



SUBMISSION ON THE SOUTHWEST AREA TRANSPORT PLAN

FROM: Alma Mater Society of University of British Columbia, Vancouver
TO: Translink
SUBJECT: Submission on the Southwest Area Transport Plan

Overview

The purpose of this memorandum is to document the stance of the Alma Mater Society (AMS) of the University of British Columbia (UBC) on the recently proposed Southwest Area Transport Plan (SWATP). As a Student Union, the AMS represents over 52,000 undergraduate and graduate students studying at University of British Columbia, Vancouver. The AMS aims to improve the quality of the educational, social, and personal lives of the students of UBC, in every way possible.

Phase II of the SWATP was set forth in May 2017 by TransLink, and it identifies transit service and infrastructure changes in Richmond, Tsawwassen, and Delta, as well as their regional connections, in order to improve the quality and reliability of its services. The AMS has received extensive feedback and concerns from its membership at UBC regarding the proposed changes in the SWATP. UBC students have engaged with this transportation plan through social media, by completing TransLink's survey on the proposed changes (May 23, 2017 to July 19, 2017), and by reaching out directly to the AMS.

The Issue

The changes that directly impact the UBC community involve the proposed cancellation of the 480 bus route which runs between Bridgeport station and UBC.



TransLink's has made alternative recommendations to commuters from Richmond in face of the cancellation:¹

- Canada Line to Oakridge/41st Station, transfer to 43 route,
- Canada Line to Oakridge/41st Station, transfer to 41 route,
- Canada Line to King Edward Station, transfer to 25 route,
- Canada Line to 49th and Cambie Station, transfer to 49 route,
- Canada Line to Broadway- City Hall Station, transfer to 99 (B-line) route, and
- Canada Line to Olympic Village Station, transfer to 84 route.

TransLink's 10 Year Vision² encompasses several upcoming changes in relation to the aforementioned routes; routes 25, 43, 49, and 84 will experience an increase during the weekday peak hours starting 2017-2018 period. Additionally, a B-line (rapid bus route) will be introduced running along 41st Avenue between Joyce Station and UBC is expected to be in provision by 2019. The aim of these changes is to increase ridership on public transportation, whilst reducing costs and congestion.

Despite these forthcoming changes to bus routes connecting to UBC, capacity issues remain at connections along the Canada Line towards UBC, and their intersections remains a key regional connectivity node for ridership outside of Richmond. Students have raised concerns about constantly full busses when seeking connections from the Canada Line. Through the U-Pass Advisory Committee, Translink shared with post-secondary institutions that the 480 is amongst the 25 most used bus route for U-Pass holders. Moreover, the Canada Line's two-car system has resulted in congestion along stations. An article published by CTV News in October 2016,³ based on data provided by TransLink, supports students' concerned experiences, where it is reported that the 99, 49, 41, and 25 are the routes with the highest number of pass-ups annually. All of these routes are

¹ Translink: Southwest Area Transport Plan: <http://www.translink.ca/en/Plans-and-Projects/Area-Planning/Southwest-Area-Transport-Plan.aspx>

² Translink: Ten Year Vision <http://tenyearvision.translink.ca/>

³ Woodward, Jon. "'It's Every Day': Bus Pass-ups on the Rise in Metro Vancouver." CTV News, 11 Oct. 2016. Web.



possible transfer options; however, they are already highly frequented routes by UBC riders. By directing additional volume of riders to the Canada Line, it would increase congestion rather than reduce it.

For UBC ridership outside of Richmond proper, such as Delta or Tsawwassen, cancellation would pose as an ever more significant commute challenge to them. Additional transfers on a long commute in a region that is underserved would only increase travel time, and decrease efficiency and ease. At an open-house on July 7, 2017 at Bridgeport station for the SWATP, a representative further noted that TransLink is aware of the current deficit in capacity of its east-west bus routes serving UBC. The cancellation of the 480 would further undermine this deficit.

While no information on the timeline of proposed changes on the 480 route was found on TransLink's website and published reports, the Translink representative indicated at the open-house that the 480 cancellation is tentative to increasing the Canada Line service during peak hours as well as the provision of the proposed 41st Avenue B-line. It also had been mentioned that it is unlikely for the proposed changes to take effect before 2019.

Recommendations

Although the 480 may have decreased slightly in overall ridership, it remains a key connection for riders from Richmond, Surrey, Tsawwassen, White Rock, and beyond. The 2015 Transit Service Performance Review shows that in 2015,⁴ there were just under one million riders, on a service that operates solely from Monday to Friday. This indicates that the value of the 480 remains, especially to students of UBC who commute to the university from East/Westbound areas.

⁴ *Translink's Transit Service Performance Review 2015*: http://www.translink.ca/-/media/Documents/plans_and_projects/managing_the_transit_network/2015%20TSPR/2015%20Transit%20Service%20Performance%20Review.pdf



The AMS asks Translink to reconsider the cancellation of the 480 and recommends that TransLink assess alternative options that would optimize the 480 service, such as:

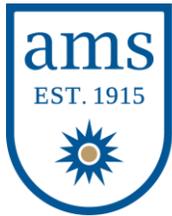
- Limit operations to the morning and evening weekday peak hours
- Reducing the number of stops in areas of congestion along the route based on Compass Card data,
- Rerouting the service:
 - a. For example, instead of taking South Granville up to 41st Avenue like the 41, the 480 could remain on Southwest Marine Drive before reaching UBC. This prioritizes the needs of commuter students for students from areas such as Richmond, Tsawwassen, and White Rock - the majority of the ride base for UBC students using the 480.⁵
 - b. It is a key consideration to avoid areas of congestion such as Kerrisdale Neighbourhood. Other major bus routes such as the 41 and 43 pass through Kerrisdale and congestion during peak hours yields very slow moving traffic.

Lastly, the AMS encourages Translink to facilitate a smooth transition between the services, ensuring that alternative services and frequency increases can accommodate the shift in population growth and commute flows.

Closing

The AMS is aware that TransLink is a publicly-funded authority whose goal is to provide essential transportation services and infrastructure within the Metro Vancouver region. Translink's system is integral to AMS members and the greater community. The population growth at UBC will occur in tandem with the population growth of the Greater Vancouver Region, both of which will rely on Translink's services for an efficient and

⁵ This statement is predicated on the assumption that this could cause a disadvantage to riders who use the 480 from Granville St to UBC. Nevertheless, there are other bus routes readily available to these users, who live in a highly frequented area, rather than those who use the 480 as part of a long commute.



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affordable commute option. The AMS acknowledges that a number of UBC community non-student members will also be affected by these changes whereby commuters, especially those with mobility impairments, travelling from Richmond, Tsawwassen, Delta, and Vancouver's South Granville area will require an additional transfer.

The AMS supports TransLink's public consultation via surveys, and encourages transparency to the public regarding existing and collected data from surveys, Compass Cards, and analysis of alternative options. The AMS further supports and encourages TransLink to make implementations which improve the efficiency with which these services are provided, especially those that enhance UBC's connectivity to the surrounding region.