REGIONAL TRANSIT ADVOCACY CAMPAIGN
CAMPAIGN DOCUMENT

Updated - September 19, 2012
What is Get OnBoard BC?

On an average day, there are hundreds of thousands of trips daily in Metro Vancouver on a wide variety of transportation options. Whether you take the Expo Line from King George to Waterfront, the 99 B-Line from Commercial to UBC, the SeaBus from Lonsdale Quay to Downtown Vancouver, ride a bike down 41st Avenue, or drive your vehicle over the Port Mann Bridge every morning, in some way shape or form, you use Vancouver’s extensive transportation network. However, of all these options, public transit lacks three key things: the ability to handle current demand, lack of service options to rural and suburban areas, and sustainable funding to address these issues.

The B.C. provincial government is ultimately responsible for approving taxation mechanisms used by the municipalities of Metro Vancouver to fund TransLink, Metro Vancouver’s transportation authority. In the past several months, the province has refused to grant any new taxation powers to the cities. At the same time, ridership in the entire region continues to grow, and has even passed Olympic levels system-wide. In Burnaby, students and workers taking the 135 to SFU are shoved into busses like sardines in a can. On the Broadway corridor alone, over 3,000 “pass-ups” or the ridership of some entire bus lines are waiting at the side of the street for a bus to get to work or to school. In Surrey, those trying to get to work in Burnaby or Vancouver have to wait upwards of a half hour to an hour for an overcrowded bus, only to have to connect to another bus or SkyTrain, adding time to their daily commutes.

TransLink’s annual operating budget exceeds $1 billion and is funded by a variety of mechanisms including the Gas Tax, property taxes, and ridership fares. Given the increasing need in key areas of Metro Vancouver, however, the current funding model does not allow for future infrastructure projects.

What does that mean? Without a sustainable and equitable funding mechanism to better fund TransLink, any future transit projects are stuck in the planning phase. Demand and usage by transit riders will increase, but will be met the same amount of service and potentially even fewer options over the coming years – unless something is done. Although Translink must of course account for its expenses to the taxpayer, savings resulting from audits will never be enough to cover major capital expenses and service improvements.

That’s where the Get On Board campaign comes in: It is a partnership-driven coalition of residents, students, workers, businesses and academics who all believe in a better future for Metro Vancouver’s public transit riders. Get On Board is not a political organization, but exists to push for changes at the municipal, provincial and federal levels to ensure that public transit can adequately support the region’s demographic growth.

We firmly believe that improved public transit can be an important economic, social and environmental driver. Removing privately owned cars from the road while keeping Metro Vancouver connected are key to the region’s and the province’s continued economic prosperity, if only because it will move people more efficiently to and from their destinations (including stores), while also creating less congested roads for commercial users who do not have any realistic alternative to conduct their business. A good public transit system can also increase quality of life for everyone, such as families, individual with mobility issues, senior citizens and anyone who cannot afford or does not always want to rely on a car. And it goes without saying that by reducing our environmental footprint, public transit can contribute to protecting the environment for future generations.
The campaign is founded on two basic principles:

- Rapid transit projects and major service improvements cannot move forward in Metro Vancouver without sustainable and equitable funding mechanisms: TransLink’s current limited funding options, combined with a decline in revenue from taxes, cannot support the future economic and demographic growth of the region. To see the construction of regional rapid transit, we need new solutions, including potential road use tolling and reallocations from current municipal and provincial taxes. Any new funding mechanisms must be equitable, so that transit service can be improved for the whole region.

- Municipalities and regional entities need to be given the power of choice: In the past, BC’s provincial government has not always provided an adequate level of support to regional officials with regards to instituting new funding mechanisms to maintain and develop rapid transit. Those who represent the residents of Metro Vancouver should be able to decide freely whether and how to fund rapid transit solutions, rather than be forced to wait for decisions made on their behalf in Victoria.

In the spring of 2013, the province of BC will hold its provincial election. It’s time that we make regional transit an election issue and ensure that all parties make funding for regional transit a top priority in their platforms. We need to tell them clearly that transit is important to the people of Metro Vancouver and that we need a successful transit system in the future, one that can handle our growing population.

At the end of the day, the people of Metro Vancouver have a choice: do we want to have more transit that serves the region as our population grows or are we satisfied with the status quo?

It’s time to Get OnBoard.
1.0 Background

One key consideration in the discussion for regional funding measures is the interconnectedness of each transit proposal in the region. As TransLink has suspended or delayed most future transit projects due to fiscal constraints and an unsustainable funding mechanism, all projects within Metro Vancouver are in jeopardy. Unless a new mechanism is adopted, rapid transit in Surrey the Broadway line and other major infrastructure projects in the region cannot proceed. For this reason, a collaborative movement recognizing the interests of key stakeholders while also being agnostic to one primary project or technology can unite many regional stakeholders on the issue of public transit funding. Such an initiative would have a profound effect on future action within the provincial government on this issue. In fact, a diverse and grass-roots campaign is essential if we hope to secure sustainable, effective public transit solutions for the region as a whole.

The Broadway corridor (from Commercial through to UBC) in Vancouver is a key economic, residential, and institutional area, holding more than 25% of Vancouver’s economy. According to a recent study released by TransLink, more than 100,000 bus trips occur on Broadway each day, making it the “most busy diesel line in North America.” In the same study, TransLink has admitted that more than 2,000 passengers are “passed up” each day in the UBC Broadway corridor. Similar issues have arisen in Surrey and in Burnaby, namely at the Production Way terminal and on the 135 B-Line bus, whether an equal number of pass-ups occurs daily.

With the introduction of the UPass program in 2003 as well as the introduction of the gas tax and the public growing more sustainably minded, transit ridership has grown exponentially. However, transit in Metro Vancouver is a victim of its own success, where ridership exceeds capacity levels. Furthermore, with funding resources for TransLink proving to be unsuccessful to account for future transit growth, TransLink has recently announced that service expansion plans that merely aim to meet increases in ridership are being greatly reduced to deal with budget shortfalls.

The Mayor’s Council had asked the province for increased taxation powers in early 2012, but the government has steadfastly refused to grant them their wish. Projects and services, such as the Rapid Bus through Surrey, the SFU Gondola, Surrey Rapid Transit, and the Broadway/UBC Line have all been delayed or cancelled given current political and fiscal realities. On a regional scale, all municipalities and institutions can benefit from a united front to connect the region together in a meaningful and efficient way.

2.0 Purpose

2.1 Goals

Ultimately, the campaign has two overarching goals:

- Build awareness of the increasing strain on Metro Vancouver’s public transit infrastructure and support of the need for regional transportation improvements.
- Create a coalition force of key stakeholders to keep continued pressure on public officials within the city and on the provincial level on the subject of sustainable and equitable regional transit funding in Metro Vancouver.
2.2 Messaging

The key tenets of the campaign’s platform are that:

- Rapid transit projects and major service improvements cannot move forward in Metro Vancouver without sustainable and equitable funding mechanisms: TransLink’s current limited funding options, combined with a decline in revenue from taxes, cannot support the future economic and demographic growth of the region. To see the construction of regional rapid transit, we need new solutions, including potential road use tolling and reallocations from current municipal and provincial taxes. Any new funding mechanisms must be equitable, so that transit service can be improved for the whole region.

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3.0 Concept

The Get OnBoard campaign is a community engagement advocacy and awareness campaign built on a partnership of like-minded organizations. While certain groups have the necessary capacity and resources to guide and facilitate the operations of the campaign as a whole, an external advocacy coalition will function as the main driver behind all campaign initiatives. Comprised of key stakeholder groups from around the region and with a relevant stake in regional transit, each organization will receive a voice in the body of the group with the ability to drive messaging, initiate discussion and provide input. Emphasized in the creation of this campaign will be inclusiveness of different viewpoints, consulting opposition voices, and equality in participation and impact upon group consensus.

The group will be a vehicle to pool resources, human capital and constituency contacts to facilitate the operation of the campaign and bolster its message. In order to gain the support and grow its membership, the coalition will actively communicate with stakeholders in the region and setup opportunities to meet with other organizations, pitch the concept of the campaign, listen to feedback and offer an opportunity to air concerns, as well as offer membership in and participation in the campaign.

4.0 Timetable

Utilizing the potential increase in engagement timed with the return of university students and the slowdown in summer activities, as well as key policy decisions being made currently by all provincial parties, in addition to the release of TransLink’s 2013 Base Plan, phase one of Get OnBoard BC will be deployed on September 25 with an active campaign period lasting approximately three weeks time.

A second phase of the campaign will be developed for the expected Provincial elections in May 2013. At that time, with the coalition infrastructure in place, we will be in a position to make public transit a major topic of discussion for candidates regardless of party affiliation and push for rapid transit infrastructure projects and funding to become a key election issue.
5.0 Key Highlights

5.1 Coalition Building

For the purposes of creating the best outcome on the issue, there cannot be one sole voice as a means to gain measurable traction. Building a coalition with key stakeholders in the region – such as residential housing associations, business development associations and other student societies – will garner a larger and more diverse grouping of voices. As a collective body, the coalition will be in the position to advocate more effectively and represent a wider range of stakeholders.

5.2 Consulting Opposition Voices

On an issue with wide implications, it is important to reach out to opposition voices or those who may have concerns about particular projects and administrative mechanisms or funding mechanisms, and provide an opportunity to discuss the concept and, if possible, work towards a compromise/understanding that will include their input and form of participation or discussion in the campaign.

5.3 High Visibility/Continued Pressure

Success will rely heavily upon the visibility and inclusivity of demographics that rely upon transit in the region. Joint press conferences, open houses, public consultations, print media, online media and demonstrations will be highly visible to local media and lead to sympathy from a wider-audience in Metro-Vancouver. Pressure on key public officials and continued public visibility will ensure the issue remains fresh in the minds of policy makers.

5.4 External Messaging

The external messaging of the campaign will be focused on a broad spectrum of present and potential transit users, as opposed to concentrating on a specific special interest group. To help improve public perception of the issue, the campaign will identify the different demographics of transit users, including those that work in area businesses, medical facilities, schools and other organizations and make them a public face of the campaign, thereby demonstrate that this issue affects all stakeholders and has a high regional economic impact.

Another aspect of messaging is the emphasis that “we need to be connected.” As a regional campaign with local emphasis, pushing the regional benefits of improved transit that transcends generational divides and demographics will be key to showing unilateral support for transit. While specifics groups may obviously have a prime interest in capital projects in their region, there must also be a general understanding that focusing on the regional context will help meet the goal of building these projects in the long term.

5.5 Hyper-Local Campaigns

The coalition exists primarily as an overarching organizing body focused on the issue of regional transportation funding, however, specific projects and proposals can be advocated for by means of hyper-local campaigns utilizing the coalition name. Organizations in one particular area of the region interested in supporting one particular proposal with the understanding the regional transportation funding is the
mechanism to ensure construction of said project may use the coalition name and design their own local initiative in line with the spirit of the Get OnBoard campaign. However, coalition partners may not use the logo, website, or branded materials of the organization without consensus of the coalition, and autonomous campaigns must indicate that they are an initiative of their respective organizations. This will allow for organizations to support specific projects or technologies while respecting the core function of the Get OnBoard campaign. These hyper-local campaigns will be designed to function as one campaign per municipality, to ensure that overlapping messaging is avoided.

6.0 Campaign Components

6.1 Multimedia

The multimedia aspect of the campaign will be designed to balance engaging students and the broader population in a creative fashion while also being informative and persuasive. These methods will include:

- Documentary video highlighting regional transit funding issues that affect all future transit development, with a focus on inefficiencies of the current regional transit systems, commute time, bus capacity/pass-ups and the stories of a diverse group of transit riders including students, workers and residents, future rapid transit projects in the region that will have an impact on connecting the region (5-10 minutes in length)
- "Scenario" video series, featuring different examples of why we need rapid transit (pass-ups, individual stories, shorn, etc.) and the need for funding mechanisms to move proposals forward. This will also include a video highlighting the different project proposals and technologies, statistics on current and expected trends in regional transit, interviews with key advocates and decision makers, as well as what individuals can do to support the campaign.

Multimedia products of the campaign will be published to the different social media sites (such as Youtube and Vimeo), as well as to the campaign website and can be distributed via a RSS feed.

6.2 Print Media

The print media aspect of the campaign will be outwardly focused on bringing publicity to the campaign whilst also trying to gain public support on campaign initiatives. These methods will include:

- Letters to the Editor in various Vancouver print and online publications
- Print ads taken out in publications within the Metro Vancouver area
- Physical banner ads in the region, on public billboards and transit stops, etc.

6.3 Street Engagement

The street engagement portion of the campaign is designed to recruit support directly from students and transit riders in the region. Utilizing volunteers strategically positioned at key chokepoints in Metro Vancouver, this medium of outreach will help to spread the message and gain support to help build the strength of the campaign. These methods will include:

- An “Engagement Team” made up of volunteers to spread the campaign message and important information as described above, while also signing up individuals on a listserv system and SMS
notification system. Incentives to be a part of the campaign will help gain more traction with our message.

- Announcements and materials posted in university classrooms, stores, workplaces and so on, urging individuals to have their voice and opinion represented on the issue of regional transportation, and offers the ability to find out more information from QR codes, website link, etc.

### 6.4 Social Media

Social media, with the ability to reach large numbers of individuals with relatively low amounts of effort, will be a key component in making this campaign successful. Use of the “big two” (Facebook and Twitter), including more specialized applications like Foursquare will be able to share information quickly while maximizing the number of users that see our content. These applications include:

- Facebook “page”, where we can centralize all information.
- Twitter account to share up-to-date information and notifications regarding the campaign and rapid transit in the corridor
- Wordpress-based website and blog to share all content, bring in differing perspectives, and encourage participation

### 6.5 Open House/Public Meetings

A great vehicle to demonstrate support for the cause of promoting our cause will be the utilization of campaign members attending specific hearings on issues related to transit and regional funding. A strong, diverse backing of individuals and speakers will send a strong signal to public officials that this is an issue with wide ramifications and a wide range of interest between different organizations. Other methods will include an online Q&A/Town Hall with ad hoc group representatives answering questions and taking input from the public.

### 6.6 Rally/Media Stunts

The campaign’s greatest asset is the diversity and mobilization capacity of its membership. To best utilize that potential, a series of coordinated media stunts will be scheduled during the active phases of the campaign to highlight the key messaging of the campaign as well as facts related to the current issues with transit capacity and funding in Metro Vancouver. There is also a potential to have small rallies at selected locations to draw media support to the issue.

### 7.0 Membership:

#### 7.1 How to Join

Membership in the Get OnBoard BC campaign is quite simple and non-binding. Any organization need only pass a motion or make a decision through either an organization’s board or executive to endorse the campaign and this guiding document. The organization then must contact the campaign director ( @getonboardbc.ca) and let them know of the endorsement.

#### 7.2 Membership Types

There are two categories of membership in Get OnBoard BC, either an endorser or a partner.
• **Partners:** Partners are those organizations interested in being active in campaign planning, mobilization, and development, and are provided the option of sitting as a part of the executive board of the campaign. Partners may choose a level to their liking that they may be involved in the campaign; however, they will be considered active in the administrative workings of Get OnBoard and will help to guide the campaign’s direction and must make a minimal commitment of resources, commensurate to the size of the organization.

• **Endorsers:** Endorsers are those who support the concept and agenda of the campaign, but cannot commit time or resources actively in the campaign. Endorsers are provided the option of attending meetings and receive all information on the administrative workings of Get OnBoard. Any endorser is welcomed and encouraged to provide feedback or comments on the campaign, but may choose the degree of their involvement.

7.3 *To Withdraw Membership*

To withdraw membership in the campaign, an organization must simply pass a motion through their executive or board and contact the campaign to let them know of the decision.

7.4 *Benefits of Membership:* Any member organization receives the following:

- All administrative communications on the campaign
- Material patterns, logos and access to the membership forum
- Access to the Get OnBoard blog
- Access to all surveys and feedback forms on the progress of the campaign
- The ability to communicate directly and work with organizers on the logistics and messaging of the campaign

Further benefits will be available as the campaign progresses, and any member is invited to become more involved in the campaign to their liking.

7.5 *Membership Details*

The executive board of Get OnBoard BC will meet on a weekly basis, in addition to online conversations through the membership forum and email, and any party is welcome to attend. Members will be consulted on major actions of the campaign and will be notified of progress of the campaign on a regular basis.

8.0 *Governance Structure:*

8.1 *Executive Board*

The campaign is governed by an executive board, comprised of its membership. Active partners will be voting members of the executive board and will receive one seat per organization. The board will be facilitated by an elected chair, a vote taken by all campaign members, with elections taking place on a yearly basis. On the board also sits the campaign director, secretary, and additional staff. The board will facilitate and guide the campaign’s actions, determine future directions, and work with partner organizations on mobilization and messaging.
8.2 Communications Committee

To ensure expedient and clear communications from the campaign, a communications committee, which exists as a branch of the executive board, will be comprised of about 5 individuals and will be the body responsible for drafting, editing, and approving campaign communications. These individuals will be elected by the executive board, with representation from the most active sectors in the coalition. For example, one seat representing a student organization, a residence association, a business organization, an environmental organization, and one seat open for general election. This group will be elected on a yearly cycle, with elections taking place 3 months after that of the executive board chair, and with staggered turnover occurring every 3 months.

8.3 Campaign Director

To facilitate the operations of the campaign as decided by the executive board, a campaign director will act as the head of the campaign, implementing the logistic and technical aspects of Get OnBoard, and will be the public face of the campaign. This director is appointed by the executive board on a year month basis.

8.4 Secretary

A secretary will act as the records keeper of the campaign, and will be appointed by the executive board without a discretionary term. The secretary will create agendas, submit minutes and act as archivist for all actions of the campaign.

9.0 Contact Information

To receive more information on the campaign, please contact the Campaign Director at:

Get OnBoard BC
contact@getonboardbc.ca