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ATTACHMENT 4

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Dear Jeffrey & Doug:

**Re: GVTA Comments On Draft Downtown Transportation Plan**

We would like thank you for inviting GVTA staff to actively participate in the planning processes for the Downtown Transportation Plan. Throughout the process, GVTA staff has had many meetings and discussions with City staff on issues of mutual interest and have attended several public events and stakeholder group meetings.

We are pleased with the Plan's general focus on providing priority to walking, cycling and transit in the downtown as a means of supporting local and regional livability goals, as well as enhancing transportation efficiency and competitiveness. The Plan recognizes the finite amount of space available for moving people to and within the downtown, and that future growth in travel must be met by reallocating priorities and street space.

Our staff provided comment on the various proposals and the Draft Plan both formally and informally throughout the process. A number of the comments and suggestions have been incorporated into the Plan. There are, however, a number of issues outstanding from TransLink's perspective. The following highlight these, as well as some suggested changes for the final Plan.

It is assumed that the Vancouver Transportation Plan (VTP) and related regional growth management and transportation plans provide the policy context for the DTP's work. In particular we note that:

- The City's overall goal of improving the livability of the downtown core as residential populations increase;
- Car volumes into the downtown core maintained at 1992 levels;

- The increases in travel to and within the downtown being accommodated by major expansion to rail and bus transit service to the downtown, and significant bicycle and pedestrian improvements;
- The provision of transit priority measures (bus lanes, bus bulges, queue jumpers, etc.) is needed to efficiently accommodate transit expansion;
- There will be no further expansion of road capacity into the downtown;
- Parking ceilings will be applied consistent with maintaining car volumes accessing the core at 1992 levels
- Short stay and residential parking standards will reflect VTP goals and objectives

Within the draft report, our specific issues relate to the following:

## 1) Transit Priority

### a) General

Bus transit is currently the most important way to get to the downtown. While its share of transit may decline between now and 2021, it is expected to have growth of approximately 10% in absolute terms. With improved and new local bus service, it can be expected that local bus usage will also grow.

This means that even with rapid transit, more transit vehicles will be moving to and within the downtown, with more competition for road space with motor vehicles, pedestrians and cyclists.

Delivering more surface transit service that is attractive to customers and cost-efficient to TransLink will require significant transit priority.

We are pleased that a number of potential transit priority measures have been identified, however we note that:

- there are few “firm” recommendations for transit priority measures in the DTP (e.g. many of the identified transit priority corridors are recommended to be the subject of further investigation);
- that there is no overall policy to provide guidance for where various measures might be appropriate or warranted, or for those that are being investigated;
- there is a potential for measures currently under consideration (i.e. introduction of general traffic on Granville Mall, making Pender Street one-way) to result in degradation in transit service levels, quality and legibility.

While not all transit priority measures required can be precisely defined at this stage, there have been numerous studies to support firm recommendations for transit priority measures on some corridors rather than to conduct further studies. For example, the requirements for transit priority on Burrard, Hastings and Main have been sufficiently well defined at this point to proceed to implementation.

**RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- That Howe, Seymour and Pender be designated as transit priority corridors;
- That wording of transit priority on Burrard, Hastings and Main streets be changed from “Investigate the potential for introducing” to “Introduce” the stated measures.
- That the principle of person-delay, rather than vehicle delay be used as the basis for traffic management decisions.
- That an overall guiding policy for transit priority be incorporated in the Plan. The following was proposed to the DTP Team by GVTA staff in February:

*“Give effect to the City's stated priority to increase transit use and improve service by allocating road space and managing traffic systems and regulations to improve the reliability, speed, comfort and status of transit vehicles. Such priority will reflect transit's current and expected importance in moving people to and within the downtown and will include a range of measures including bus lanes, signal priority, bus bulges, queue jumpers, auto turning restrictions and improved pedestrian amenity.”*

**b) Pender Street & Granville Mall**

The majority of local bus routes operating both within the downtown and the rest of the City of Vancouver travel through Pender or Granville Streets. The operational efficiency and priority of transit on those two streets support a range of City goals and are important in terms of delivering a high level of service to transit customers. These measures can and should be improved to better support the goals of the Plan. However, GVTA staff continues to be concerned that changes under consideration for each of these streets will result in lower levels of priority and quality of transit service.

For example, we note that the increase in transit service hours and financial cost needed to support the introduction of general traffic on Granville Street will exceed the proposed transit resources to be allocated to the City of Vancouver under the GVTA's Three Year Plan. This could result in needed improvements being delayed if additional resources are required to maintain the status quo.

Making Pender Street one-way is also expected to have negative impacts. The Plan states that it does not appear possible to accommodate an eastbound bike lane while maintaining two-way transit operations. However, at meetings earlier this year, GVTA staff provided several alternative designs to Pender Street that would allow for the retention of two-way transit service, one eastbound bike lane (and in some designs two-way bike lanes) and some curbside loading space. To date, there has been insufficient analysis of the impacts of making Pender Street one-way to support it as a desirable objective in the Plan. City and GVTA staff agreed at that time that recommendations for Pender Street would focus on further study with an optimal solution being two-way transit and bike lanes, as well as some curbside loading space.

The combined impact of the two changes will result in a reduction in the levels of transit service quantity and quality into and within the downtown, which will affect the City's and the GVTA's ability to meet modal share and financial targets.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

- that DTP recommendations regarding Granville Street be strengthened to state that any changes to Granville Street do not result in any degradation in transit service versus what is achievable with transit alone.
- that DTP recommendations regarding Pender Street call for study to examine the feasibility of the introduction of bike lanes with the following priorities, in order: a minimum of one bike lane eastbound, two-way transit service, a minimum of one GP lane (going westbound) and curbside loading space in key locations. It is further recommended that discussion of options for Pender be framed to present the one-way proposal as one possible outcome that can achieve City objectives.

**2) Curbside Space for Transit**

The Plan, in several instances, recognizes the importance of curb space to accommodate termini for transit routes as well as the efficiency of downtown transit operations. Curb space is at a premium within the downtown. Despite the potential introduction of a north-south rapid transit line, bus volumes into the downtown will increase to 2021. Protecting existing termini and allocating new curb space will be increasingly important, particularly with the introduction of new downtown only transit routes as identified in the DTP.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

- that the Plan explicitly recognize the importance of curb space to efficient transit operations, that existing curb space be protected in the Plan, and that new curb space be identified and created/held in reserve to accommodate termini.

**3) Rapid Transit**

There is a long-standing regional policy that supports the introduction of an intermediate-capacity rapid transit system (SkyTrain, LRT or segregated busway) between Richmond Centre and Downtown Vancouver. While many studies have been done to date, supporting the introduction of such a system, there has been insufficient work to determine its optimal configuration. This is particularly the case in the downtown, where studies looking at vertical and horizontal alignment are now a decade old. There is currently work underway to determine an alignment for a Richmond-Airport-Vancouver Rapid Transit Line that optimizes performance, community impact and cost. This work is not yet complete and may or may not support the alignment recommended in the Plan.

#### 4) **Downtown Streetcar**

GVTA staff has several issues regarding the Downtown Streetcar. It is unclear whether the line will have impacts on bus service (in terms of diverting passengers) and lead to increased operating costs or lost revenue. Furthermore, it is unclear what, if any, involvement is required or expected from the GVTA in terms of operating or funding the streetcar system. If the GVTA is expected to take on a substantive role in operating and funding the streetcar system, it would be imperative for GVTA staff to be involved with the system's planning and design at an early stage. For example, a preliminary review of the conceptual system design has raised questions regarding:

- the primary function of the network (e.g. in servicing commuter or tourist needs)
- the sufficiency of track and system capacity (in accommodating the needs of a larger network)
- the optimality of routing;
- the impacts on GVTA bus routes;
- the system's role as an "independent transit service"; and
- the ability of the streetcar to attract local commuters given the system's low frequency relative to urban bus services and the generally short length of transit trips in the area.

#### **RECOMMENDATION:**

- That GVTA staff be actively involved in planning and design for the Downtown Streetcar system at an early stage, if GVTA involvement in operating and/or funding the system is anticipated.

#### 5) **Parking Policies**

##### **a) Off-Street Parking**

The directions for parking provided in the DTP appear inconsistent with the implied DTP objective of maintaining peak hour car volumes and congestion at today's levels, or reducing them. It also appears inconsistent with the Vancouver Transportation Plan policy of maintaining a parking supply consistent with 34,000 vehicles accessing the downtown in the peak period (VTP actions D12 and D13). If these levels of vehicle volumes are to be maintained, the downtown auto mode share targets should be reviewed to ensure they are consistent with this, and parking supply should be held constant in absolute terms. A potential increase in parking supply of 4,000 stalls (if the full build out allowed by the zoning occurs) provides for a potential increase of commuting vehicles of a similar amount.

Staff note that other cities throughout North America, some with lower levels of transit service to the downtown, have lower levels of parking availability, while still maintaining vital commercial, retail and residential cores. Furthermore, given the significant projected increase in investment in transit service and infrastructure to the

downtown, and significant increase in residential population, parking needs will and should decrease in both relative and absolute terms.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

- that the DTP uphold the VTP policy of maintaining parking supply consistent with a maximum of 34,000 cars entering the downtown in the peak period (with auto mode share accordingly adjusted), thereby supporting and justifying the significant investments in transit service and infrastructure requested

**b) On Street Parking**

GVTA staff is supportive of the introduction of on-street parking where there are identified deficiencies in supply. However, there are several concerns regarding the recommendations as presented:

- as mentioned in the transit priority section above, there has been no analysis of the operational or customer service impacts to transit of the proposed conversion of Pender Street to one way operation. Staff expects such a measure to result in additional cost to the GVTA and poorer service to customers. We note that Pender Street carries the second highest volume of buses in the downtown, and that there has been no case made for why the needs of on-street parking are greater than those of transit. The GVTA has proposed alternatives that allow for some on-street parking.
- the introduction of 24 hour on-street parking is proposed for several streets that have high-frequency transit service. In the absence of the introduction of bus bulges, this will result in slower service and higher costs to the GVTA. Furthermore, when cars are in the process of parallel parking, disruption of traffic occurs in the remaining lanes.
- transit captures many discretionary trips into the downtown core because parking is not always convenient. The introduction of peak period parking on many downtown streets has the dual impact of slowing transit service and making it less attractive, while making driving more convenient. In most areas where on street parking is permitted, there are also off-street alternatives during peak periods, and there has been no clearly demonstrated “need” for the extension of parking hours.

The GVTA is making a significant financial commitment to the renewal of the trolley fleet in Vancouver. It is imperative that the efficient operation of these million dollar vehicles is not compromised with the introduction of a relatively small number of on-street parking spaces.

**RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- that on-street parking recommendations for Pender Street be deleted from the Plan, pending a joint City-GVTA study that examines alternative designs to the street to accommodate a range of needs, in order of priority: a minimum of one eastbound bike lane, two-way transit operation, general purpose traffic and north curb side loading space.
- that the extension of parking hours occur only if accompanied by bus bulges and/or other transit priority measures that provide service equivalent or better than previous; and
- that parking be provided in areas where there is a demonstrated need for and deficiency of parking.

**6) Spot Improvements**

Appendix 1 provides specific comment on “spot improvements identified in Section 5 – Implementation Ideas of the DTP.

- 7) **Funding and Timing** - GVTA staff note, as the Plan does, that a number of the recommendations require significant levels of local and regional funding to be realized. Work on fine-tuning the scope of various measures, costing them, setting out the timelines for implementation and identifying appropriate and adequate local and regional funding sources will need considerable study. They, of course, are critical steps to ensuring that the Plan can be implemented. We look forward to working with the City in the coming year to do this work.

I trust that these comments will be given consideration for the Final DTP to be adopted by Council.

Yours sincerely,

Glen Leicester  
Director, Implementation Planning

c: Dave Rudberg, General Manager, Engineering Services, Vancouver  
Larry Beasley, Director, Current Planning, Vancouver  
Clive Rock, TransLink  
Brian Mills, TransLink  
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**Appendix 1 – Specific Comments on Spot Improvements**

- Item 5 Off-street bike route is strongly supported since lanes are very narrow on this section of Beach Ave. for transit operations. (Routes affected: #1)
- Item 12 Protect transit movements, specifically the proposed SB bus lane on Burrard. (Routes affected: #2, 22, 32, 44)
- Item 14 Protect transit movement for new intersection design.  
(Routes affected: #1)
- Item 22 GVTA staff is not in favour of providing ‘three SB general traffic lanes at all times of the day’. Propose 2 GP lanes, a bus lane during the peak period, and a bike lane in the SB direction.  
(Routes affected: #2, 22, 32, 44)
- Item 29 Operation of 5-lane configuration on this section of Granville St. has not been reflected in the recent “Review of Traffic Operations Along Granville Mall Using Micro-simulation” study. It should be reviewed from transit operation standpoint. (Routes affected: #4, 7, 8, 10, 16, 50)
- Item 40 Design intersection to accommodate the bus turning movement from WB Prior to NB Gore (existing corner is too tight). (Routes affected: #22)
- Item 42 Transit operation should be maintained or enhanced with intersection changes, consideration be given to dedicate the WB curb lane on Pender Street between Broughton and Georgia to buses only.  
(Routes affected: #19)
- Item 45 The proposed crosswalk may have some adverse impacts on the capacity of bus termini on the north side of Dunsmuir and there may also be some potential pedestrian sight lines problem due to the presence of the stopped buses. (Routes affected: #123, 150, 160, 190, 210, 211, 214, 290, 292, 311, 351, 352, 354, 601, 602, 603, 604)