

Dear federal election candidate,

As you know, traffic congestion and its impact on our quality of life, our air quality and our regional economy is of great concern to the residents of Greater Vancouver. Nowhere is this more evident than with the frustrating waits experienced daily by commuters on the Highway 1 corridor, particularly in the vicinity of the Port Mann Bridge. Recently the Province of BC has proposed the twinning of the Port Mann Bridge and widening of Highway 1 from the rapidly spreading suburbs into the heart of the densely populated and growing Burrard peninsula. This proposal has raised alarms with the GVRD and many city councils in the region. Not only does the proposal contradict the region's well established Liveable Region Strategic Plan (LRSP) for the growth of the region, but the evidence from many cities all across North America shows that highway expansion in growing urban areas does not solve congestion problems... and usually makes them worse.

Why is this local transportation issue of interest to federal election candidates?

Building freeway bridges across the Fraser River and widening highways in urban neighbourhoods is extremely expensive. At more than \$1.5 billion the project is not easily financed by the Province alone and it has requested federal funding to help with transportation project on several occasions. This fall the federal government created the Pacific Gateway Program to help improve access to the region's ports and the associated transportation infrastructure. The program includes a budget of \$590 million, much of which has not yet been earmarked for any particular projects. Through our federal representatives, we expect to have a say on how this budget is spent.

These monies could help relieve congestion on Highway 1 and our roads by providing progressive alternatives for getting people out of their cars thereby reducing air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions, saving people money, encouraging healthier lifestyles and communities, and encouraging goods to move by rail, river, or dedicated high priority lanes. Alternatively they could enable the Province to carry out its highly controversial project to twin the Port Mann bridge and widen our urban highway thus encouraging more people to drive more often and farther, shifting the regional growth into car-dependant communities out in the Valley, increasing air pollution, and threatening the Agricultural Land Reserve and green spaces. The result of course, with more and longer trips being made, is more congestion on all roads.

We welcome federal involvement in the region and a contribution towards lasting solutions to the region's transportation crisis but bear in mind that there are two divergent visions on the table (not one solution, as forwarded by the Province). One vision, that of the LRSP, aims to reduce automobile dependence by creating transportation choice and developing town centres and complete communities throughout the GVRD in order to reduce the need to travel. The other vision, highway expansion, is a short-term solution that addresses only the symptoms of our congestion while encouraging car-dependent communities, a lack of transportation choice, and the need to drive everywhere. These are the root causes of the problem.

We encourage all candidates to inform themselves of the transportation needs of the Lower Mainland, to consider the range of solutions available to address congestion problems, and to recognize the role of the federal government in implementing the solutions. We encourage you to engage urban transportation experts and the electorate on these issues while weighing the full costs and benefits of each available solution. The path followed will impact the residents and communities of the region for generations. We hope that senior levels of government will proceed responsibly and make themselves fully aware of the long-term impacts of transportation improvements before committing large sums of money to any project.

We wish you success with your campaign, and thank you for being part of our democratic process.

Sincerely,

Deming Smith
Liveable Region Coalition

Please see our website www.livableregion.ca or call 604-669-2860 for more information.

The Liveable Region Coalition is a group of sustainable transportation and community advocates, urban transportation experts, and citizens concerned about freeway expansion in the Greater Vancouver Region.
