



October 12, 2012
To: Board of Directors, TransLink
Mayors' Council
Regional Transportation Commissioner
Re: HUB input on TransLink's 2013 Base Plan

HUB: Your Cycling Connection (formerly known as the Vancouver Area Cycling Coalition) is a charitable organization that works to make cycling better through education, events and collaboration. We are Metro Vancouver's leader in making cycling an attractive choice for everyone.

HUB recognizes that Metro Vancouver is fortunate to have a progressive governance structure in which one organization, TransLink, is the key transportation authority for the whole region. However, recent funding challenges which have led TransLink to prioritize and cut planned initiatives, especially those related to cycling, cause us great concern.

We would like to take this opportunity provided by TransLink to give input on the proposed [2013 Base Plan](#). The currently proposed plan, which sets cycling funding at \$3M annually, retracts on previous plans to restore funding for cycling upgrades to \$6M. This was the level for the years 2007 – 2010. We also note that, of the \$3M still said to be slated for cycling, \$1M has been moved to the Road Rehabilitation Capital bucket, which can be used for either road or cycling projects. This amount for cycling will not go far in the region.

We are very concerned with the level of funds being allocated to cycling. In these difficult financial circumstances, cycling should be prioritized higher, as it is the most economical form of transportation to build and maintain and will help TransLink achieve its goals. TransLink has set out a target of 10% cycling mode share by 2040 and funding certainly needs to be increased to meet this target. There is demand from over 60% of the population who are regular or interested cyclists, and cycling is the fastest growing mode in Metro Vancouver, according to TransLink's own research.

Cycling is important to TransLink meeting its commitments

TransLink has committed to important quality of life goals both as part of its own [Transport 2040 plan](#) and as part of its requirements to support Metro Vancouver's [Regional Growth Strategy](#). HUB is very supportive of these promises to a better life for our region's residents.

The Transport 2040 plan has six high level goals. Increased cycling mode share is an especially important tool in achieving the first, second and fifth goals:

- Goal 1. Greenhouse gas emissions from transportation are aggressively reduced, in support of federal, provincial and regional targets
- Goal 2. Most trips are by transit, walking and cycling
- Goal 5. Economic growth and efficient goods movement are facilitated through effective management of the transportation network

T. 604.558.2002
info@bikehub.ca
bikehub.ca

Mailing Address
Box 47068, RPO City Square
Vancouver, BC
V5Z 4L6 Canada

Office Address
1-828 West 8th Ave.
Vancouver, BC
V5Z 1E3 Canada



More cycling can also play a direct and critical role in achieving two of the five goals in the Regional Growth Strategy:

- Goal 3. Protect the environment and respond to climate change impacts
- Goal 5. Support sustainable transportation choices

Increased cycling mode share, and a related reduction in motor vehicle mode share, has the following benefits, which will directly support the goals listed above.

- A more competitive economy
Lee Malleau, CEO of the Vancouver Economic Commission, recently spoke at a Metro Vancouver Regional Dialogue. Malleau mentioned several times how efficient transportation plays a critical role in a functioning economy. This is both in terms of the smooth operations of businesses that rely on goods and people to move efficiently, and from the point of view of attracting skilled people to our region. Increased cycling mode share means less pressure on our stressed road infrastructure and finite usable urban land area.
- More affordable cost of living
Those who choose to commute by bicycle for some or all of their trips enjoy lower costs for transportation. This means increased disposable income and a more affordable cost of living – an issue that local governments are struggling to address these days.
- Healthier environment
Fewer greenhouse gas emissions mean cleaner air and fewer climate change impacts to have to prepare for. As more people move to cycling, less space is required for roads, and there is less noise pollution.
- Healthier, happier residents
People who get more exercise experience improved health and a more positive attitude. Increased exercise is also linked to improved productivity in the workplace¹. Cycling's benefits of reduced pollution and noise are great contributors to better health for everyone. Furthermore, urban settings with less motor vehicle traffic are more conducive to fostering communities in which people get outside and engage with each other and their environment.

Increased cycling mode share can reduce the overall pressure on the transit and road systems. At the same time, it can increase ridership on the rail network because the catchment area of stations is larger for those who choose to cycle there.

In contrast, the money that TransLink gives to municipalities for road maintenance and rehabilitation does not make sense given our needs in the region. The current investment structure does not facilitate increased walking or cycling to transit, or increase the efficiency of transit. With revenue from the gas tax decreasing, road maintenance and rehabilitation is the first area that should be cut, as it does not increase transit revenue or decrease the cost of running the transit system. Interestingly, providing funding for roads has not appeared to have led to increased support for TransLink by motorists.

¹Pronk & Kottke, 2009. *Physical activity promotion as a strategic corporate priority to improve worker health and business performance*



Cycling is a fiscally prudent and effective way to achieve TransLink's goals

Cycling is the most economical form of transportation to build and maintain². Investments in cycling will pay off in the long term much more than in road and transit infrastructure.

We can easily achieve great increases in cycling mode share if we make the effort. Half of all trips in Metro Vancouver are less than 5km in length³, which is a comfortable and time-competitive cycling distance. It is realistic to expect portions of Metro Vancouver, especially the urban centres, to dramatically increase cycling mode shares. Copenhagen, for example, has cycling mode share around 40% thanks in large part to the provision of safe cycling infrastructure. Already, cycling mode share for all trips in Metro Vancouver has increased from 1.5% in 2004 to 2% in 2011. This is a good indication that recent investments are paying off.

From an equity perspective, it is interesting to note that cyclists do not receive investment in cycling at a rate that is up to their current mode share of 2% – their share of the TransLink budget is around 0.2%. We note that the subsidy provided to transit riders is about \$400M per year⁴, while the transit mode share is about 15%. By proportion, cycling should receive about \$53M. If cycling received only half as much, cycling mode share would increase rapidly and everyone in the region would enjoy the benefits much more quickly.

HUB's recommendations

Regional decision-makers know that the current system of investment is not working. We are not on the path to achieving our vision for the region. Our recommendations for TransLink moving forward are as follows.

1. **Restore funding for cycling to \$6M for 2013; plan to increase this to \$30M for coming years.** HUB would like to see Metro Vancouver residents enjoy cycling funding at levels enjoyed by people in cities with world-class cycling infrastructure – \$40 per person per year. Knowing that this is not realistic for 2013, we request that funding be restored to the previous level of \$6M. We recommend that the majority of this be re-allocated from funds currently under the road maintenance budget. On a more general budgeting note, it is time that cycling improvements, such as connections to transit stations and the completion of the regional cycling network, be funded as capital programs in the same way that transit and road programs are.
2. **Prioritize the following types of cycling infrastructure and programs.** Funding should be prioritized based on an initiative's ability to achieve increased mode share for sustainable transportation, and it should be allocated to municipalities in a similar fashion to the road maintenance that it replaces. In particular, the following types of initiatives should be prioritized.
 - a. **Cycling and walking access to transit.** TransLink has no funds dedicated to improving cycling or walking access to transit stations or stops. This is an area that can improve circumstances for users of all types of sustainable transportation. The 2012 plan had a \$30M budget for station area upgrades of this type, but this has unfortunately been cut. Cycling improvements up to 2km

² TransLink Regional Cycling Strategy, p.12

³ Ibid

⁴ TransLink 2013 Base Plan



- from rapid transit stations and bus exchanges are urged, as is increased bike parking at stations. Note that these improvements can increase ridership revenue for TransLink, which is generally not the case with road funding.
- b. **Cycling infrastructure improvements and promotional programs in areas and times that parallel peak demand on transit lines.** By replacing ridership on sections with peak demand, costly capacity expansion could be delayed, enabling funds to be invested in badly needed transit improvements elsewhere; this potentially could generate incremental transit ridership revenue. An example is the Expo Line between Commercial Drive and Main Street. The peak demand period for transit is early September – the perfect time of year for cycling. Improved cycling facilities and promotional programs to encourage cycling at this time of year could enable the more effective deployment of transit service.
 - c. **Cycling infrastructure that completes the regional network.** People will not use a form of transportation that does not get them from point A to point B in a connected way. To ensure that cycling is viewed as convenient and accessible to all, we need to complete the regional network of cycling infrastructure.
 - d. **Cycling education, awareness and promotion.** These areas are historically underfunded. It is critical to parallel all cycling infrastructure upgrades with education and awareness campaigns to ensure that the investment is fully taken advantage of. Cycling education and promotion is also essential for increased safety and improved interactions between all road users, especially as we hope to see a shift in mode shares which will necessitate a change in behaviours.
3. **Work more closely with other levels of government to re-evaluate funding sources and initiative priorities.** The Provincial Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure and Metro Vancouver need to help TransLink further evaluate all feasible funding sources. These should include a regional road pricing strategy to generate a sustainable revenue stream that effects positive behavior change, and a re-examination of whether BC Carbon Tax revenues should be directed towards initiatives that tackle climate change issues. Also, there needs to be a push to free up TransLink's federal gas tax funds for use for cycling infrastructure. This stipulation on the use of this money does not exist in other regions in Canada, and it makes no sense since the gas tax is meant to be spent on initiatives that reduce GHG emissions and/or facilitate cleaner air and water. Finally, as recommended by Metro Vancouver staff in a [report](#) to the Regional Planning and Agriculture Committee, TransLink should work closely with Metro Vancouver to prepare a new Regional Transportation Strategy to ensure integration with the Regional Growth Strategy and the Integrated Air Quality and Greenhouse Gas Management Plan.

Thank you for your consideration of our input at this important time in determining TransLink's future and its impact on our region.

Sincerely,

Tess Kitchen
President, HUB