

To: Regional and Corporate Services Committee
From: Alison Stewart, Manager of Strategic Planning

Date: 2018-03-13
File No: 8330-02-02

Subject: Metro Vancouver Mobility Pricing Independent Commission Update

INTENT

This report is intended to advise the Regional and Corporate Services Committee of information pertaining to the work of the Metro Vancouver Mobility Pricing Independent Commission work to date. Staff is not looking for a recommendation and has forwarded this information should members want more clarification to discuss the item further.

STRATEGIC AREA(S) OF FOCUS

Foster a Strong & Diverse Economy

Support Healthy & Sustainable Community

Provide Responsive & Effective Public Services

BACKGROUND

On May 26, 2016 the Metro Vancouver Mayors' Council on Regional Transportation submitted to the province a draft funding strategy to advance the "10-year Metro Vancouver Transit and Transportation Plan". The Mayors' Council proposed several funding options for provincial and regional contributions towards the Plan's costs. Among the options proposed is "the introduction of regional mobility pricing by 2021 to support the expansion and improvement of road and bridge infrastructure". In order to determine what mobility pricing will look like in Metro Vancouver, the TransLink Board and Mayor's Council struck an independent Commission to explore the issue. The Independent Commission has been undertaking research and public engagement since October 2017.

The FVRD has offered Commission representatives an opportunity to provide an overview of their work to the Board. Unfortunately, we have been informed by the Commission they will not be able to accommodate our request given tight timelines of the consultation process within Metro Vancouver.

DISCUSSION

The Commission, consists of 14 community leaders from across Metro Vancouver, and has been mandated to “...engage the region broadly throughout its term, and use its findings as key inputs to help inform and guide its recommendations. Members of the public will have the opportunity to take part in the Independent Commission’s work at public meetings in communities across Metro Vancouver and online.”

The Independent Commission is evaluating mobility pricing options based on the following objectives (emphasis added):

- **Reduce traffic congestion** on roads and bridges across the Metro Vancouver region, so people and goods can keep moving and businesses can thrive and be competitive;
- **Promote fairness** to address concerns around the previous approach to tolling some bridges but not others; and
- Support transportation **investment** to improve the current transportation system in Metro Vancouver for all users.

The public and stakeholder engagement process is as follows:

- October 25 – Start of engagement process
- October 26 - November 30 - Stakeholder workshops
- November 6-24 - First phase of online public engagement (accessible via ItsTimeMV.ca)
- Winter - Public report for phase 1 and Commission public meeting
- January to February - Local and regional stakeholder engagement
- February - Public report for phase 2 and Commission public meeting
- March - Public and stakeholder engagement events and online engagement
- Spring 2018 - Final public report released

The final report at the end of April 2018 will be submitted to the “Sponsoring Authorities”, and will include:

- “Recommendations on a number of detailed principles that should be adhered to in designing a mobility pricing policy including: policy design, privacy and affordability considerations, the need for transportation alternatives, and next steps in the process.
- Illustrative scenarios of mobility pricing for Metro Vancouver describing how key principles might be achieved.”

As part of the January to March phase-2 consultation, the Commission has produced a discussion paper that outlines seven decongestion examples to generate discussion (attached). These concepts are provided for engagement purposes only and are not final proposals. The proposed decongestion charging options have been narrowed down to two concepts: congestion point charges and distance based charges.

Congestion point charges:

The congestion point charging ideas range from tolling all tunnel and bridge crossings, congestion charge specifically related to the City of Vancouver core, congestion charges more broadly applied to the Burrard peninsula, and specific “hot spots” sprinkled around Metro Vancouver.

Distance based charges:

The distance based charging concepts have a greater likelihood of impacting Fraser Valley residents. There is no discussion in the discussion paper as to the application of these charges to residents/businesses from outside Metro Vancouver. It is therefore a bit difficult to assess the impacts from an FVRD perspective. Two of the distance based examples are zone-based charges where people would pay a fee no matter where they lived in the region. One example is a flat fee across the region, while the second suggests a higher cost within the Burrard peninsula where access to alternative travel modes is more available.

The third example, a “multi zone distance-based charge”, raises a number of questions from an FVRD perspective. According to the discussion paper:

“People who drive would pay this distance-based charge regardless of where they are in the region. However, this charge could vary based on the location, time and direction of travel. Charges could be lower in less congested spots and in areas with fewer options for transit.”

The map (page 9) shows a number of high congestion areas in the Metro Vancouver region where higher charges could possibly be applied. Of note to the FVRD, partially hidden by the text block, is the area between approximately 200th Street and 264th Street along Highway 1. This is a well-known congestion point that needs to be addressed, but it is a provincial highway and TransLink provides no transit services along this route. It is unclear why charges collected at this location should benefit transit development in Metro Vancouver. If charges were to be collected in this location, one could argue that such charges should be applied to specific transportation improvements in this location and/or locations in the FVRD, including improved transit options.

Another concern from such an option would be drivers avoiding the charges by choosing alternative routes including the already congested Fraser Highway and rural roads through the Agricultural Land Reserve.

It is unclear as to the impact of mobility pricing in this Region. Such charges, in the end, could place increased demands for enhanced transit services in the FVRD, which raises the question about the fairness of Fraser Valley residents funding TransLink when this region is facing its own transit and transportation investment challenges. While increasing transit mode share is a goal for the region’s

various transit services, the ability for the Region and local governments to fund increased demand as a result of externalities, such as mobility pricing in Metro Vancouver, is a concern.

COST

No impact at this time

CONCLUSION

The Commission has indicated they will not be able to make a presentation directly to the Board due to the tight consultation time frame and their focus on Metro Vancouver. While the discussion paper provides some indication as to the direction the Commission is leaning, the lack of consideration of external impacts makes it difficult for the FVRD to calculate the potential impacts to residents and businesses of this Region.

The FVRD will continue to monitor the progress of the initiative and report back to the FVRD Board as new developments occur.

COMMENTS BY:

Barclay Pitkethly, Director of Regional Programs

Reviewed and supported.

Mike Veenbaas, Director of Financial Services

No further financial comments.

Paul Gipps, Chief Administrative Officer

Reviewed and supported