policy topics in the regional growth strategy like Agriculture or the Environment. Each Policy Review is looking at the current policies in Metro 2040 related to the topic area, identifying gaps and opportunities, engaging with stakeholders and others, and developing policy recommendations to be integrated into Metro 2050. Upon completion of the Policy Reviews, Metro Vancouver is producing Policy Review Summaries to support a broad understanding by decision makers and interested stakeholders of the issues and updates proposed that will guide the drafting of amended and new policy directions for each topic area in Metro 2050.
Metro Vancouver and its member jurisdictions share a region-wide interest in transportation and its relationship to land use and growth management. An efficient and well-functioning transportation system is a vital ingredient in creating a compact urban area, developing complete communities, supporting a sustainable economy, protecting the environment, and adapting to climate change impacts. Transportation is also the largest source of greenhouse gas emissions in the region, so reducing transportation emissions is critical to achieving carbon neutrality by 2050.

One of Metro Vancouver’s roles is to coordinate with TransLink and member jurisdictions on the growth-related elements of regional transportation planning. As part of the Board-endorsed process to update the regional growth strategy, a priority is to integrate Metro 2050 with TransLink’s update to the Regional Transportation Strategy (Transport 2050). Land use and transportation planning are inextricably linked and this policy review in particular requires close work with both TransLink and the Province to ensure an integrated policy framework for the region.

Metro 2050 will establish regional land use and transportation strategic directions (e.g. transit-oriented development, parking provision, transportation demand management) and identify actions for TransLink, member jurisdictions, and other levels of government to implement in support of Metro 2050.

**WHAT’S CHANGING**

The following changes to transportation policies are recommended:

1. Increase the development of affordable, rental housing near transit
2. Ensure that planned transportation investments support Metro 2050
3. Ensure land use and transportation planning processes consider inter-regional impacts
4. Develop a regional parking strategy
5. Increase opportunities for active transportation by accelerating the build-out of infrastructure
6. Explore opportunities to manage air quality and noise impacts of the transportation system

**BENEFITS**

These changes will provide the following benefits:

- Guide the delivery of affordable housing together with transit investment
- Integrate Metro 2050 closely with Transport 2050
- Increase alignment of land use and transportation policies
- Encourage and support the more efficient use of industrial lands and goods movement network
- Support greater job growth in Urban Centres
- Increase the emphasis on active transportation opportunities
- Commit to stronger climate action

1. Source: Metro Vancouver Emissions Inventory
Recommendation #1: Increase the development of affordable, rental housing near transit

There is a need for more affordable, transit-oriented housing in Metro Vancouver. The Transit-Oriented Affordable Housing Study (TOAH) identifies a growing regional supply gap for these types of units, particularly rental tenure. Filling this gap is a significant task, as rents set at ‘affordable’ levels (i.e. no more than 30% of gross household income) generally do not cover development costs when high land costs are factored in and, as a result, are a challenge to build, particularly in more expensive transit-oriented locations.

This recommendation is to include policies that help to address this supply gap. Creating new affordable housing in rapid transit station areas can be addressed by making use of the tools and tactics identified in TOAH. Improving policy support for affordable housing along bus-based transit corridors can also encourage the development of ‘missing middle’ housing forms (e.g. low to mid-rise apartments, townhouses) where there tends to be lower land and construction costs. Reducing development costs is a key strategy in getting more transit-oriented affordable housing, particularly rental units, built in the region.

Recommendation #2: Ensure that planned transportation investments support Metro 2050

Since its adoption in 2011, the current list of priority transit corridors in Metro 2040 have all received, or are scheduled to receive, transit investment. The next regional priorities now need to be established and must be closely aligned with Transport 2050.

The overall framework for growth around the Frequent Transit Network is in need of an update. Challenges and opportunities include increasing the use of the Frequent Transit Development Area tool and integrating with the emerging Transport 2050 Major Transit Network concept. Working with TransLink to ensure that its transportation strategic planning aligns with the regional growth vision of Metro 2050 will result in transit-oriented growth that better achieves complete community objectives and supports transit ridership.

Additional policies are needed to better align the location of jobs, the goods movement network, and transit service. This can be achieved by bringing more employment opportunities to transit-oriented areas, and by enhancing the transportation connections, for both transit and goods movement, to industrial areas.

Recommendation #3: Ensure land use and transportation planning processes consider inter-regional impacts

Inter-regional transportation projects have an impact on the livability and economy of the Metro Vancouver region. Any such projects (including highway expansions, inter-regional commuter rail and bus route extensions, or new high-speed rail corridors) should include land use considerations at the same inter-regional scale, ensuring that Metro Vancouver, adjacent regional districts, First Nations, TransLink, the Province, and others are able to consider and plan for the anticipated implications.

This recommendation recognizes how growth patterns within and beyond Metro Vancouver affect transportation outcomes in the broader region. It seeks to ensure improved coordination between adjacent regional districts at the transportation planning stage.

Province-led transportation strategies are currently being developed, in the Fraser Valley Regional District and Squamish-Lillooet Regional District. Collaborating with these partners as this planning work is undertaken will benefit transportation and economic outcomes in all jurisdictions.

Recommendation #4: Develop a regional parking strategy

An excessive supply of parking in apartment developments results an inefficient use of land and resources, and a missed opportunity to reduce the overall cost of housing construction; this has been confirmed through Metro Vancouver’s Apartment Parking Studies. Though it looks at the issues separately, Metro 2040 does not make strong connections between reduced parking requirements, affordable housing development, and transit access.

The recommendation to develop a regional parking strategy links the opportunities that can result from reduced parking requirements with both regional affordable housing and transportation objectives. Furthermore, such a strategy can comprehensively address parking supply and use with a view to providing guidance for different land uses and locations, such as Urban Centre types, and can consider ways to harmonize parking-related policies and regulations for similar contexts across the region.
Recommendation #5: Increase opportunities for active transportation by accelerating the build-out of infrastructure

There is a need to construct safe, connected active transportation networks to facilitate increased walking and cycling. While walking, cycling and other modes of micro-mobility are on the rise, uptake can be improved if the gaps in active transportation networks are addressed.

The recommendation recognizes the need to accelerate the build-out of active transportation infrastructure to increase walking and cycling opportunities. This can be addressed by enhancing existing policies in the regional growth strategy to make specific reference to active transportation networks, including Metro Vancouver’s Regional Greenways Network and TransLink’s Major Bikeway Network.

More walking and cycling contributes to improved public health, greenhouse gas reductions, enhanced resilience, transportation affordability, compact communities, and more.

Recommendation #6: Explore opportunities to manage air quality and noise impacts of the transportation system

Noise, vibration, and air quality impacts from transportation are a growing health concern for residents. Necessary goods movement corridors serving industrial activities that are close to residential areas are of particular concern. Improving air quality and reducing noise impacts on residential areas reduces public health impacts and increases neighbourhood livability.

The recommendation responds to emerging evidence about the effects of transportation on human health, and it encourages mitigation strategies at the neighbourhood scale, as well as new performance measures to better track and understand the issue.

REGIONAL PLANNING PRINCIPLES

The recommended changes align with Metro 2040’s established core regional planning principles to:

- Put growth in the right places (centres and corridors)
- Protect important lands (agricultural, ecologically important, industrial)
- Support complete communities
- Create diverse and affordable housing, better mobility, and a prosperous economy
- Enable efficient urban infrastructure (utilities, transit).

NEXT STEPS AND OPPORTUNITIES TO PROVIDE FEEDBACK

Member jurisdictions have had opportunities to provide feedback on these recommendations through Metro Vancouver’s Regional Planning Advisory Committee, Regional Planning Committee, and Board. Member jurisdictions may submit questions or request a presentation from Metro Vancouver staff by sending an email to regionalplanning@metrovancouver.org.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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