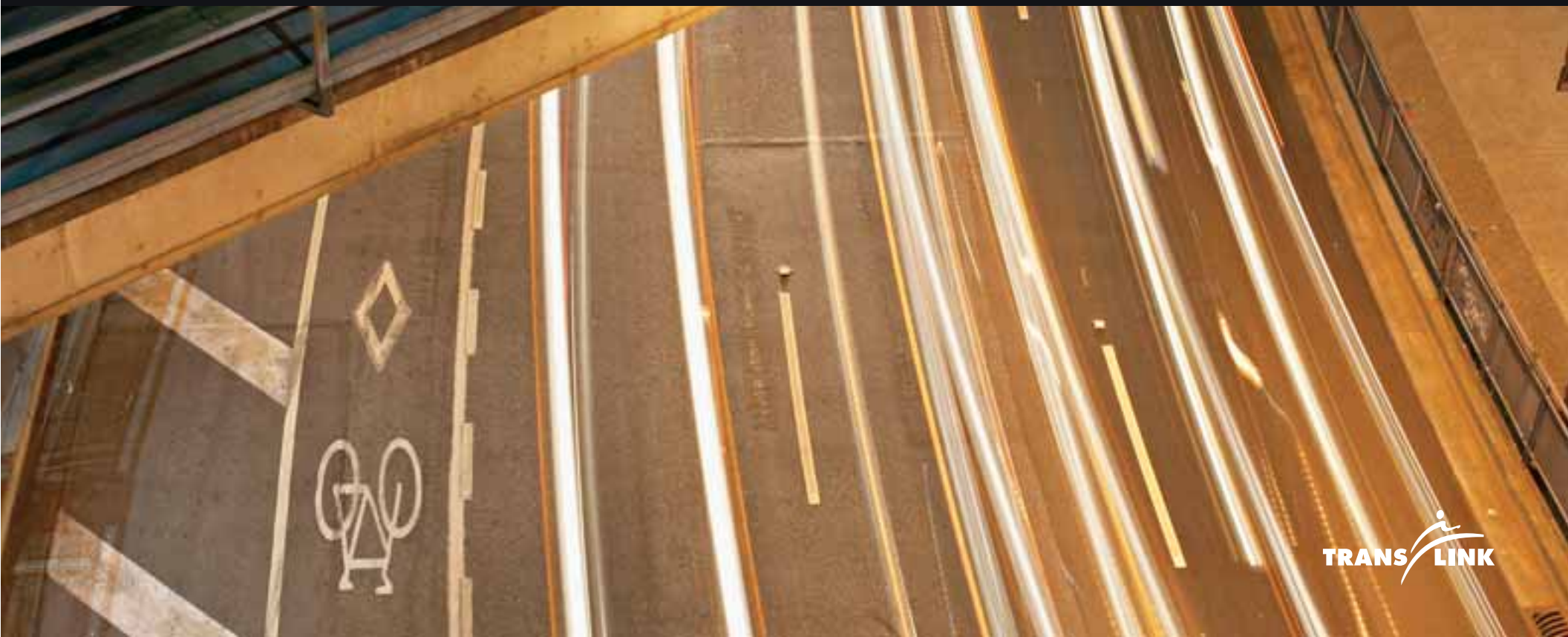




THE ROAD LESS TRAVELLED

TransLink's Improbable Journey from 1999 to 2008



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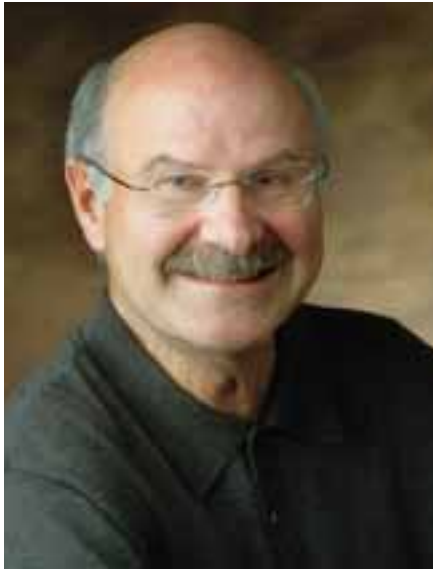
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PREFACE

by **Mike Harcourt**

Mike Harcourt is a former premier of British Columbia, mayor of Vancouver, and city councillor. His work has helped B.C. become one of the most livable regions in the world. Today, he continues to champion sustainable development and livable communities worldwide, and has been honoured for his efforts with the Woodrow Wilson Award for Public Service, and the Canadian Urban Institute's Jane Jacobs Lifetime Achievement Award. In 2006, he chaired the Prime Minister's Advisory Committee for Cities and Communities, and co-chaired the National Advisory Committee on the UN-HABITAT World Urban Forum.



MIKE HARCOURT

In the 1990s, transportation was the top issue in the Lower Mainland. Skyrocketing rates of car ownership and gridlock on the roads made commuting a nightmare, as well as challenging efficient goods movement and producing environmentally damaging emissions. The provincial government and leaders of the 20 municipalities making up the Greater Vancouver Regional District (GVRD) knew at that time this situation couldn't go on.

The solution, the GVRD believed, lay in a regional response. With no other transportation model coming close to fitting its needs, Greater Vancouver blazed its own trail, developing a regional agency with unprecedented authority to tackle the crisis. Through negotiations with the Province of British Columbia, TransLink was born in 1999: a unique, made-in-B.C. solution unmatched by any transportation authority in the world.

TransLink has three key features. First, it is responsible for creating a transportation network to move people and goods efficiently, and building capacity to handle population growth and meet the municipalities' economic plans. Second, it is responsible for both the major road network and the public transit system - in almost every other city, these areas are the responsibility of separate departments. Third, it has the means to raise its own funds through taxation—a key change from its predecessor BC Transit, who had to appeal to the province for funding every year.

The structure works. In the years since its formation, TransLink's work has brought a wealth of benefits to our region.

For instance, after a decade that saw virtually no expansion of transit services, TransLink increased transit service hours by 32 per cent since 1999. The bus fleet expanded from 1092 vehicles to over 1400. Specialized services like community shuttles and rapid bus lines have been added, and ridership jumped due to programs like the Vancity U-Pass.

TransLink also builds key roads and bridges to keep the region moving, expanding its capital budget from \$600 million in 1999 to about \$5 billion in 2008. Projects include the new Golden Ears Bridge opening in 2009, connecting Maple Ridge and Pitt Meadows to Surrey and Langley. The bridge ties directly into the road upgrades of the province's Gateway Program, improving regional traffic flows immensely.

Opening in 2009, the new Canada Line provides a rapid transit link between Richmond, Vancouver, and the Vancouver International Airport. The line offsets the need for more roads and bridges, adding the transit capacity of 10 major road lanes to a corridor containing one-third of our region's jobs, and one-fifth of its population.

And TransLink's work has helped the region reduce its environmental impact. New transit vehicles run on cleaner diesel fuels that use less fuel and produce far fewer emissions, and 141 diesel-electric hybrid buses are even cleaner. TransLink also continues investing in zero-emission electric trolley buses, replacing its entire trolley fleet to low-floor models. Cycling infrastructure and bike access to transit are also major priorities: most TransLink buses are now equipped with bike racks, and bike lockers are in many SkyTrain stations.

What will blow everyone's socks off, however, is TransLink's next five to seven years. With 2008 bringing a new board structure and more dedicated funding, TransLink can now truly deliver on its promise of transporting people and goods while responding to the needs of municipalities.

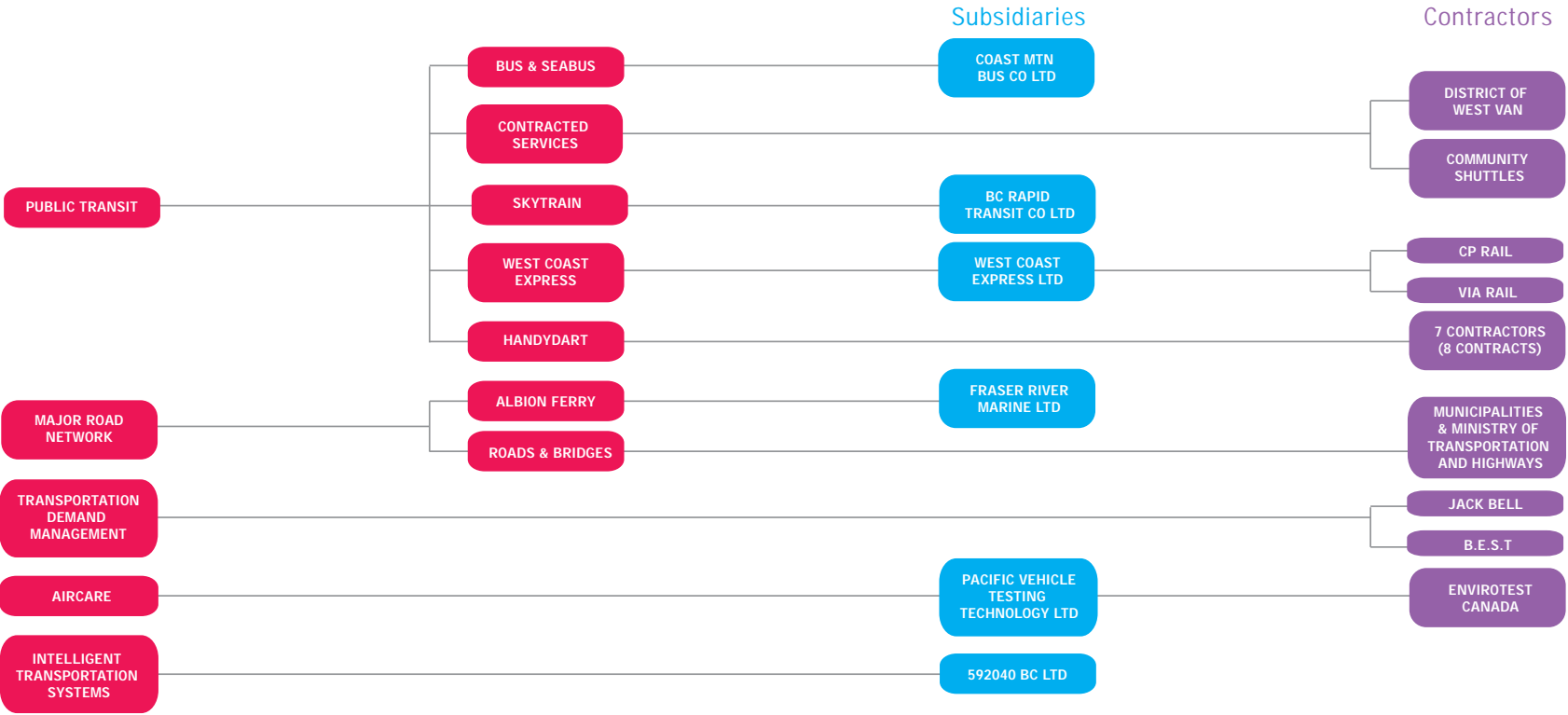
Aligning with provincial plans, TransLink is already planning two new rail rapid transit lines, the Evergreen Line and UBC Line, as well as an extension of the Expo Line. Seven more high-capacity rapid bus lines will also be launched in Metro Vancouver. TransLink's new real estate function is looking to shape smarter, denser city development early on. Through these projects and more, TransLink is moving toward a complete regional transportation system, offering a viable alternative to the car, and linking city centres and corridors that are greener and more compact.

So enjoy this book: a thorough look at the monumental task of building TransLink, and the successes and challenges overcome in its first decade of growth. There are many amazing achievements in these years. What comes next will be even more spectacular.

Michael Harcourt

SERVICES

OPERATING



TransLink is responsible for planning, financing, and managing transportation modes and services in the Metro Vancouver region of British Columbia.

The first North American transportation authority responsible for both roads and transit, TransLink also oversees transportation demand management, cycling facilities, AirCare vehicle emissions testing, and intelligent transportation systems technology. This model allows TransLink to plan the network as a strategic whole, and has drawn acclaim from transportation experts worldwide.

Coast Mountain Bus Company

The Coast Mountain Bus Company (CMBC) was created on April 1, 1999, and was formerly known as BC Transit within Metro Vancouver. It is TransLink's largest subsidiary, with a current fleet of more than 1,400 buses and over 5,000 employees. CMBC operates over 96 per cent of the region's bus service, which includes 208 state-of-the-art clean diesel buses and 228 zero-emission trolleys. Contracted companies, including West Vancouver Blue Bus and community shuttle services, operate the remaining four per cent of regional bus service.

CMBC also operates the SeaBus passenger ferries, a vital link between North Vancouver and downtown Vancouver. These two vessels, which carry up to 400 passengers each, were a world first when launched in 1977. The SeaBus crosses Burrard Inlet 45,000 times a year and carried more than 94 million passengers by 2007.

BC Rapid Transit Company

The British Columbia Rapid Transit Company operates the internationally respected SkyTrain advanced rapid transit system, which connects downtown Vancouver with Burnaby, New Westminster, and Surrey. TransLink's SkyTrain is the world's longest automated light rapid transit system. SkyTrain began with the Expo Line, built for the Expo 86 World Fair, with the Millennium Line added in 2002. The two lines have a combined total of 49.5-kilometres of track and 33 stations. The system uses the same family of linear induction motor-driven trains found in Toronto, New York, and Kuala Lumpur. SkyTrain is one of the country's largest transit services, carrying over 65 million people every year.

West Coast Express

West Coast Express runs the rail and bus service that connects Mission, Maple Ridge, Pitt Meadows, Port Coquitlam, Coquitlam, and Port Moody with downtown Vancouver. It is the travel choice of over 9,000 a day and

THE TRANSLINK FAMILY OF COMPANIES

over two million customers a year, and makes the 65-kilometre commute to downtown in just over an hour.

WCE's five trains are vital for the northeast-sector, taking customers into downtown Vancouver during the morning peak period, and back to their communities in the afternoon peak. The company's mission is for customers to love riding their service; amenities include computer plug-ins and a cappuccino bar. The system's double decker coaches are also climate-controlled, wheelchair accessible, and equipped to carry bicycles.

Fraser River Marine Transportation

The Albion Ferry Service is operated by Fraser River Marine Transportation Ltd. Currently, the Albion Ferry is the only Fraser River crossing between the Port Mann and Mission bridges. Over 70,000 crossings between Langley and Maple Ridge are made annually by two vehicle ferries. Ferry service will end when the new six-lane \$800 million Golden Ears Bridge opens in 2009.

Intelligent Transportation Systems

Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) involves the application of computer and communications technologies to maximize the efficiency and safety of the transportation network. ITS minimizes congestion, improves safety and security, reduces harmful emissions and provides access to better traveler information. ITS enables integration and interoperability between systems to support goods movement and intermodal travel, allowing agencies in the region to provide a seamless, smoother and safer trip throughout the network.

Pacific Vehicle Testing Technology

AirCare, created in 1992 to address the deteriorating air quality of the Lower Fraser Valley, provides emission testing and identifies vehicles with excess emissions. Excess polluters are required to make repairs to reduce emissions or their license and insurance may not be renewed. Most of the region's passenger cars, light-duty trucks, and motor homes are required to have AirCare

emissions inspection. New vehicles are exempt from testing until they are seven model years old. Pacific Vehicle Testing Technologies delivers inspection in Metro Vancouver and the Fraser Valley. These centres will perform some 562,000 inspections in 2008.

AirCare has been a big success—12 years after its inception, vehicle-generated emissions in the region were reduced by 71 per cent, with AirCare-related repairs responsible for 29 per cent.

Transportation Demand Management

TransLink's Transportation Demand Management group aims to reduce single-occupant vehicle trips within Metro Vancouver—to improve the air, fight climate change, and reduce congestion. Through its Commuting Options program, the group serves commuters with cost effective alternatives and carpooling.

One program, Employer Pass, offers a 15 per cent discount on a transit

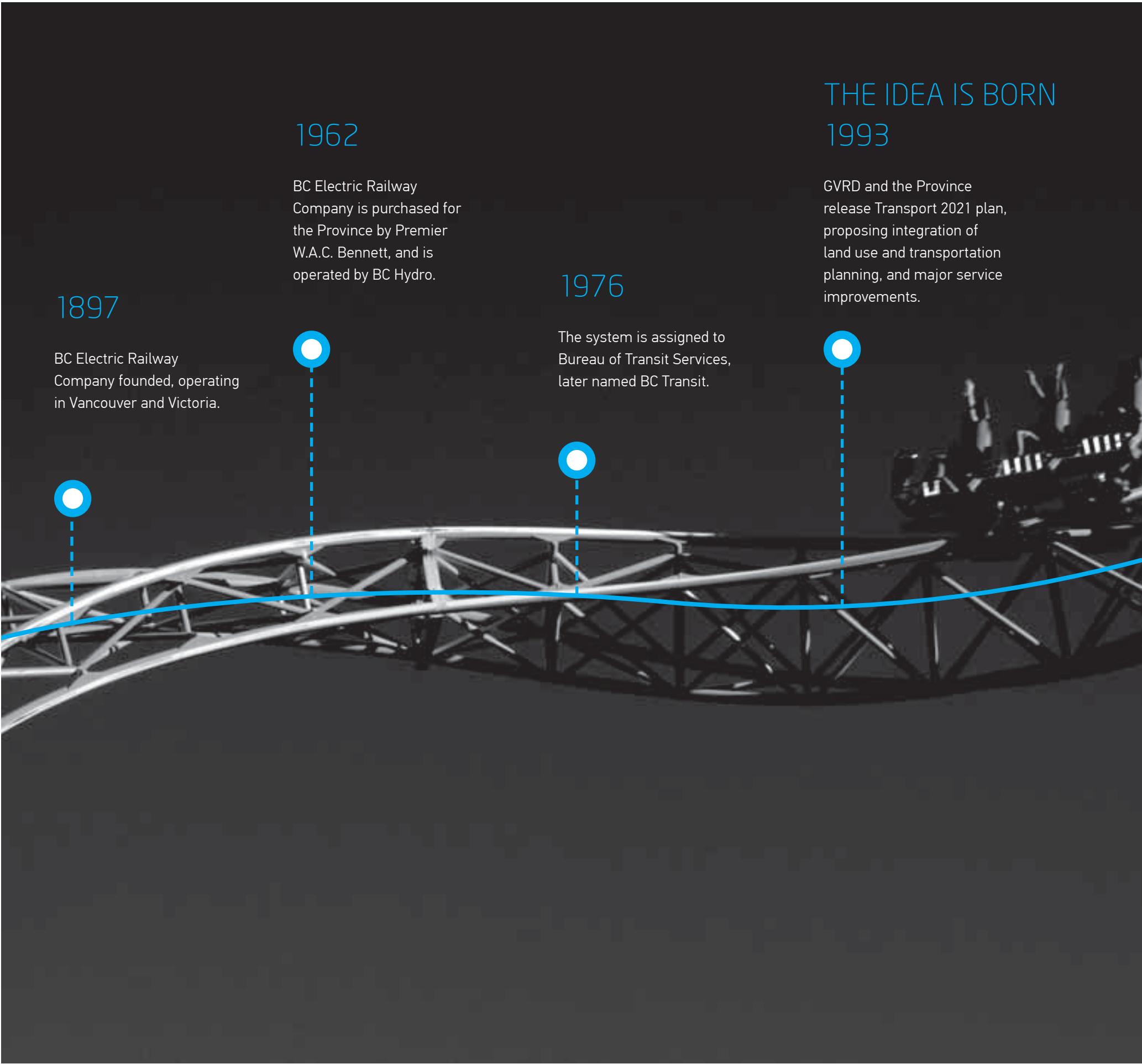
pass when 25 or more employees from a company participate. By 2007, over 240 companies and 15,000 employees were on board, all playing an important part in converting vehicle trips to transit trips.

Park and Ride sites are found throughout Metro Vancouver, and all 20 are located at major bus loops and SkyTrain stations so commuters can use transit for a portion of their trip. TransLink also assists several carpooling programs, such as Jack Bell Ride-Share, a not-for-profit organization offering an online ride-matching database for casual ridesharing partners, in addition to formal car and vanpool groups. The Company Car is a corporate car-share program created in partnership with the Cooperative Auto Network. It provides businesses with access to corporate vehicles so they can save on gas and parking costs.



IGNITION: CREATING THE WORLD'S FIRST MULTI-MODAL TRANSPORT AUTHORITY

An idea is born in the early 1990s and steadily grows. The GVRD makes transportation its first priority. Then the province downloads roads responsibility to municipalities. In 1999, to everyone's surprise, the province and region agree on a multi-modal transportation authority. Funding decisions? Those would come later.



1897

BC Electric Railway Company founded, operating in Vancouver and Victoria.

1962

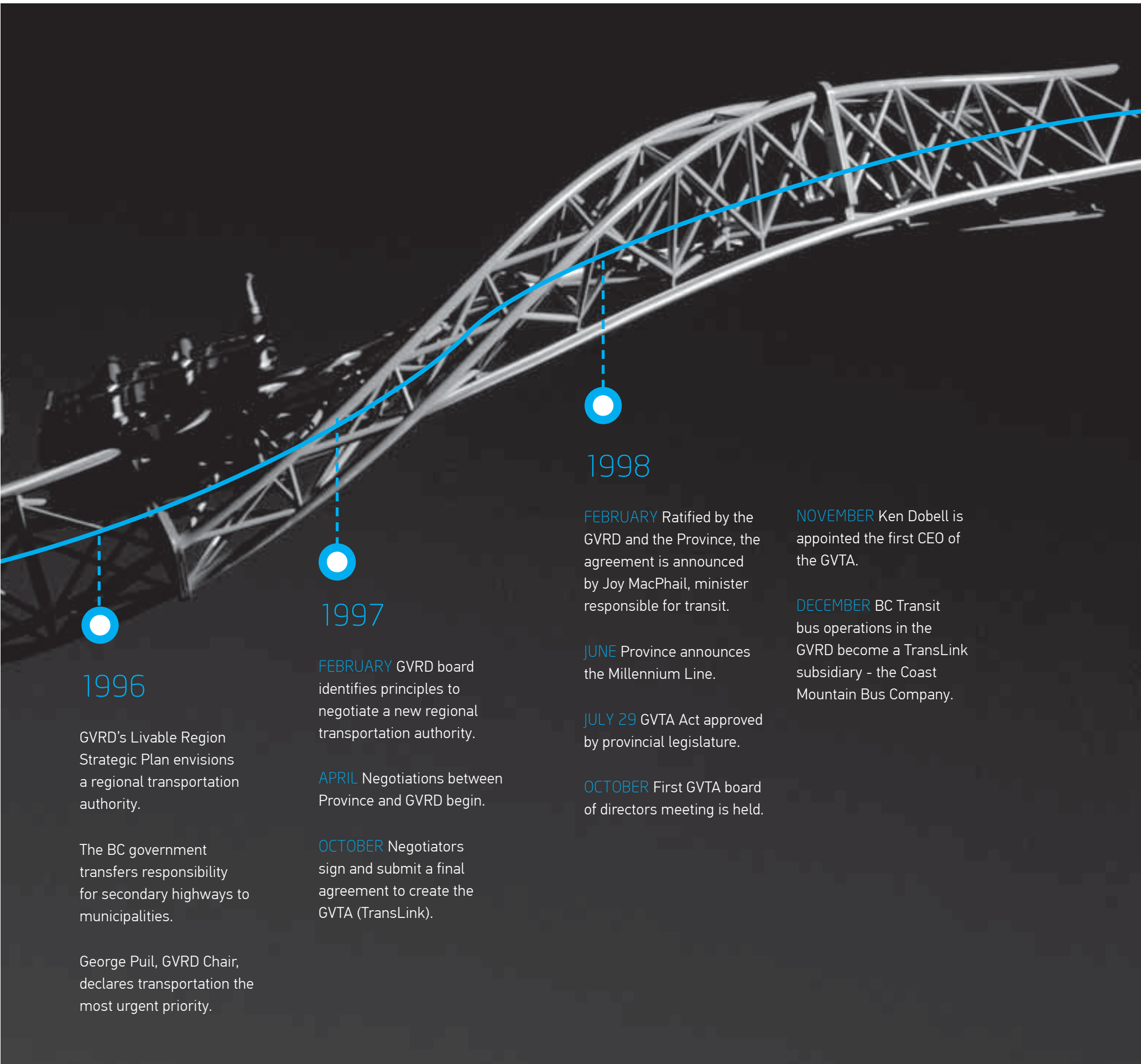
BC Electric Railway Company is purchased for the Province by Premier W.A.C. Bennett, and is operated by BC Hydro.

1976

The system is assigned to Bureau of Transit Services, later named BC Transit.

THE IDEA IS BORN
1993

GVRD and the Province release Transport 2021 plan, proposing integration of land use and transportation planning, and major service improvements.





TRANSLINK: A NEW MODEL FOR MANAGING TRANSPORTATION

On April 1, 1999, a transportation agency unlike any other was born. That day, seven Lower Mainland municipal officials boarded buses, SkyTrain, SeaBus, and West Coast Express, heading for a Burnaby boardroom and the official ceremony to launch the Greater Vancouver Transportation Authority, also known as TransLink.

TransLink's founders created an agency with the power to improve the transportation network on multiple fronts, intended to bring dramatic transportation enhancements to the region as a whole.

TransLink was the world's first multi-modal transportation authority, tasked with creating an efficient transportation network to move people and goods well. To help build this network, the new agency had authority over both major roads and public transportation, and would coordinate transportation development with land use plans from the 20 municipalities of the Greater Vancouver Regional District (GVRD).

At the time, Greater Vancouver had the highest per capita automobile ownership in Canada, and the number of registered vehicles in the Lower Mainland increased at nearly three per hour. Sixty per cent of commuter car trips crossed municipal boundaries, but the road network lacked the structured approach required to effectively manage it.

In short, transportation conditions were far from what was needed to support the thriving economy of Canada's Asia Pacific gateway and the

country's third largest urban region. Greater Vancouver residents were also clamouring for action: just three years earlier, transportation was rated the top issue in the region, and 50 per cent of residents believed that better transit was the solution.

And so, from the growing transportation crisis, TransLink was born. The new and promising idea behind the organization was that, unlike its predecessor BC Transit, TransLink would go beyond public transit. Bestowing the new authority with responsibility for transit and major roads in the region, TransLink's founders created an agency with the power to improve the transportation network on multiple fronts, intended to bring dramatic transportation enhancements to the region as a whole.

Through the GVRD, TransLink would work with all municipalities in the regional district to develop and maintain a major road network,

and coordinate transit and land use planning. This integrated approach not only made sense from a funding and governance point of view, it also meant operational changes could be made to relieve congestion and pollution in one of the country's fastest growing areas.

By drawing together experienced staff, a variety of revenue sources, and regional growth strategies, TransLink aimed to benefit all businesses and residents within the GVRD—from cyclists, transit users, and car commuters, to those transporting goods and services.



LIFE BEFORE TRANSLINK

Compared to most major metropolitan areas in North America in the mid 1990s, public transit in the Greater Vancouver region was an anomaly.

“ BC Transit wasn't doing a bad job, but it was just transit. And it was very mode-specific, yet the challenges are multi-modal, ”

Clive Rock

The Vancouver metropolitan area was one of only a few regions in North America where transit was operated by the provincial government, rather than run at the local level. This was because public transit in Vancouver had been chiefly run by a private company, the BC Electric Railway Company, which had operated both the streetcars and the electrical system since 1897. BC Electric was purchased by Premier W.A.C. Bennett and his Social Credit provincial government in 1962, and after that the transit system was juggled from one provincial entity to another. At one point, transit was a division of BC Hydro, with excess power from the grid transferred to streetcars and trolleys.

Eventually, the system was handed off to the Bureau of Transit Services in 1976, and then to the Urban Transit Authority in 1978, and later renamed BC Transit.

BC Transit became a sprawling and complex entity. A provincial crown corporation, it provided all services, controlled expenditures, and established contracts. Its services were divided geographically; two separate units each responsible for Victoria and Vancouver, and a third which oversaw municipal systems in communities throughout the province. For Vancouver, a separate commission of seven elected municipal officials made pricing decisions, including fare increases.

But BC Transit's major problem was its funding. Instead of having a stable income, the organization was required to go to the provincial government each and every year. The result was fluctuating and unpredictable revenue, making implementation of long-term plans effectively impossible.

“BC Transit wasn't doing a bad job, but it was just transit. And it was very mode-specific, yet the challenges are multi-modal,” said Clive Rock, a former

BC Transit executive who became head of GVRD's transportation planning in the mid-1990s, and later served as TransLink's director of strategic planning. The regional district did not have control over public transit, and that was something they wanted to change.

“We thought there was a need for a new kind of approach, but this wasn't just some dream that came about overnight. The region had been trying for decades to get something off the ground,” he recalled.

Laying the foundations

The GVRD's evolving vision for regional transportation can be tracked through its planning documents published in the 1990s, intended to shape the face of the region for years to come. Three of these documents provided key transportation priorities and strategies which would later lead to the creation of TransLink.

“ We thought there was a need for a new kind of approach, but this wasn't just some dream that came about overnight. The region had been trying for decades to get something off the ground. ”

Clive Rock former head of GVRD transportation planning, and TransLink's first director of strategic planning



KEN CAMERON

As manager of the GVRD policy and planning department in the 1990s, Cameron was an early visionary of regional transportation planning, and one of the key figures in negotiating the creation of TransLink. He was appointed CEO of the British Columbia Homeowner Protection Office in 2004.

The first was Creating Our Future, which established measurable goals and targets in many areas of planning, and was approved by the GVRD board of directors in July 1990. Most significant, from a transportation perspective, was that the GVRD and its member municipalities committed to a transportation policy that gave walking, cycling, transit, and goods movement higher priority than the private automobile. The region's growing dependency on cars was causing concerns about air quality, land use, and community choices.

Livable Region Plan targets transportation

The agenda set out in Creating Our Future directly influenced two other key documents: the Transport 2021 and Livable Region Strategic Plan, both of which were based on integrating land use and transportation planning—an approach to regional planning never before seen in Greater Vancouver.

Transport 2021 was completed jointly with the province in 1993. This document set specific strategies for how to achieve increased transportation choice, as set out by Livable Region Strategic Plan—the chief methods were to manage land use, transportation demand, and transportation supply. But the goals it set were lofty, including the construction of three new rapid transit lines, and doubling the 1992 bus fleet from 950 to 1800 buses by 2006, as well as adding new high-occupancy vehicle carpool lanes and additional traffic lanes for general traffic.

"There were all these wonderful plans like Transport 2021, but if you look at that document, it doesn't actually say who would do what, when, and how," Rock said. "It was very easy to approve because it was very abstract. There were these high-level, shimmering visions of the future, but they didn't say 'OK, if you want to get there, this is what you have to do tomorrow.'"

A key proposal in Transport 2021 was some form of road user cost to help fund the major transit fleet expansions, and transit and road infrastructure improvements. Ken Cameron, manager of the GVRD policy and planning department and one of the key figures in developing the legacy plans, viewed transportation as a municipal service like any other.

"You can look at it as if it's no different from water or sewers, or any other kind of utility," Cameron said. "So what are the financing principles behind those utilities? They're user pay, essentially. You use water and sewer revenues to pay for water and sewer services, and the aim was to get transportation services to be autonomous, self-financing, self-constructing utilities."

At \$1.5 billion, Transport 2021 was too rich for the provincial government, who turned to the GVRD to contribute. But without any say in how the planned transit system would operate, the GVRD said no.

The Livable Region Strategic Plan was the GVRD's first growth management strategy. It was derived from Creating our Future and also met the requirements of new provincial

legislation on growth management strategies. Transportation played a key role in the plan—increasing transportation choice was one of its four main principles. While it was only a vision on paper, the plan was nonetheless a critical moment in TransLink's pre-history. The Plan was eventually adopted by the GVRD in 1996.

GVRD aims to take centre stage in transport planning

In September 1996, the first of several transportation governance workshops were held, for which Ken Cameron credits Clive Rock's insight. The two were already friends prior to working at the GVRD, and would carpool to and from work in Cameron's blue Pontiac 6000 station wagon.

"It was Clive who basically said when he came on the scene, 'If there's going to be something different from just straight-up capital provincial projects, and we have to put local money in, there has to be some say in local governance,'" Cameron said. "That was really important insight and influence for me, and he guided that whole process."

Several options for governance were presented during the first workshop. The GVRD ultimately reached the conclusion that it wanted to play the central role in regional transportation, and move toward a solution on a broad and strategic level, while finding a way to use existing tax sources to buy a place at the table.



CLIVE ROCK

Clive Rock is a former BC Transit executive who became head of GVRD's transportation planning in the mid-1990s, and later served as TransLink's director of strategic planning. Rock played a central role in developing the concept of a regional transportation authority, and was a lead negotiator in the high level discussions that led to the founding of TransLink.

“ People had been trying for 20 years and no one had even come close. No one was out to sabotage the process, they just thought it was improbable. ”

Bob Lingwood former BC Transit general manager, Victoria

FIRST STEPS

In December 1996, two key events allowed the concept of a regional transportation authority to gain momentum. The first was the election of George Puil as chair of the GVRD board. A veteran of the parks board, Vancouver city council and the GVRD board for 27 years, Puil had one thing in mind when he became chair: transportation.



GEORGE PUIL

An acknowledged founder of TransLink, George Puil served as its first chair, from 1999 to 2001. When he was elected chair of the Greater Vancouver Regional District, a post he held for six years in the 1990s, Puil declared transportation the number-one political priority—and headed the negotiations with the province to create the Greater Vancouver Transportation Authority. He served as a public representative for 40 years, first elected in 1962 to the Vancouver Parks Board, then to Vancouver City Council in 1976. Puil was a councillor until 2002—the same year he was named Transit Advocate of the Year by the Canadian Urban Transit Association.

“In my inaugural speech, my priority was going to be transportation, because polls had been done and everybody was complaining,” Puil said. “Ironically enough, both Ken Cameron [GVRD policy and planning manager] and Clive Rock [head of GVRD transport planning] had been working on this vision about what they wanted. And I had no background in transportation, but had pretty good teachers in those guys.”

Ken Cameron was shocked by the announcement. “I had no idea he’d wanted to do this, and we certainly had not had any conversations about it,” he said. “It’s interesting to see what happens to someone when they get executive power, how they become constructive and forceful for good things.”

The second major event was a decision by the provincial government to unilaterally “declassify” the responsibility of approximately 600 kilometres of provincial secondary

highways to municipalities. Many municipalities found themselves with the unexpected burden of maintaining these newly acquired roads. The GVRD pounced on the decision as an opportunity to negotiate a new governance and funding agreement for not only the transit system, but the roads as well. Today, Cameron points at the declassification as being a major reason why ultimately a transportation authority was created, instead of merely a transit authority.

A 1997 study proposed a major road network, consisting of roads and bridges within the GVRD that were regional in function. It also significantly addressed the plans spelled out in the Livable Region Strategic Plan, and included all the provincially downloaded roads. Criteria were set for designating major roads: they had to link activity centres; be key transit corridors for both intra- and inter-municipal travel, major routes for goods movement, or emergency response corridors; and contribute to network continuity.

Putting the pieces together

Negotiations for a planned rapid transit line, comprising the Broadway-Lougheed Highway and Coquitlam-New Westminster lines, had already begun between GVRD and provincial staff. These negotiations suddenly expanded to include governance and financing issues as well.

“We found a very receptive atmosphere provincially,” Cameron said. “They wanted to get out of spending \$250 million a year on subsidies and collecting taxes across the province for it. I mean, raise property taxes in Prince George for buses in Vancouver, how does that work? They really wanted to achieve something.”

However, the leading figures for the GVRD and the provincial government were at opposite ends of the political spectrum: George Puil’s counterpart was Joy MacPhail, the NDP’s minister responsible for transit. “We’re opposites in absolutely every aspect,” MacPhail

“ Getting a funding formula that George and his guys could live with was tough, but it was even more difficult to get it through the treasury board and cabinet. I had to draw on a lot of my political capital to get that through. ”

Joy MacPhail Former BC minister of finance

The leading figures in the negotiations were at opposite ends of the political spectrum. GVRD chair George Puil's counterpart was Joy MacPhail, the NDP's minister responsible for transit.



JOY MACPHAIL

A longtime member of BC's Legislative Assembly, Joy MacPhail served as a cabinet member from 1993-1999 and 2000-2001. It was during her post as Minister of Finance in charge of transit that she played a key leadership role in TransLink's founding. As chief negotiator for the provincial government, MacPhail fought for and won treasury board and cabinet approval for the historic agreement. She was first elected in 1991 as MLA for Vancouver-Hastings and, while in cabinet, also handled the social services and health portfolios.

said. "He's curmudgeonly beyond belief, but an incredibly straight shooter. But I quickly learned to feel a great deal of affection for him. I'm not sure if we would've ended up as successfully as we did without George there."

"When we started, the idea of meeting with her didn't agree with me at all," Puil admitted. "But the more we worked together, the more she grew on me, the more I realized how important she was in getting this deal done."

On the last day of February 1997, the GVRD board adopted several principles for negotiating the new authority. They proposed a comprehensive entity with regional and local control, one that would operate on appropriate and equitable funding, be politically responsible and accountable, and have effective management and operations.

Transport authority unlike any other envisioned

As formal negotiations began, GVRD officials including Puil, Cameron, vice-chair Beth Johnson, and chief administrative officer Johnny Carline traveled to Toronto, Montreal, Boston, and San Diego to research the operation and governance of transportation in those cities. They were not keen on any of the models they studied, and as they crossed each city off their list, one thing became clear: the authority created in Vancouver would be unlike any other in North America.

Before talks could begin, both sides had to appoint negotiators, and ironically enough, both sides wanted the same person: Marvin Shaffer. Shaffer, an economist and policy analyst who had worked for the crown corporation

secretariat, was familiar with the major transportation issues facing the region. However, it was the GVRD who secured Shaffer's services.

"Marvin is quite a bright, creative guy," George Puil said. "He was the best choice we could've made, because most of the things that we got, I think Marvin was responsible for."

The provincial government then brought in two people to negotiate their end of the bargain. The first was Bob Lingwood, BC Transit's general manager of Victoria and municipal systems, a man Joy MacPhail calls one of the best public servants she ever worked with. The second negotiator was Peter Cameron, a labour relations expert who had previously worked for the Ministry of Health during the health sector negotiations, and with whom MacPhail was also familiar. Both Lingwood and Cameron remember the provincial government's skeptical attitude.

It was up to MacPhail to deal with that skepticism. "The reputation I had in the government at the time was that, 'If there's a bag of crap to deal with, give it to Joy.' And this was a bag of crap they were giving to me to deal with," MacPhail said. "So there was hope, but there was no optimism."

"No one was out to sabotage the process, they just thought it was improbable," Lingwood said. "People had been trying for 20 years and no one had succeeded, no one had even come close. But there was a good deal of common ground which made it worthwhile."

On April 5, 1997, the parties sat down to the table to begin what would be

a lengthy process. The first round of negotiations revolved around developing a set of principles to guide the discussion. Once that was achieved, the trio began to tackle the issues one by one. Although the provincial government's objectives were not as specific as the GVRD's, one of its major concerns was labour.

"Because our government ideologically embraced the trade union movement, and because we were such a highly unionized province in the public sector, labour issues were key," MacPhail said. "It's a labour intensive industry, and if the operators are offside then you're screwed, absolutely screwed. We had successor rights, seniority rights, SkyTrain operators versus bus drivers; we had security issues, regional issues...and we had to pull it all together somehow."

"There was some desire on the NDP's part to not poke the union in the eye, but there were some things that had to be done if there was going to be a deal, and not all of them were popular with the unions," Peter Cameron said.

Other issues included the integration of the road system, breaking the new authority into more manageable units with the ability to contract out, plus environmental issues, including whether or not to include AirCare testing as part of the agreement. But the bulk of the negotiations focused on two crucial aspects: governance and funding. What would the board structure look like? How many members would it have, and how would they be appointed? How broad would the scope of their powers be?



MARVIN SHAFFER

An economist and policy analyst who had worked for the province's crown corporation secretariat, Marvin Shaffer became the lead GVRD staff negotiator in negotiations with the provincial government to establish TransLink. Shaffer was also co-chair, with Bob Lingwood, of the transition team that prepared for TransLink's official launch in 1999.



BOB LINGWOOD

As BC Transit's general manager in Victoria, Bob Lingwood was appointed by the provincial government to help cabinet minister Joy MacPhail lead talks with the GVRD to create TransLink. Subsequently, Lingwood was named co-chair, with Marvin Shaffer, of the transition team leading up to TransLink's 1999 launch.

“ We were negotiating with Marvin in his office in White Rock on a Saturday and we put a package on the table. I could just see this look in his eye, and I knew that we had a deal. I didn't say that, but I could just see that he was surprised, and I knew then that this could actually work. ”

Bob Lingwood provincial government appointee to TransLink's transition team

Funding formula a key breakthrough

Everything ultimately came down to money. A vast amount of time was spent on financial forecasting, and developing a model that would work for both parties. Not only did the negotiators have to identify stable revenue sources for the new entity, they also had to figure out how to divide the debt from previously existing projects like SkyTrain. MacPhail said that reaching a funding formula was a huge milestone. “Getting something that George and his guys could live with was tough, but it was even more difficult to get it through the treasury board and cabinet,” she said. “I had to draw on a lot of my political capital to get that through.”

“There was a joke that Peter and I would make: ‘Everything’s great, except for the funding and the governance.’ Well, that was essentially the entire deal,” Shaffer laughed. “But the people I was working for, guys like Clive and Ken, were incredibly committed to this entire vision, and they had been for years at that point. They thought it could be done and should be done. None of us wanted to walk away from this. There were just a lot of pieces of the puzzle, and fitting them together was a bit of a struggle.”

Lingwood pinpoints one key moment

On October 25, 1997, the three negotiators signed the final agreement. The following day, Ken Cameron, Clive Rock, and Johnny Carline gathered to analyze the document. The Greater Vancouver Transportation Authority (GVTA) would have all the functions of BC Transit within the GVRD, allocate funding to municipalities for capital

improvements and maintenance of a major road network, offer transportation demand management programs for residents, and ensure its services met the region’s air quality objectives. The GVTA board was made up of 15 elected officials, including mayors, councillors, and MLAs who represented communities throughout the region.

The province agreed to provide six cents of tax room from the provincial fuel tax, which would be a major funding source, and also give the GVTA the parking sales tax revenue. The GVTA would have the ability to generate a steady stream of revenue through levying taxes; however, any increase in taxes would have to first be approved by the GVRD board. The only increase the GVTA could implement on its own was to transit fares.

However, its goals for expansion fell short of what Transport 2021 had suggested; the negotiators had instead developed a midpoint scenario, halfway between BC Transit’s and GVRD’s 10-Year Transportation Outlooks. All fleet expansions, capital projects, new initiatives, and its funding formula were based upon this midpoint scenario.

The GVTA itself would be a relatively small organization—the actual operations of the various elements within the transit system would be carried out by wholly-owned subsidiaries, some of which already existed, and others, including a new bus company, which could be created by the GVTA. The GVTA itself was concerned with “steering,” not “rowing.”

The road show: winning support for the agreement

The agreement was to be ratified by February 28, 1998, but not without an extensive consultation process first. Cameron, Rock, and George Puil were left with the dubious task of touring all 21 municipalities and making presentations at their council meetings, some of which were extremely hostile due to concerns about the GVTA hiking property taxes. It was a difficult process for Puil, who was recovering from knee surgery and whose patience was wearing thin. “The West Van council was especially cruel,” Rock said. “But George is a scrapper, he’s a really tough guy. He stood his ground in there.”

A similar process with stakeholders, including the BC Trucking Association and the BC Automobile Association, had begun under the leadership of the GVRD’s newly appointed manager of communications and education, Bob Paddon.

“I wouldn’t say it was a slam dunk—not everybody was willing to see this created,” Paddon said. “There was some real hesitation because nothing like it had ever existed in this area before, or anywhere, really. You couldn’t even point your finger at anywhere in the world and say, ‘We want it to be like this’, because ‘this’ wasn’t even there.”

The GVRD board did eventually ratify the agreement by a majority of 70 per cent. The provincial cabinet approved the agreement on the same day. Work began immediately on drafting a piece of legislation that properly reflected the agreement, and all three negotiators joined a team from the provincial

government to work through it clause by clause.

“That legislation is terrific, I was really pleased with the way things turned out,” Puil said. “We got more than we could’ve ever expected to get. I remember the CEO of Calgary’s transit saying, ‘I would’ve died to get that sort of financial arrangement.’ I was quite surprised that the province was willing to get involved and give as much as they gave. It really stunned me.”

On July 30, 1998, the Greater Vancouver Transportation Authority Act was signed into law by the Lieutenant Governor. A new era of developing transportation in the public interest had begun.

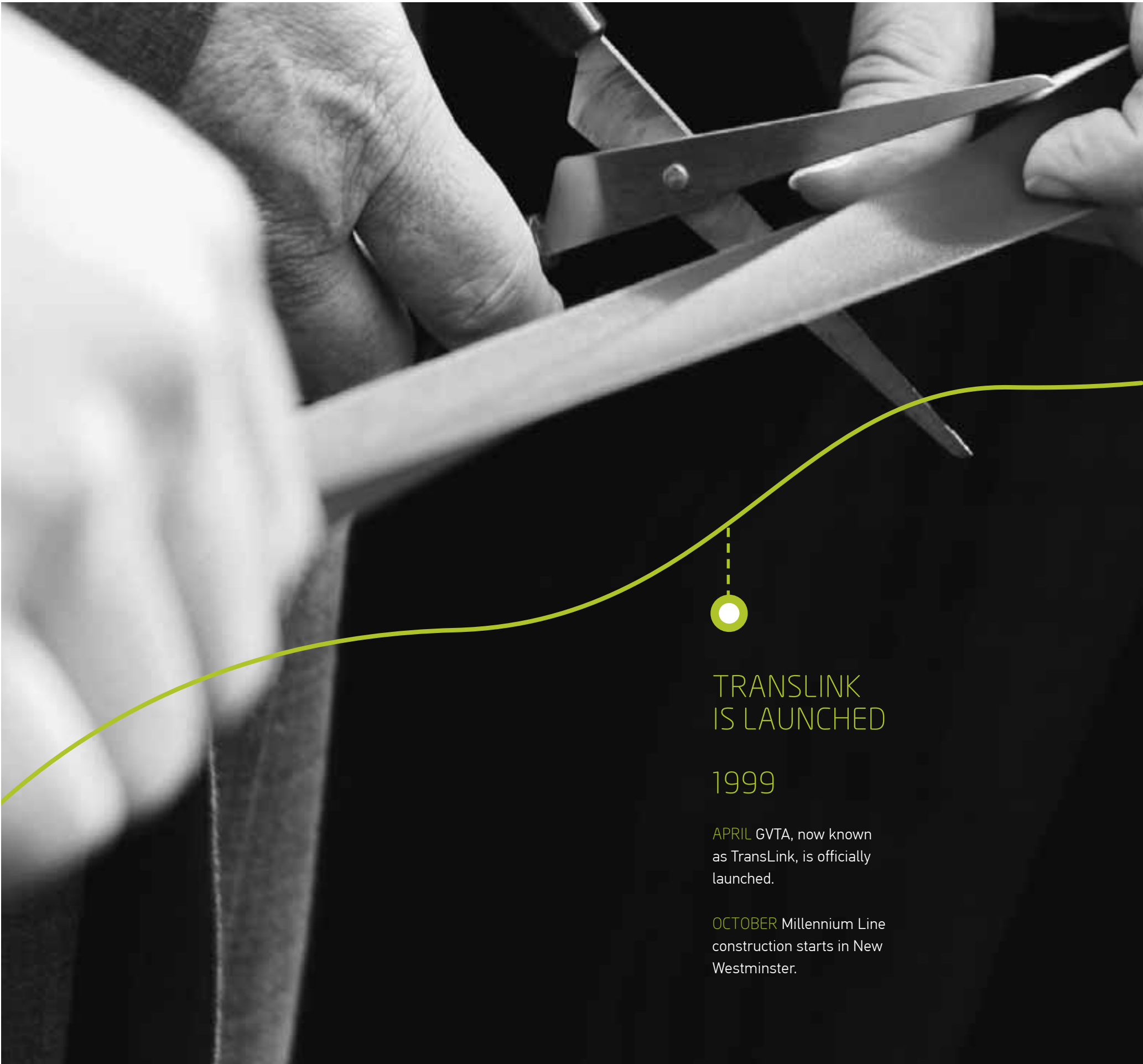




PATHFINDING: EARLY WINS AND SETBACKS IN THE STRUGGLE FOR GROWTH

Fast upgrades to the bus system made a strong first impression. But the vehicle levy is quashed, and TransLink's image takes a few dents. And then a few more, as a bus strike tries the patience of the region. As the population burgeons, the urgency for stable funding grows.

1999 – 2001



TRANSLINK
IS LAUNCHED

1999

APRIL GVTA, now known as TransLink, is officially launched.

OCTOBER Millennium Line construction starts in New Westminster.



2000

APRIL TransLink's Strategic Transportation Plan 2000-2005 is approved by the TransLink board, a year ahead of schedule.

NOVEMBER TransLink and GVRD approve Vehicle Levy proposal.

NOVEMBER Province quashes Vehicle Levy. TransLink reduces services and delays improvements.

2001

JANUARY CEO Ken Dobell announces resignation.

MARCH Auditor General begins review of TransLink financing and governance.

APRIL Bus company workers declare strike; congestion on Greater Vancouver roads skyrockets.

APRIL Pat Jacobsen is appointed CEO of TransLink.

AUGUST Province ends BC's longest transit strike with back-to-work legislation.

AUGUST Auditor General releases a report recommending changes in composition of TransLink's board.

SEPTEMBER Province announces additional gas tax funding—if TransLink can match revenues from local sources.

DECEMBER George Puil steps down as TransLink chair; Surrey mayor Doug McCallum becomes chair.



LEADERS ARE APPOINTED AND THE TRANSITION BEGINS

“We’ll get you there.” With universal promise TransLink launched an education campaign to prepare the public for the imminent shift to the Greater Vancouver Transportation Authority (GVTA). It aimed to build awareness and support for the changes in transit funding and governance that it would bring. If the campaign raised expectations for better transit service, staff teams were already working on plans to meet them.



KEN DOBELL

TransLink’s first chief executive officer, Ken Dobell brought to the position over 30 years experience in urban issues from his career at the City of Vancouver. Starting as a research engineer in 1967, he was appointed deputy city manager in 1978. He became city manager in 1990, a post he held until taking the helm at TransLink in 1998. During the authority’s early months, Dobell led the implementation of key improvements to transportation; among them, upgraded bus services and implementation of the Intelligent Transportation System subsidiary. A key achievement during Dobell’s tenure was the SkyTrain Cost Sharing Agreement, which had the province paying the capital costs for the Millennium Line.

Six months before the hand-off date, a transition team was struck, with Bob Lingwood and Marvin Shaffer, negotiators who helped get the GVTA off the ground, appointed co-chairs. This team was now responsible for running the transit system and setting up appropriate mechanisms in time for the April launch—when they would assume responsibility for the regional road network as well as transit.

Important pieces of the GVTA governance puzzle were also falling into place. The inaugural board of directors was elected in October 1998, and a week later George Puil, who had done so much to bring about its existence, was named founding chair.

Single bus company gets the nod

With the launch fast approaching, a number of major decisions remained. One of the most far reaching was whether the GVTA bus company would be a single entity or divided into multiple subsidiaries. A study

recommended two subsidiaries, one urban and one suburban, to reflect distinct market segments and geographic boundaries. The report also stated that multiple subsidiaries would increase the opportunity for privatization, reduce costs, and encourage innovation. A day after that report was released, Ken Dobell was appointed as the first chief executive officer of the GVTA. Dobell had been a City of Vancouver employee since 1967, and had recently retired from the top post of city manager. He was one of 55 applicants for the GVTA job, and though others had more experience in transportation, few could equal his strong grasp of the issues facing the region. And he had a different view of the bus issue.

“The subsidiary issue was not one we placed at the top of the list,” he said. “There was an existing company, which was not a bad company, so why would you fragment it? Why would you split off Surrey or Delta when the transit

lines cross those boundaries anyway? Sure, there would’ve been some joy in multiple subsidiaries, in competition, and privatization, but it wasn’t a large priority then. We had other issues to deal with.”

Dobell quickly seconded Larry Ward, president and CEO of SkyTrain, to join him and assist in setting up the new authority. Shortly after these appointments, the board decided to organize bus operations and maintenance as a single subsidiary company, and also to establish a heavy maintenance overhaul unit. A public campaign, “Don’t Break Up the Bus System”, also had a significant influence on the decision.

“ We were looking for a name that clearly said 'more-than' a given operating entity. 'TransLink' linked all the modes across the Lower Mainland. ”

Jan Pezarro former TransLink vice-president, customer service and marketing



JAN PEZARRO

Jan Pezarro was TransLink's first vice-president of customer service and marketing, and the third senior staff member to join the new authority. She had previously been with BC Transit and West Coast Express. Among Pezarro's early initiatives was the search for a more approachable name for the GVTA—"TransLink" was the successful choice.



LARRY WARD

From his post as head of British Columbia Rapid Transit Company—operator of the SkyTrain system—Larry Ward joined TransLink in 1999 as senior vice president of planning. He became TransLink's acting CEO during the search for a new leader after Ken Dobell's resignation in 2001.

"TransLink" name gives agency a friendlier image

Jan Pezarro, previously with BC Transit and West Coast Express, was the third senior staff member to join, named as vice-president of customer service and marketing. Pezarro was responsible for many initiatives, but the most evident was the name of the new authority.

"It wouldn't be the letters GVTA, because I felt that was much too bureaucratic," Pezarro said. "We were looking for a name that clearly said 'more than' a given operating entity. So the idea came for TransLink, which is transportation and transit, and linking all those aspects across the Lower Mainland."

Pezarro also wanted the logo to reflect a human focus. "If the philosophy was that this would be a customer-centered entity, we wanted a reminder about what the agency was for," she said. "And at the heart of that, we wanted to support the quality of life and mobility

of the people of the region. Whether those people are customers, whether those people are suppliers of services, whether those people are businesses, we wanted to have something that said, 'Not equipment, not infrastructure, but people.'"

A frenzy of activity led up to the April 1 launch date, including naming the new bus subsidiary the Coast Mountain BusLink, which was selected from nearly 3,000 proposals from the public. However, this name was strikingly similar to another existing company; it was eventually changed to Coast Mountain Bus Company.

With the essentials in place, the new board and senior staff made their way to Burnaby on April 1, 1999 for the ribbon-cutting moment. It was the official launch of a new transport authority for Greater Vancouver, and a new approach to moving people around the region.



EARLY TRANSIT AND ROAD IMPROVEMENTS

TransLink staff got things moving quickly, immediately tackling an array of initiatives in every area of its mandate.

TransLink immediately tackled the changes that had been long-desired under BC Transit.

Prior to launch, head planners from the GVRD and BC Transit were brought together to help develop the authority's first plan. Clive Rock headed up the GVRD personnel, eventually becoming TransLink's director of strategic planning. Glen Leicester, a senior planner from BC Transit, eventually became the vice-president of planning. The two had known each other for years and worked together in the past.

At the start, however, there was some friction between the two groups. "There was definitely a bit of a cultural clash," said CEO Ken Dobell. "Bringing together the GVRD planners and the operational planners out of BC Transit was an interesting kind of challenge because they had very different views, very different opinions, and very different histories." What united them however was a common purpose: to make transportation better for people as soon as humanly possible.

"We all wanted the same thing: to make a difference right away, and see significant changes right off the bat," Leicester said. "But there were huge expectations that things would change overnight, from the public and the municipalities. People just didn't understand; they thought we could get hundreds of buses right away. To get buses, you have to change the infrastructure, you have to build garages, and that's a long process. We wanted to do things and we tried to do them the best we could."

But change did in fact happen quickly. The planners came up with a program to see the new authority through the end of the year, with a total operating budget of \$358.8 million. One hundred and ten buses were delivered in 1999, including 64 to replace aging buses, and 46 for service expansion. By far, the lion's share of the budget was dedicated to transit, with an increase of 140,000 annual hours of bus service proposed.

Bus service tailored to community needs

TransLink immediately tackled the changes that had been long-desired under BC Transit. Notably, different types of buses were brought in to accommodate ridership on various routes. On Bowen Island, for example, two commuter-oriented mini-buses were provided to serve the island of 3,000 people. The concept became a model for flexible community-based transit for out-of-the-way locations. ("Flexible" meant the mini-bus would stop wherever along the route Bowen passengers happen to be waiting.)

For routes to South Surrey and Tsawwassen, highway coach buses were purchased, offering passengers a much more comfortable experience. Bicycle racks were added on certain routes, with plans for all buses to be equipped for bikes by 2005. And looking forward, a planning project in South Surrey and White Rock, called Community Bus 2000, began looking into innovative services for suburban areas.



Planning also began for B-Line service from Vancouver to Richmond, the busiest north-south corridor in Greater Vancouver. The 98 B-Line built on the success of the 99 B-Line linking the Broadway SkyTrain Station to UBC.

As Glen Leicester noted, “In real estate it’s all about location, location, location, but with transit it’s all about frequency, frequency, frequency.”

In the meantime, Jan Pezarro, vice-president of customer service and marketing, focused on bringing TransLink closer to the customer. “Transit agencies are historically very focused on having to spend money on safety, and it’s much more difficult to get them focused on what they might view as softer issues,” she said. “This was the time to do that.” An in-house market research capacity was developed to improve interaction with customers. Technology initiatives included a voice recognition system for the call centre, revamping of the website, and a trip planning tool for better accessibility.

Millennium SkyTrain construction starts

Among these generally successful changes, SkyTrain’s new Millennium Line was undertaken only a few months into TransLink’s first year of operation; construction began on the new line in New Westminster in October 1999. Five months later, TransLink and the provincial government signed the SkyTrain Cost Sharing Agreement, with the province agreeing to pay 100 per cent of the line’s capital costs.

Ken Dobell names the Millennium Line agreement as one of the most

important achievements on his watch. “Getting an understanding so that things finally got done was big,” he said.

Strategy calls for bold expansion

Beyond increasing bus service, the first year’s objectives included other broad goals: to improve customer responsiveness and promote the integration of services, and to support regional and municipal transportation and land use goals by working collaboratively with local governments.

In 2000, TransLink also released its first strategic plan, outlining actions to respond to the needs of the region over the next three to five years.

The plan featured three objectives: expand existing transit services; improve the major road network and add new facilities such as the South Fraser Perimeter Road, and a bridge to replace the Albion Ferry (to relieve congestion at key points and support goods movement); and launch “transportation demand management” efforts to promote alternatives such as walking and cycling.

The Major Road Network had only come into being with the establishment of TransLink so there were no plans identifying its future capital needs, or even the criteria for including a road in the MRN. The 2000 plan set criteria, implemented maintenance standards and cost tracking systems, set funding for maintenance and rehabilitation of the MRN at \$12,000 per lane kilometer per year, and established budgets for major and minor capital improvements. TransLink also identified projects of strategic importance and set out to establish partnerships to fund them.

But the plan’s boldest goal was to grow transit use by 29 per cent through major fleet expansions, improving connections between town centres, expanding SkyTrain capacity, and maintaining ongoing public consultation while implementing these changes. The additional services and capital programs set out in the plan were to increase TransLink’s annual costs from \$506.7 million in 1999 to \$814.4 million in 2005. Unlike previous strategies, the plan also recognized the importance of goods movement and other economic factors.



THE VEHICLE LEVY STALLS

TransLink's founding agreement pinpointed a key potential funding source: a vehicle levy. This proposed method to raise money for transportation through individual car ownership would bring TransLink its first major test of public support.

Releasing its strategic plan in April 2000, TransLink began discussing the vehicle levy with stakeholder groups—and quickly hit several brick walls.

A vehicle levy was proposed as the primary strategy to fund expansion. It would require all vehicle owners in Greater Vancouver to pay a set amount each year for every automobile they owned. The average person would have to pay \$75 a year, generating about \$95 million in 2002, the first year it was to be implemented.

It was an example of the utility service theory that Ken Cameron had favoured. "Everything we put before the public had the vehicle levy front and centre in it," said Marvin Shaffer, the GVRD's negotiator. "The powers all stemmed from the vehicle levy."

Opposition breaks out

Not everyone was fond of the concept. Releasing its strategic plan in April 2000, TransLink began discussing it with stakeholder groups—and quickly hit several brick walls.

Neither the BC Automobile Association nor the BC Trucking Association would

endorse the levy because they felt commercial drivers were already hit hard enough at the pumps with fuel taxes. Residents south of the Fraser River saw it as unfair, because the majority had lengthy commutes and lacked frequent transit services in their municipalities.

"It was something that, when you talked to anybody south of the Fraser, they were livid about it," said Doug McCallum, mayor of Surrey and a TransLink director. "You cannot bring things in, in financing, unless you have a general agreement that people think it is fair, and they didn't think the levy was fair."

However, for the majority of people in the region, improving transportation was still a major priority. An Ipsos-Reid poll conducted in early October found 74 per cent of Greater Vancouverites supported TransLink's five-year plan, even if it meant paying a vehicle levy.

New services hang in the balance

It was a simple proposition: without the \$500 million generated by the levy over those five years, no expansion could occur. That would mean the bus fleet would remain at 1,100 vehicles instead of growing to 1,640, that 200 SkyTrain cars would not be purchased, and major highway improvements would not be carried out. The 98 B-Line service to Richmond, scheduled to begin in December, would also be delayed until spring 2001.

"It's no threat, it's just a fact," said chairman George Puil at the time. "Either we do something now, or the transit system deteriorates." Puil rounded the talk-show circuit, explaining how TransLink's road mandate meant this was a user fee and not an attempt to force people out of their cars. "All we're trying to do is give them an alternative," he added.

The flames were fanned by McCallum, who said the levy would result in

“ When the vehicle levy was ripped away from us, we had already ordered buses and upped service levels. Then we had to claw it right back. And that was very painful for people. ”

Bob Paddon TransLink vice-president, corporate and public affairs (2002-present)

unbalanced funding. He refused to endorse it, even threatening to pull Surrey out of the GVRD if the levy was passed. An 18,000-signature petition against the levy was announced in early November by the Canadian Taxpayers Federation.

The only way to avoid a levy was through the return of some federal tax monies to the region to pay for improved transportation. TransLink established www.vehiclelevy.com, enabling residents to relay their concerns to federal election candidates, and urge them to help reduce or eliminate the levy through alternate funding.

TransLink board approves levy

After a four-hour debate on November 22, the TransLink board narrowly approved a modified plan where levy amounts would be based on a combination of insurance classification, and the weight of the vehicles. A week later, the GVRD board also passed the contentious levy. “When that went through, it was with a huge sense of relief,” Puil said. “That was a big milestone, maybe the biggest.”

The plan proposed that the Insurance Corporation of British Columbia (ICBC) would collect the levy amount when vehicle owners paid their insurance. However, in October, ICBC chairman Bob Williams said the corporation was in no position to do so.

Province quashes levy agreement

It was a sign of what was to come. Premier Ujjal Dosanjh had already said he would not support any increase in taxes. On January 21, Mike Farnworth, the minister responsible for TransLink, declared the cabinet would not sign an order-in-council enabling it to collect the levy on TransLink’s behalf.

CEO Ken Dobell believed it was a violation of the original agreement with the province. “That really stung Ken and I badly,” said Larry Ward, then president of BC Rapid Transit Company, which operated SkyTrain. “Well, not just us, but everyone at TransLink, when it comes down to it.”

“It was devastating to lose the vehicle levy,” said Bob Paddon, vice-president of TransLink’s corporate and public affairs. “The unfortunate part is that by the time it was ripped away from us, we’d put in bus orders and upped service levels out on the street, and then we had to claw it right back. And that was very painful for people.”

Unable to implement the initiatives in the five-year plan, TransLink regrouped quickly. It had to trim its 2001 budget by \$7 million, but cuts would have been far worse without a \$36-million one-time surplus it was able to tap into. Still, every bus route was closely examined, and those with the lowest ridership numbers became candidates for elimination.

Dobell announces resignation

The same week that the levy failed, Dobell dropped his own bombshell by announcing his resignation, to become Deputy Minister to Premier Gordon Campbell, effective in April. The timing would enable his replacement to work on TransLink’s new strategic plan from its inception.

“Was the GVTA in better or worse shape when I left? In some sense worse, because the vehicle levy had left a bad taste in lots of people’s mouths,” Dobell said. “But was the organization reasonably functioning and operating well? Yes, definitely.”

The search for a new CEO began, with Larry Ward filling in temporarily.



TRANSIT STRIKE CRAWLS

In 2001, a brief period of quiet followed the vehicle levy issue. However, it was only a matter of months before TransLink was thrust into the spotlight again, for an entirely different controversy—a strike by Coast Mountain Bus Company drivers and mechanics.

After the strike, transit users enjoyed three free days on the system, but it would take a lot more than that to regain public support.

In contract negotiations, Coast Mountain management had been demanding the ability to employ part-time drivers to increase efficiency, allowing savings of \$9 million over three years. Across the table, the Canadian Auto Workers Union (CAW), representing 3,300 employees, was asking for an 18 per cent wage hike over three years. Talks broke down on March 26 and CAW members voted in favour of a strike, as did Office and Professional Employees International Union members who worked at Coast Mountain's head office. The transit system came to a complete halt on April 1, TransLink's second anniversary, and the public braced itself for gridlock.

The last significant disruption had occurred in summer 1984, when transit riders endured a three-month-long BC Transit strike before the bus company was legislated back to work. But transportation in Greater Vancouver had evolved over the 17 years into a different creature—ridership had

increased by 39 per cent, and the number of private vehicles on the road in the morning rush hour had jumped from 370,000 to 585,000.

Bus riders left to find other modes

While 675,000 bus riders were forced to find alternative transportation, a saving grace was that SkyTrain and West Coast Express were still allowed to run, thanks to a Labour Relations Board ruling that limited picketing by striking security guards.

It quickly became evident that a resolution would not be easily reached, and highly regarded labour mediator Vince Ready was brought in to solve the dispute. The union dropped its wage demand to a nine per cent increase, but Coast Mountain was only willing to offer eight per cent. Negotiations stalled again, and some members of the public began venting their frustration on TransLink, dismissing the fact that bus service was Coast Mountain's responsibility. Two hundred

placard-waving protestors took over TransLink's board meeting in June, forcing chair George Puil to call an abrupt end to the meeting after 45 minutes of passionate speeches.

And it wasn't just transit users who were unhappy—members of the Downtown Vancouver Business Improvement Association saw business drop by an average of 39 per cent. A tent-camp protest began outside Vancouver City Hall.

Still, the end was nowhere in sight.



Protestors target home of TransLink chair

As the strike progressed, Puil became, in his words, a “lightning rod” for TransLink’s problems. One morning in late July, he awoke to find a tonne of manure covering the walkway of his home. A group calling itself the Biotic Bullshit Brigade claimed responsibility, blaming Puil for prolonging the strike. Days later, 200 protestors held a protest picnic on his front lawn. Soon afterwards, Puil and fellow board member Jennifer Clarke received plainclothes police escorts.

“I remember during the strike, someone had written ‘Osama bin Puil,’ on the back of a bus,” Puil reminisced. “I didn’t see it, but my family saw it. Hearing things like that was tough.”

Campbell government legislates end to strike

During the strike, former Vancouver Mayor Gordon Campbell and his team of 76 Liberals overwhelmingly won the provincial election held in May. On August 1, the Liberals said “enough is enough” and introduced back-to-work legislation to end the 123-day transit strike—the second longest in Canadian history. The settlement gave union members a 8.5 per cent wage increase over three years, plus a \$1,000 signing bonus.

Transit users were given three free days on the system before normal charges resumed, but it would take a lot more than that to regain public support. An upcoming series of crucial public consultations would help determine the next strategic plan, but with TransLink’s low approval ratings, the authority—under new CEO Pat Jacobsen— had a tough uphill battle ahead.





ACCELERATION: LEADERSHIP CHANGE BRINGS A NEW APPROACH

New leadership injects energy into all relationships. When TransLink is awarded a gas tax contingent on matching funds from public taxation, those relationships are vigorously tested. The Millennium Line opens, RAV is the new hot question, and U-Pass leads to dramatic growth in transit use.

2002 – 2004

2002

JANUARY First two Millennium Line stations open.

JULY TransLink's 2002-2004 Transportation Plan is released.

JULY Vancouver and Whistler win 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games.

AUGUST Full Millennium Line officially opens.

2003

SEPTEMBER VanCity U-Pass is introduced, subsidizing an unlimited transit pass for students at UBC and SFU.

Governance Task Force presents recommendations to GVRD Council of Councils. Agreement is not reached on the composition of TransLink board.

DECEMBER TransLink board and GVRD approve \$4-billion, 10-Year Regional Transportation Plan, the region's largest-ever capital plan.

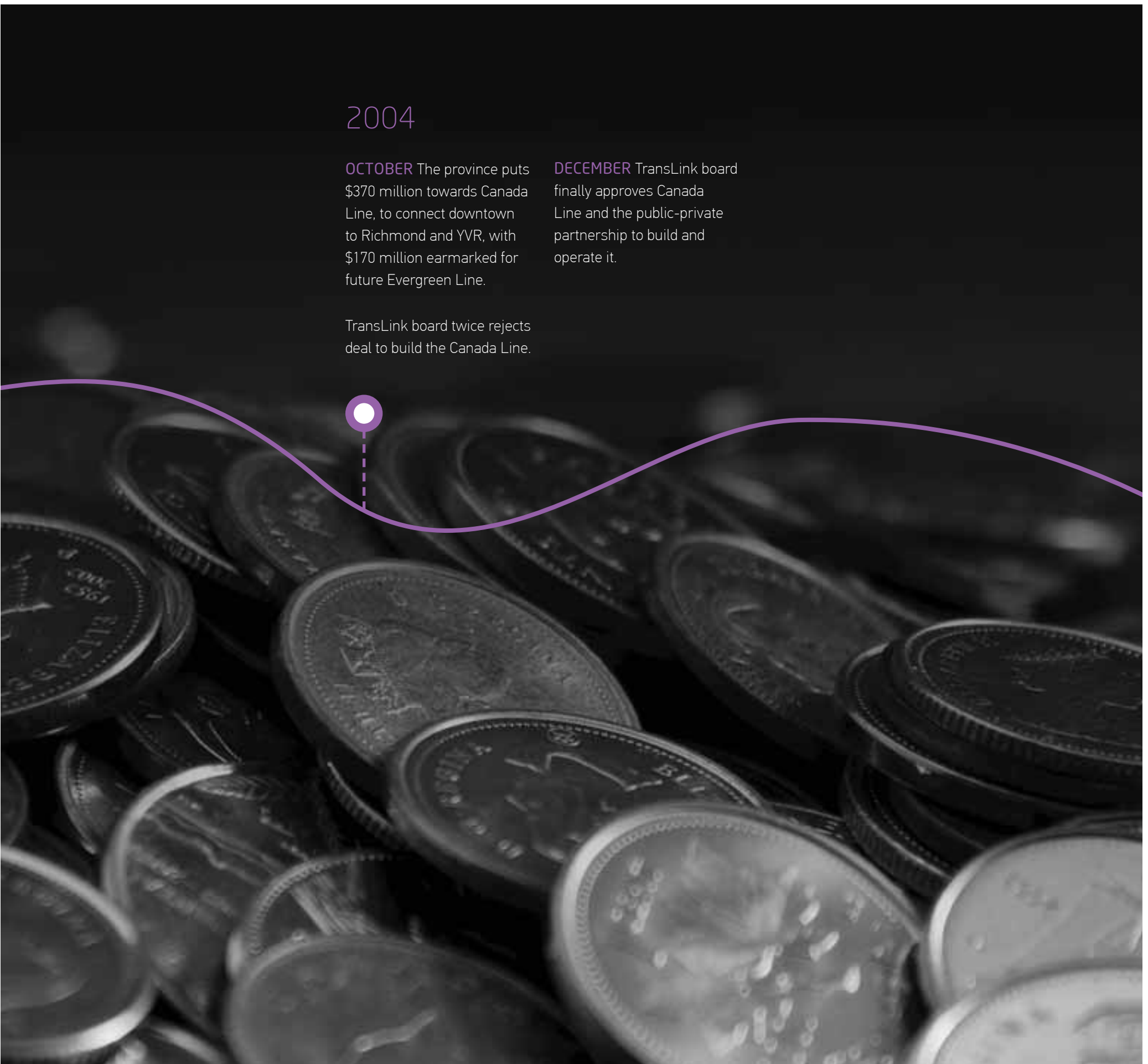


2004

OCTOBER The province puts \$370 million towards Canada Line, to connect downtown to Richmond and YVR, with \$170 million earmarked for future Evergreen Line.

DECEMBER TransLink board finally approves Canada Line and the public-private partnership to build and operate it.

TransLink board twice rejects deal to build the Canada Line.





NEW LEADERSHIP REVITALIZES TRANSLINK

Damage to TransLink’s image lingered hard after the strike. After only less than two years of operation, the agency not only had to regain the trust of the public, but also convince them to open their wallets.

New CEO Pat Jacobsen's energetic approach soon had things moving forward again.

After the vehicle levy had failed, massive cuts were made to plans for transit services expansion, and the organization set to work revamping its strategies. Extensive stakeholder and public consultation had to take place first, and the lengthy strike had delayed that process.

“It really felt like a rescue operation at that point,” said Bob Paddon, vice-president of Corporate and Public Affairs. “A lot of people were hurt, morale was really down, and that was our low point.”

New CEO Pat Jacobsen’s energetic approach soon had things moving forward again.

As deputy minister of transportation in Ontario in the early 1990s, Jacobsen had tried to create an integrated transportation authority there, but couldn’t gain sufficient support from the municipalities. When the opportunity presented itself to guide TransLink, she saw it as a dream job.

Dobell hands off to Jacobsen

Dobell passed the reins to Jacobsen, and helped her become familiar with a region she knew little about.

“Ken was enormously helpful,” Jacobsen said. “He provided me with a lot, in terms of background and his assessment of what TransLink needed, as well as supporting me with the municipalities and provincial government. We wouldn’t be on the financial footing we have now without the support and leadership Ken gave. Very few people could have been the first CEO; the things he had to concentrate on to get TransLink up and running were difficult, to say the least. For it to grow in two years from an idea to an active organization was a huge challenge, and a huge accomplishment.”

Jacobsen’s people-oriented style was geared towards building stronger relationships with governments and stakeholders, something both she and

Dobell realized must happen for TransLink to be successful.

That approach was successfully put to the test at the Coast Mountain Bus Company, which also experienced a change in leadership when its president David Stumpo resigned a month after transit services returned. He was replaced by Denis Clements, previously Coast Mountain’s senior vice-president of service delivery.

“We made a lot of changes after the strike,” Clements said. “We started communicating more with the unions and employees, and saw significant results within a year. We sat down with the union and said, ‘Here’s the budget, and here’s the manpower.’ This sort of thing had never been done before. The team was pretty hands-on in helping right the ship, and that helped foster a new attitude. Our philosophy is to go out and find people doing things right, because it’s contagious. It’s a much more proactive attitude and organization now.”





PAT JACOBSEN

Pat Jacobsen was appointed CEO of TransLink in 2001. She had become very familiar with the challenges of moving goods and people over a large region as deputy minister of transportation in Ontario, where she oversaw the development of the Greater Toronto Area Transportation Plan and the Highway 407 public-private partnership. Pat also brought 10 years experience as a senior executive in the insurance industry. At TransLink, she led the development and funding of the 2005-2007 Three-Year Plan and 10-Year Outlook, which includes eight major road projects, the Golden Ears Bridge, significant bus fleet expansion, and Canada Line construction. Transit ridership increased by 30 per cent and regional sources leveraged over \$2 billion in senior government funding and \$1 billion in private investment under the 10-Year Outlook. Jacobsen resigned in early 2008 to pursue other opportunities.

Auditor General sees reduced role for province

Shortly after the strike, on August 9, 2001 provincial auditor general Wayne Strelloff released his report, which had been commissioned after the vehicle levy debacle. The province asked him to look at whether TransLink's governance and funding structure was potentially flawed.

Strelloff did indeed propose changes in governance. He called for eliminating overlaps in roles and responsibilities—and suggested that the provincial government should play a less prominent role in regional transportation. He also recommended that all parties involved in local transportation should carry out their accountability obligations to the public, which TransLink fulfilled by releasing its first annual report.



DOUG McCALLUM

Doug McCallum was the second chair of the TransLink board of directors. Then the mayor of Surrey, McCallum took over in 2002 after George Puil's resignation and served until 2005. First elected to Surrey city council in 1993, he was mayor from 1996 to 2005. Advancements that took place during McCallum's chairmanship include TransLink's 2002 three-year plan that saw upgrades to transit, major investment in roads, plans for a new Fraser River crossing, and significant efforts to build stakeholder relationships and solidify the authority's funding mechanisms.



A NEW PUSH FOR STABLE FUNDING

Prior to his departure, Ken Dobell had laid the groundwork with the new Liberal government for a different approach to funding as well. Then, in September 2001, came the decidedly welcome news that the province had granted TransLink permission to add up to two cents a litre for gasoline. This would generate as much as \$42 million annually at the pump to improve transportation in the region.

It was a significant success—but it came with a big string attached: TransLink would have to match the gas tax funding through other sources, including increased fares and property taxes. TransLink executives embarked on an intense fall campaign to gain the support of the municipalities for those measures. Surprising no one, municipal councils in the region expressed little enthusiasm for a property tax hike.

“Coming out of the strike, our approval rating was in the ditch, but we had to go out to the public and get approval of funding,” said Ian Jarvis, then TransLink’s Vice-President of finance and corporate services. “So it wasn’t a very fun fall of 2001. We basically got hammered everywhere we went.”

“That campaign was as significant as the first major strategic plan we did,” Bob Paddon said. “We basically went right back out to people and said, ‘We’ve stopped the bleeding, but we’re still lying on the ground here. We’re

not up and running, and we’re not going to be able to meet any of your expectations with the level of revenue that we have. If you want to achieve these things, you need to give us more.’ That was a tough sell.”

TransLink officials presented two options. The first was a “do nothing” scenario. Projections for several key commuting and goods shipment routes showed how much longer travel times would become in 10 to 20 years in the absence of new investments.

The second choice was, of course, calculated to be more attractive despite the cost implications: TransLink must raise \$80 million through transit fares and fuel and property taxes to pay for modest improvements. A public opinion poll showed 66 per cent supported option two. In November, the TransLink board approved it, and staff got to work on the new plan, slated for release in early 2002.

Puil steps down, McCallum steps up

As this eventful and difficult year drew to a close, chairman George Puil announced his resignation. He cited fulfillment of two goals during his brief and action-packed tenure: helping to create a local transportation authority, then providing it with financial stability.

Before Puil left, he introduced the TransLink Governance Task Force, to look into issues raised in the auditor’s report. A key question? The composition and size of TransLink’s board—but it would be six years before that question was answered.

Puil’s longtime opponent, Surrey mayor Doug McCallum, became the board’s new chair.

“I always like a challenge, and that’s how I looked at it: as a challenge,” McCallum said. “I’m the type of person who likes to get things done, and I said when I came in that I wasn’t going to sit back and wait. I knew a lot of the things the board would have to approve wouldn’t be popular, but sometimes in

order to achieve things, to get things done properly, you have to make decisions that are not popular. And this region had to have some decisions made for it.”



MILLENNIUM LINE SKYTRAIN OPENS AMID CONTROVERSY

The Millennium Line opened on August 31, 2002. The muted fanfare seemed to reflect the project's awkward history—which began several years before TransLink had been established.

The new automated light rail line ran north from the existing Columbia Station on the Expo Line, serving residential and commercial areas in New Westminster and Burnaby. The route, however, was chosen not by the transportation authority or municipalities in the region, but by the provincial government of the day. It was forced into being over many concerns—chiefly, that the route would not service the rapidly growing population in the northeast sector, and left Coquitlam Centre without a rapid transit connection.

Its history began back in 1995, when NDP Premier Mike Harcourt and Glen Clark, minister responsible for transit, announced that a street-level light rail line would be built along Broadway and Lougheed Highway to Coquitlam Centre. An 18-month review of rapid-transit alternatives began in January 1998, with Clark as Premier.

Province's unilateral move predates TransLink

To everyone's surprise, the study ended suddenly in June when Clark's government announced the decision to build an elevated SkyTrain line between Broadway Station and Lougheed Mall, with a budget of \$1.24 billion. The provincial government said add-ons such as overpasses and tunnels made SkyTrain a more feasible option, despite opposition from municipalities that favoured light-rail.

Even worse, the route was neither the first nor second choice of the municipalities. Instead, it combined sections of two different lines, selected by the province because they could be constructed more quickly. Certainly, Lougheed Mall, Lake City Industrial Park, and Simon Fraser University would benefit, but a large portion of the line paralleled the existing Expo Line, and it doubled back upon itself at the end of its route.

"Rapid transit people from around the country were talking about the Millennium Line proposal," said former CEO Ken Dobell. "And one of them said, 'I can't figure it out. You've got this project that the government is mostly paying for, and you're not—and you guys are fighting and saying they should pay for something else. We would take that hands down.'"

The line was not popular with TransLink and municipal leaders, but the province forged ahead with construction, and managed to keep costs to \$1.2 billion, \$40 million under budget.





State-of-the-art features win approval

On the positive side, the new stations were attractive. Designed for safety and crime deterrence, they featured plenty of glass to provide clear sight. Innovations included platform edge warning tiles to warn the visually impaired about getting too close to the guideway, laser devices to shut down the system and trigger an alarm if anyone fell into the guideway area, and anti-graffiti film on windows which would also hold glass in place if broken.

And when they were delivered, the new SkyTrain Mark II cars enjoyed good reviews, too. Built by Bombardier, they operated in two-or four-car trains and had a capacity of 119 passengers per car, compared to the original four-car Mark I cars which carried 75 people per car. The open layout offered more comfortable seating and let passengers walk between cars. With this addition of 60 cars, the SkyTrain fleet was expanded to a total of 210.

A ribbon-cutting ceremony took place at the Lougheed Town Centre Station on August 31, 2001; the first SkyTrain cars had traveled the fully-functional nine-station line hours earlier. Officials predicted the new line would result in a ridership increase of 16 million in its first year.

Once the tenth station at Vancouver Community College finally opened in 2006, the line spanned 20.5 kilometres.



THREE-YEAR PLAN MARKS A FRESH START

After the extensive consultations of autumn 2001, TransLink staff began developing a new three-year transportation plan. Setting a path for the future, the plan would provide a fresh start after the setbacks of the vehicle levy, transit strike, and SkyTrain controversies—and it would also reflect valuable lessons gleaned from those ordeals.

Public consultation led to the adoption of four principles that became the plan's backbone: a balance of interests, operational efficiency, clear accountability, and fiscal and environmental sustainability.

It quickly became evident that to balance diverse interests successfully, TransLink would need a similarly balanced funding strategy, reflecting the needs of all who had a stake in public transportation systems. Funds should come from a variety of mechanisms and should be spent on a variety of services: transit, the major road network, cycling, commuting options, AirCare, and intelligent transportation systems.

Funding campaign leads to broad support

Operating expenditures for the transit system, however, commanded the largest portion of the projected budget. A key priority was to attract more commuters and post-secondary

students, and increase service levels by nearly 14 per cent with an additional 328,000 hours. All-day direct bus routes would also be introduced between regional town centres, as well as limited weekend night bus service for core routes. HandyDART service would be expanded to carry 60,000 additional trips.

The road network was the other main beneficiary of the 2002-2004 three-year plan:

\$125 million were allocated to road improvements, with minor capital funding for cost-sharing with municipalities. TransLink would spend \$200 million over three years to improve efficiency and safety. Planning studies also began for a new Fraser River crossing.

However, the new plan inevitably meant hikes in property taxes and transit fares, plus an increase in the parking sales tax from seven to 21 per cent. Because only a few municipalities have paid off-street parking – principally

Vancouver and White Rock – there was concern about the equitability of this revenue source. TransLink had been given legislative authority to develop a tax on parking areas. However, such a tax had never been implemented in Canada. Nonetheless, to address regional equity the TransLink board agreed to develop a parking area tax that would be uniformly implemented across the entire region.

None of the increases were wildly popular among homeowners, transit users, and businesses. But, taken together, they were a successful example of TransLink's new balanced approach.

An amendment to the plan increased TransLink's borrowing limit, allowing the future construction of the Richmond-Airport-Vancouver rapid transit project.

"We had access to other revenue streams that other cities at the time didn't have, said TransLink chair Doug McCallum. "That wide range of revenue

sources meant we had the money to look at expanding and running the system efficiently."

One of the issues that consistently arose during public consultations was the "empty 40-foot bus syndrome," which the public saw as a sign of poor money management. TransLink replaced 15 per cent of conventional bus routes in low-ridership areas with community shuttles, improving service at half the cost. The surplus larger buses were redeployed to enhance service on busier core routes. The program was both a fiscal success—and a gratifying win in public approval.



U-PASS EARNS HIGH MARKS FROM UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

The new plan called for dramatically building transit volume among post-secondary students. For years, TransLink had hoped to introduce a universal transit pass offering post-secondary students subsidized travel to use anytime, anywhere on the system—and now was the time to give it a try.

U-Pass became wildly popular right away. Within the first year ridership at UBC increased 53 per cent, and 39 per cent at SFU.

“When Pat Jacobsen, TransLink’s second CEO, came on board, one of the things she wanted right off the bat was to increase ridership,” said Glen Leicester, TransLink’s former vice-president of planning. “And university students are a great market, because you have a new group every year. They’re on the margin economically, and all headed to the same place so you can have specialized routes. We knew it had been very successful in Victoria, but it had never been tried in a city the size of Vancouver. But Pat said, ‘Just make it happen.’ So we made it happen.”

UBC and SFU student bodies approved the universal pass concept—although the SFU vote was a close call. U-Pass was a scheme to minimize the cost of a mandatory pass for each student. Vancity also sponsored the program, reducing administrative costs to make the passes even more affordable.

The Vancity U-Pass became wildly popular right away. In fact, despite the 23,000 additional service hours added,

certain routes became so busy during peak hours that in the early weeks, buses had to pass students by—causing a new public relations issue. However, the system was improved, and within the first year ridership at UBC increased 53 per cent. Ridership at SFU also enjoyed a significant increase, up 39 per cent in its first year.

“There were people critical of us because we put a strain on the transit system,” said TransLink director of communications Ken Hardie. “Yes, it is a strain, but it just proves that the system could carry a lot of people, and with the right investment it could carry more. To see the incredible rise in demand over the past years is really quite remarkable.”

Daily ridership by students, faculty, and staff in early 2005 amounted to more than 49,000 trips, and automobile traffic to and from UBC had dropped nearly 15 per cent. The massive success of the Vancity U-Pass program accounts for a good deal of the 30 per cent growth in transit ridership in recent years.

In fall 2007, the Vancity U-Pass expanded to Langara College and Capilano College, where students approved the program through referenda. TransLink staff hope to continue expanding it to other post-secondary institutions in the future.

“It’s a rather strategic move,” noted CEO Pat Jacobsen. “If we lose that generation of transit users during that stage of their life, we lose them for good. But if we can graduate generations of transit users, they will transform attitudes towards transit. They’ll start to shape where they work and where they live. And I believe young people can transform what their parents do.”

Jacobsen’s belief in the potential of up-and-coming generations would eventually fuel a vision for TransLink’s evolving strategies for sustainable public transportation. But the question of how to fund massive investments to stimulate changes in travel behaviour was still waiting for a definitive answer.



MOMENTUM: NEW FUNDING AND GOVERNANCE SPARK NEW STEPS

The New Deal for cities clears the way for more tax funding, welcome news in the wake of the exhausting but successful Canada Line campaign. Bold initiatives in all travel modes make sustainability a key goal. And a new governance structure comes with an expanding mandate in the South Coast.

2004 – 2007



2005

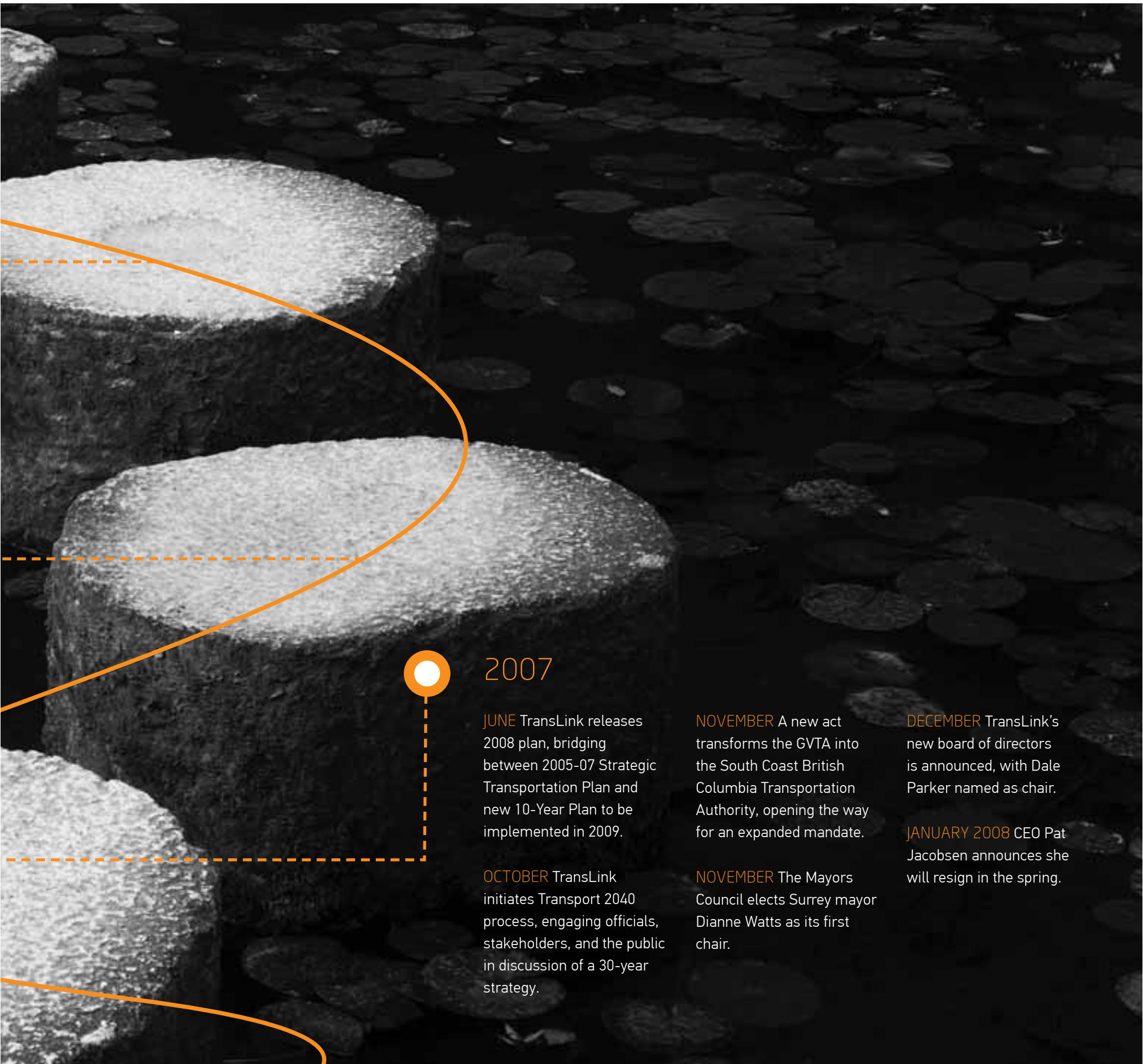
APRIL New Deal for Cities and Communities will return \$307 million in gas tax funding to TransLink.

JULY 2005 GVRD reviews governance structure and recommends minor modifications.

2006

JANUARY Richmond mayor Malcolm Brodie becomes third chair of TransLink, replacing Doug McCallum.

MARCH Transport minister Kevin Falcon names a three-member panel to review of TransLink's governance structure, funding, and responsibilities.



2007

JUNE TransLink releases 2008 plan, bridging between 2005-07 Strategic Transportation Plan and new 10-Year Plan to be implemented in 2009.

OCTOBER TransLink initiates Transport 2040 process, engaging officials, stakeholders, and the public in discussion of a 30-year strategy.

NOVEMBER A new act transforms the GVTA into the South Coast British Columbia Transportation Authority, opening the way for an expanded mandate.

NOVEMBER The Mayors Council elects Surrey mayor Dianne Watts as its first chair.

DECEMBER TransLink’s new board of directors is announced, with Dale Parker named as chair.

JANUARY 2008 CEO Pat Jacobsen announces she will resign in the spring.



BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS THROUGHOUT THE REGION

The Vancity U-Pass success proved the practicality of TransLink's 2002 plan. It centred around one paramount goal: to increase transit ridership. To take more single occupant vehicles off the road, TransLink needed to tap into new markets—and that meant mounting new efforts to build consensus in the region about the need for stable funding.

TransLink had always carried out extensive public consultation, but moved to strengthen relationships in the post-strike years. Staff focused on engaging people in more direct and meaningful ways, enabling them to make substantive contributions to planning discussions. In the process, many gained a better understanding of the region's transportation issues.

"We've done some things here that have not been done anywhere in Canada," said TransLink spokesman Ken Hardie. "Now average citizens discuss rapid transit development and understand that you need to put people in jobs along rapid transit lines to make the system work. The sophistication level of the average citizen has gone up quite significantly, and that helps."

"People see the difference on the street when they see the new buses, and see us delivering on our promises," said Bob Paddon, vice-president of corporate and public affairs. "Four

years ago we were out there talking to people and we said, 'Trust us, we'll get federal money, and we'll buy buses.' Four years later, we've done exactly that. We gained that trust again, and the public is back on our side."

Relationships also improved with stakeholder groups and the provincial government. The vehicle levy storm was seen by many as a breakdown of trust between the authority and the province. But former CEO Ken Dobell's work in securing the provincial gas tax from the new Liberal government had opened new channels of communication, and Pat Jacobsen's team wanted to make sure the lines of communication stayed open.

Winning over key stakeholders

Similarly, TransLink executives realized that if there had been more stakeholder communication prior to the levy attempt, it might have received greater support from key players. Significant effort has since been devoted to

strengthening bonds with the BC Trucking Association, the Vancouver Board of Trade, the BC Automobile Association, and others.

"The Vancouver Board of Trade comes to our defense now," noted Paddon. "We upset a lot of people when we had to bring in a parking tax, but not as many as you'd think. A lot of people in the business community supported us dealing with that revenue source in that way. I think we've struck a pretty good balance at this point. More people perceive us as fairly accountable, so that's the real difference today."

National recognition has also improved TransLink's public image. It's widely considered a leader in public transportation in Canada, and plays a large role in shaping federal public policy—participation that benefits not only Greater Vancouver residents, but Canadians across the country.

"The federal government is very supportive of our structure, of having an integrated multi-modal authority that does long-term planning," said CEO Pat Jacobsen. "In the absence of that structure you have agencies shopping projects, saying 'choose my road, choose my bridge, choose my rapid transit line.' So the federal government has long been a real advocate for the structure of integrated planning."

“ If we can graduate generations of transit users, they will transform attitudes towards transit. They'll start to shape where they work and where they live. And I believe young people can transform what their parents do. ”

Pat Jacobsen former TransLink CEO



ACCESS TRANSIT

In 2005 TransLink began its Access Transit Project, one of the most extensive accessibility reviews ever undertaken in North America. Consulting with people who have physical, cognitive, or other difficulties, TransLink developed a plan to make the transit system more accessible.

Access Transit aims to:

- Create an Access Transit Office and Users Advisory Committee.
- Provide better customer support.
- Improve access to a full range of transit services.
- Increase availability and effectiveness of custom transit.

Analyzing accessibility guidelines and codes from the United States, Europe, and Australia, TransLink developed Universal Accessibility Guidelines to set a new standard for all future investments in fleet and facilities.

The Access Transit strategy is guided by the principle that by making the system easier to use for people with significant physical, language, or cognitive barriers, it would become more attractive for all transit users. By developing the strategy in concert with users, and committing to reviewing the entire range of facilities, services, equipment, and communications tools, Access Transit set a new benchmark both for public engagement and organizational management.

TRANSLINK'S POLICE SERVICE

In 2004, the Solicitor General established the Greater Vancouver Transportation Authority Police Service as a designated policing unit under the Police Act.

The first of its kind in Canada, TransLink's special police service was granted additional powers in 2004 that the previous special provincial constables did not have. Now TransLink police can enforce laws relating to possession of illegal drugs and stolen property, apprehend those wanted on outstanding warrants, and operate outside TransLink property as necessary.

TransLink's police, who are fully sworn officers, work with the RCMP and other police across the region, and are mostly dedicated to maintaining order, safety, and security at transit facilities and their surroundings.

TransLink's police service continues its role in issuing violation tickets to customers without

correct fare; about 35,000 such tickets are issued every year.

Officers operate on SkyTrain and adjacent properties with a minimum of 10 officers during the day and a minimum of 12 at night. An addition of 35 officers in 2008 will bring the force to a total of 156. New officers are being recruited to meet policing requirements for the Canada Line, beginning service in 2009.

On July 21, 2008 former RCMP Superintendent Ward Clapham, a 28-year police veteran became Chief Officer of the Transit Police Service, taking over the reins from Robert Kind, who retired. "Although the department is only three years old, collectively the members are without a doubt the most experienced police service in the province," Clapham said. "Most officers have at least 15 years with either a municipal force or the RCMP."

“ TransLink's 2005-2007 plan was the only plan in the province's history that the BC Federation of Labour and the BC Business Council both went out and advocated for—despite the fact that it was a very bitter pill for both. ”

Pat Jacobsen former TransLink CEO

A NEW PLAN, A 10-YEAR OUTLOOK, AND A NEW DEAL

Now that TransLink had stabilized revenue sources, it could begin to address the region's longer term goals. Systems were functioning relatively well, but improvements still had to be made across the board—improvements that came with a hefty price tag.



FRED CUMMINGS

Fred Cummings is vice-president of major construction projects for TransLink, and the project director for the Golden Ears Bridge for the past five years. Fred is also leading the implementation of the Evergreen Line, and sits on the Board of Directors of Canada Line. He has been with TransLink and its predecessor, BC Transit, for over a decade. Prior to that, he worked as a transportation engineering consultant for large-scale capital projects. A University of Waterloo grad (BASc civil Engineering), Fred is also a Professional Engineer.

While the 2002-2004 plan was one of modest expansion, the new 2005-2007 plan was much more ambitious and proposed several major construction projects in addition to improving transit. TransLink also began developing a 10-year strategy, taking many cues from GVRD plans. Intensive public consultation was at the heart of the whole process. Three urban transportation forums, seven public meetings, and numerous municipal council and stakeholder meetings helped shape the vision. In an online component, 12,000 people voiced their views.

The three-year plan came with a \$1.9 billion capital program price tag. It proposed new bus services in the metropolitan core and between regional centres, more frequency in high-demand corridors, and expanded rapid bus service. The electric trolley fleet would be replaced in 2007, and 200 additional buses would be added.

For the road network, \$236 million would be spent on major projects—including construction of a rapid transit line linking Richmond, Vancouver International Airport and downtown Vancouver, foreseen in the 2002-2004 plan.

Another major undertaking was construction of a third Fraser River crossing between Langley and Maple Ridge. The new Golden Ears Bridge would cost approximately \$800 million.

"Many people have said that plan was the only plan they could remember in the province's history that the BC Federation of Labour and the BC Business Council both went out and advocated for – despite the fact that for both, it was a very bitter pill," said Pat Jacobsen. "So getting something that both labour and business could be aligned on was very important."

The 10-Year Outlook called for even more dramatic expansion: a 30 per cent boost in bus-service capacity by 2013,

and rapid transit lines to the northeast sector—at long last—and west along Broadway.

Combined, the two plans cost \$3.9 billion. TransLink's board approved the plan in December 2003. But debate was heated, and small wonder: the plan once again depended upon the municipalities of the GVRD approving a property tax increase, and the province enabling the parking site tax and a transit fare hike. In its longest-ever board meeting, GVRD directors approved TransLink's plan in a vote of 57-56. It was the largest capital plan ever approved by the region.

By introducing all revenue measures in 2005, TransLink was able to build a reserve fund to maintain the growth in to the next decade. The plan relied on future federal gas tax proceeds coming to the region. At the time the 2005-2007 plan was approved, there was no federal program to return fuel taxes collected by the Canadian government to the regions where it is collected,





When a New Deal for Cities and Communities was finally signed on April 15, 2005, TransLink leaders breathed a collective sigh of relief.

so the TransLink approach was a calculated risk. In 2006, federal policy changed, and a portion of the fuel taxes from the region were returned to the region and allocated to TransLink, providing a significant new source of revenue to fund the capital program in the 2005-2007 plan.

Funding breakthrough with New Deal for Cities

That state of financial affairs was set to change. Back in 2002, federal finance minister Paul Martin conceded that cities need ongoing funding for vital infrastructure such as transportation. Although the decision to recycle the GVRD's gas tax back into the region took longer than expected, TransLink had tied its new plan to that anticipated outcome.

When a New Deal for Cities and Communities was finally signed on April 15, 2005, TransLink leaders breathed a collective sigh of relief. Their next step was to have the funds

paid to the GRVD redirected to regional transportation through an agreement among municipal leaders. It meant British Columbia would receive \$635 million in federal gas tax funding over the next five years (2005-2010)—with \$307 million of it allocated to TransLink.

"The biggest fight for me was the federal gas tax, and getting them to agree," said former chair George Puil. "I should've made a list of the number of meetings we had, it'd certainly be a long one. When they eventually agreed to it, I was so pleased that it had finally happened."

But an equally lengthy fight, to build a new SkyTrain line, was about to begin.



THE CANADA LINE DEBATES

For over 30 years, regional planners had called for a rapid transit line along the Vancouver-Richmond corridor. With congestion continuing to grow, TransLink leaders decided that the time for serious action had arrived.



SHERI PLEWES

Sheri Plewes has been TransLink's vice-president of capital management and engineering since 1999, and has been acting vice-president of planning since 2007. She was the lead TransLink executive on the Richmond-Airport-Vancouver (RAV) project, now known as the Canada Line. In her position at TransLink, Plewes's engineering responsibilities include design, construction, procurement, and maintenance of all TransLink functions – roads, bridges, bus, SeaBus, rail and ferries. After graduating from University of Alberta (BSc Civil Engineering, '82), Sheri worked in Alberta and BC in oil field, highways, and municipal engineering. She now represents TransLink on many project, corporate, subsidiary and advisory boards and committees.

By 2002, the Lower Mainland's busiest north-south corridor was home to 20 per cent of the population and linked a third of the region's jobs. Twenty-year forecasts showed the population growing by 50 per cent in central Vancouver and 75 per cent in Richmond, with employment increasing by 70 per cent at Vancouver International Airport. Transit planners hoped to add capacity in a sustainable way, with a rapid transit line to relieve congestion and facilitate a smoother flow of goods. But realizing a Richmond-Airport-Vancouver line, known then as RAV and now named the Canada Line, would prove a tumultuous endeavour.

For starters, the region's northeast communities, including Port Moody, Coquitlam, and Port Coquitlam raised a protest. They still felt cheated that the Millennium Line had delayed rapid transit to their rapidly-growing corner of the region, and were determined to continue pressing for it.

"We had three projects on the table, but we knew we couldn't build these on our own," said CEO Pat Jacobsen. "Some felt they should have been done in a certain order, but I felt that whatever we could attract federal and provincial money to would leverage the system. We needed other funding, so we started to shop the projects."

"The province really liked the Canada Line because of the order of magnitude," she explained. "At that time, it would get about 10 times the ridership of the northeast sector line, because it would connect the airport to the busiest urban centers and, because of this volume, it would recover its costs. So it had a higher priority."

Feasibility studies and broad public consultation began. It included presentations, open houses, and a dedicated website. A 2001 MarkTrend poll found that 81 per cent of Richmond and Vancouver residents believed the RAV line would be good for their

communities. The question changed from "if" to "when".

Province asks Ottawa for RAV funding

In late 2002, BC premier Gordon Campbell asked Ottawa to contribute \$450 million. Soon after, TransLink boosted its borrowing cap by \$800 million, allowing a \$300 million contribution. This move also provided partial funding for a northeast sector line. Vancouver International Airport also committed \$245 million to the project.

But there was a major hitch. The federal government said while it would match TransLink's contribution, it could not meet the province's request. It would be another two years, and in April 2004 the federal government finally stepped in with the requested \$450 million.

The RAV line project would also be partially funded and operated through

“ It's really fabulous to be part of this project. It's something that people will look back and say 'I can't believe there was a time that this didn't exist.' It's like the Expo Line today, which is just a part of our fabric now.”

Sheri Plewes TransLink vice-president of planning, capital management and engineering, and the lead TransLink executive on the RAV project

a partnership of government and private sector companies, known as a public-private partnership, or a P3—and this proposal generated a controversy of its own.

CEO Pat Jacobsen had no doubts about the approach. “I think that the Canada Line is the way of the future,” she said. “The significant thing about it, as a North American first, it had four pretty equal funders, and a significant amount of private equity. It’s also the first rapid transit line the region was responsible for; historically, the province just decided what they wanted and put it there. So it was a very pivotal point because it was the first time that the region developed the project, and then asked the federal and provincial governments for funding for it.”

Two consortiums, RAVxpress and SNC-Lavalin, were shortlisted to design, build, and operate the line.

TransLink board twice rejects RAV P3 scheme

Then, at the TransLink board of directors meeting in May 2004, RAV came to a screeching halt when the board voted against allowing the two bids to proceed to best-and-final-offer stage.

Board members against the project cited numerous issues. They said the private sector should absorb more risk, the cost should be reduced by scrapping a planned tunnel in Vancouver, and the provincial government should commit to building the northeast sector line at the same time.

Then, at the request of a coalition of 11 business groups, including the Vancouver Board of Trade, the BC Chamber of Commerce, and the Downtown Vancouver Business Improvement Association, Premier Campbell stepped in and announced the province would assume responsibility for any cost overruns. He also agreed to provide funds towards a northeast rapid transit line.

In June, the RAV project came before the TransLink board for a second time—only to be voted down again, at which point Kevin Falcon, the minister of transportation, pronounced the RAV line dead, saying the province would not provide money for a cheaper alternative.

Sheri Plewes, TransLink vice-president of planning, capital management and engineering, and the lead TransLink executive on the RAV project, said the board’s decision was disappointing, but understandable.

“It was a hard decision and a lot of facts for the board to assimilate,” said Plewes.

“The project was very complex technically. It affected two very important cities, TransLink, the airport authority, and all of their residents and local governments. It was like a small pressure cooker—it was very difficult to balance all these elements and come out successfully. And it was a groundbreaking partnership along with the private sector.”

Yet the RAV project refused to die, gaining colourful nicknames like “Count RAVula” and “FrankenRAV.”

Compromise motion sparks approval

Ultimately it was a move by Barbara Sharp, mayor of the City of North Vancouver, that brought RAV back to life. Her motion at GVRD called for a limit to public spending and greater safeguards from cost overruns, and requested that staff secure a provincial government \$170 million funding agreement for the northeast line.

At the same time, a report from the City of Vancouver found that a light-rail system could not work in downtown Vancouver, ending hopes for a cheaper alternative. All that proved to be enough, and the TransLink board approved the RAV project by a 8-4 vote.

“A lot of the board members didn’t have a background in business, and when they hear about possible overruns and other things, it scared the daylights out of them, especially since they’re the ones that have to make the decision,” said chair Doug McCallum. “There were new concepts, we were breaking new ground in how to build major capital projects, and the financing was very complicated on it. We had private partners, and having the airport on board was unheard of. There’s no way in the world the airport is going to put up a third of the money, I mean, holy mackerel, how’d we accomplish that? The model we developed was brand new and certainly had never been tried in a major capital, but it was a good model.”

Bid is awarded, construction begins

SNC-Lavalin eventually won the project. The plan would rely on extensive sections of cut-and-cover construction in downtown Vancouver and along Cambie Street. The cut-

and-cover technique offered several advantages, including tunnels and stations closer to the surface, reducing overall journey times. However, amid fears that construction would be disruptive, a mitigation fund was set up to assist local merchants.

SNC-Lavalin and two other companies became equal partners in InTransitBC, responsible for building and operating the RAV line, now officially dubbed the Canada Line. Construction began in August 2005, aiming for a fully operational line by November 2009 (and in good time for the 2010 Olympic Winter Games).

The 19.5 kilometre showcase route will feature 16 state-of-the-art stations connecting downtown with Richmond and the airport. Its sleek grey trains will carry up to 334 passengers from downtown to Richmond in 25 minutes. Ridership for the Canada Line is expected to be 80,000 per day upon startup and 138,000 by 2021.

“The process has actually been moving along very well,” said Larry Ward, chief operating officer of InTransit Operations. “We’re actually slightly ahead of schedule, and there haven’t been any major difficulties. We’re only 26 months out from financial close, and you look at everything that’s been accomplished in that amount of time, and it’s impressive.”

“It’s an amazing accomplishment,” says Plewes.

“It’s really fabulous to be part of this project. It’s something that people will look back and say ‘I can’t believe there was a time that this didn’t exist.’ It’s like the Expo Line today, which is just a part of our fabric now.”



Concept of Potential Frequent Transit Network

MAJOR SHIFTS IN GOVERNANCE, MANDATE, AND FUNDING

Before former chair George Puil left in 2001, he established the TransLink Governance Task Force. He wanted a review of the governance structure after a 2001 Auditor General report had cited numerous issues. The task force made several recommendations, but no changes were made.



MALCOLM BRODIE

Joining TransLink's board of directors in 2002, Malcolm Brodie was chair in 2006, during delivery of the 2005-2007 three-year plan. Brodie's term ended in 2007 when a new governance structure for TransLink brought an end to a board composed of elected representatives. He has been a member of Richmond city council since 1996 and has been mayor continuously since 2001. He is currently on the Mayors' Council on Regional Transportation, serves on Metro Vancouver's land use and transportation committee among others, and chairs its finance committee.

It wouldn't be until after Puil's successor, Doug McCallum, lost his seat as mayor of Surrey in late 2005 and was replaced as chair by Richmond mayor Malcolm Brodie, that any changes were made.

Citing the three politically-charged votes it took for the Canada Line to be approved, transport minister Kevin Falcon declared that TransLink had become parochial, suggesting the board lacked the expertise to deal with multi-billion dollar projects. In March 2006, he named a three-member panel, headed by former TransLink director Marlene Grinnell, to conduct another review of governance, responsibilities and funding. "Almost from the very beginning, there's been some sense that the governance wasn't quite what people wanted it to be," said TransLink spokesman Ken Hardie. "But everybody was having a devil of a time deciding what the perfect solution would be."

New governance structure includes Mayors' Council

A year later, the province unveiled the panel's recommendations. TransLink retained its responsibilities, but how and where it operated, and its funding sources, was greatly revised. The current board of municipally elected officials was abandoned and replaced by a board of nine independent directors, none of whom were local politicians. A screening panel, chaired by Mike Harcourt, proposed a slate of directors to the Mayors' Council who then selected the board.

The concept was that their expertise in law, accounting, and transit planning would help guide the authority and provide oversight of operations, planning, and finances.

As a result of the new model, TransLink no longer reports to the GVRD, now known as Metro Vancouver, to ratify or reject their transportation plans and tax increases. Instead a

new Mayors' Council on Regional Transportation makes key decisions regarding regional transportation. All 21 municipalities are represented by their respective mayors on this council, which also appoints new directors, and meets regularly throughout the year.

The Mayors' Council also appoints an independent commissioner, whose primary responsibilities are to oversee proposed fare increases, review customer satisfaction reports, and advise the mayors whether operations are in line with strategic and regional growth plans. The Province proposed expanded reach and new funding. The governance changes make it possible for TransLink to expand its geographic mandate beyond Metro Vancouver, potentially extending the service area as far north as Pemberton in the Squamish-Lillooet regional district, and as far east as Hope in the Fraser Valley.



DALE PARKER

Named in December 2007 to a three-year term on TransLink’s newly structured board of directors, Dale Parker became its third board chair in January 2008. The new board will provide oversight of TransLink’s operations. A former BC Workers Compensation Board president and CEO, Parker will help lead TransLink into a period he describes as its “next stage of development and growth” as the organization adopts the new governance structure approved by BC’s provincial legislature. Leaving Workers Compensation in 1998, Parker currently serves on the boards of Canada Pension Plan Investment Board, GrowthWorks Ltd., Century Mining Ltd., UBC Investment Management Trust Inc., and Encorp Pacific (Canada). Among other past positions, he was president and CEO of the Bank of British Columbia and an executive vice-president with the Bank of Montreal.



Province proposes expanded reach and new funding

The panel also wanted to see TransLink's geographic mandate grow beyond Metro Vancouver. They proposed extending the service area as far north as Pemberton in the Squamish-Lillooet regional district, and as far east as Hope in the Fraser Valley—where systems are still operated by BC Transit.

Municipalities in the expanded service area would be given the option of joining TransLink.

TransLink would also be allowed an additional three cents of the regional fuel tax if, by the end of its new 10-Year Plan, it was able to raise matching funds—two-to-one—from other local sources. The authority would also be permitted to raise money by developing land adjacent to rapid transit lines and major transit hubs.

"TransLink as an organization has experienced absolutely no change, and that's an important thing to recognize," said Bob Paddon, vice-president of corporate and public affairs. "Basically all the province is trying to do is rewire at the board level. As an organization attempting to address complexities of transportation in a large urban region in Canada, we're doing many things right," he added.

TransLink would also be required to create a 30-year strategy, aligned with the provincial government's 30-year transportation vision and Metro Vancouver's Regional Growth Strategy. The current 10-Year Transportation Plan would also be replaced for a new one that would come into effect in 2009.

For both these plans to meet the mark, many long-term strategies had to be thought through, including regional land use objectives, the province's greenhouse gas emissions reduction target, and addressing the projections for population growth and economic development.

In fall 2007, TransLink initiated Transport 2040, engaging elected officials, stakeholders, and the public in the creation of its far-reaching sustainability-oriented strategy for the next 30 years.

Name change reflects expanded mandate

On November 29, 2007, the BC legislature passed the Greater Vancouver Transportation Authority Amendment Act. TransLink's new legal name became the South Coast British Columbia Transportation Authority, retiring the GVTA name.

The new law also scrapped the contentious parking stall tax, replacing the \$18 million annual revenue with an equal amount of property tax.

The next day, Metro Vancouver's new Mayors' Council elected Surrey mayor Dianne Watts as its first chair. On December 13, she announced the new nine-member board of directors.

"TransLink's future plans must address transportation needs across the entire region, not just now, but in anticipation of the significant growth we are expecting. The Mayors' Council will specifically ensure its vision is reflected in any plan it approves," said Watts.

Dale Parker, a former CEO of the B.C. Workers Compensation Board, was named TransLink chair on January 16, 2008.

Reflecting on TransLink's major milestones in its first decade, vice-president of finance and corporate services Ian Jarvis noted:

"Although there's been a fair bit of criticism, and it's been difficult at times, people from all over the world come to look at TransLink as an interesting model, and they're amazed by what we've achieved in a relatively short period of time. That's a pretty good indicator of TransLink's success."

Former vice-president of planning, Glen Leicester, agrees. "We're really the envy of Canada in terms of the range of equipment, how modern it is, and the diversity of initiatives and projects that have been implemented or are on-the-go. People here should consider themselves lucky."

"No one else in the country has what we have here," he said.



DIANNE WATTS

Dianne Watts, mayor of Surrey, was elected in 2005 after serving on that city's council for nine years. She was named first chair of the Mayors' Council on Regional Transportation in 2007. The council, comprising all 21 mayors in the Metro Vancouver region, was established as part of new governance structure set out in 2007's South Coast British Columbia Transportation Authority Act. The Council appoints TransLink's board of directors, the commissioner, and has final approval on expansion plans as well as transit fare increases and property taxes required to pay for them. Representing Surrey in the big city mayors' caucus of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, Watts sits on the national transit strategy committee.



NEW DESTINATIONS: 30-YEAR STRATEGY POINTS TO SUSTAINABILITY

Far-reaching vision sees mobility for a million more people in the region and serious measures to cool the climate. By dramatically improving the individual experience, and increasing travel choices for all, the strategy aims to preserve quality of life in the region.

2008 and beyond



2008

YOU ARE HERE



2040

VISION FOR 2040
Current plans aim to maintain Greater Vancouver as the best place in the world to live and work in 2040. Strategies developed by people, governments, and industry in the region today will ensure wise, long-reaching choices about transportation and land use in the future.

These choices will protect the natural environment, reduce greenhouse gases, foster an inclusive and fair society, and support a vibrant sustainable economy.

Greenhouse gas emissions from transportation have been aggressively reduced and meet provincial government targets.

Traveling in the region is safe, secure, and accessible for everyone.

Most trips are by transit, walking, and cycling.

The majority of jobs and housing in the region are located along the Frequent Transit Network.

Economic growth and efficient goods movement are facilitated through effective management of the transportation network.

Funding for TransLink is stable, sufficient, appropriate, and influences transportation choices.



EXPANDED MANDATE MAKES BIGGER PROJECTS POSSIBLE

Eight years after its founding, TransLink has evolved to become the South Coast British Columbia Transportation Authority, but it still has the same goal—to expand and maintain the region’s transportation network.

“ In 1999, it was all about planning and creating a vision. Today, it's about doing,”

Ian Jarvis

TransLink's vice-president of finance and corporate services

TransLink is essentially the same entity that was created by the historic agreement of 1999, but its scale is now much larger. Originally, TransLink’s operating budget was about \$358 million, and it managed about \$100 million in small capital projects. Today, TransLink’s operating budget is \$992 million, with about \$4 billion in major capital projects.

“In 1999, it was all about planning and creating a vision,” said Ian Jarvis, TransLink’s vice-president of finance and corporate services. “Today, it’s about doing.”

And the list of initiatives now being done is impressive by any measure.

In 2009, just in time for the 2010 Winter Olympics, TransLink will make several major milestones: the opening of the Golden Ears Bridge, the launch of Canada Line operations, and the debut of a third SeaBus vessel.

The long-awaited Evergreen Line is now moving forward. In 2008, it was

announced that the Line will use SkyTrain-like advanced light rapid transit (ALRT) technology, which is automated and separated from traffic. The Line will also be constructed along a northwest route, connecting Lougheed Town Centre with Coquitlam Town Centre through Port Moody, at an estimated cost of \$1.4 billion.

Envisioning a 30-year strategy

In the years to come, the task of creating sustainable transportation for the entire South Coast area comes with myriad challenges. Among them: a population that is both growing and aging, continued dependency on single occupancy vehicle use, heightened concerns about climate change—and high housing costs forcing more and more people and businesses to outlying areas that are difficult to serve with transit.

By working with the province’s 30-year transportation vision and Metro Vancouver’s regional growth strategy, TransLink aims to preserve the

quality of life residents here treasure. Its 30-year strategy will envision a transport network that will provide mobility for an additional 1.3 million people in the region, while enabling goods and services to move easily.

The number of jobs in Metro Vancouver will also grow by 600,000, and if current trends continue, scattered employment locations will become increasingly difficult to accommodate. That’s why TransLink is stepping up calls to fully integrate transportation with land use decisions. By focusing development in existing built-up areas, natural lands can be protected, and a growth pattern that preserves and enhances the natural beauty of the region can flourish.

“ We're now at the nexus of the environmental and economic agenda, and we're entering what I call a golden age for TransLink. ”

Pat Jacobsen former TransLink CEO



Through strategies to guide the development of the transportation network, and continued consultations with elected officials, stakeholders, and the general public, TransLink is shaping its 30-year vision to help maintain the livability of the region for decades to come.

"I think the public has started to recognize those capacity restraints, and they're willing to shift accordingly," said Pat Jacobsen.

Jacobsen decides to move on

With new governance in place, many big new initiatives coming on line, and the 30-year vision close to completion, popular CEO Pat Jacobsen announced her resignation in early 2008 after a very strong six-year run.

Jacobsen, however, leaves the world's first multi-modal transportation authority in a very strong position. "We're now at the nexus of the environmental and economic agenda, and we're entering what I call a golden age for TransLink," she said.

TRANSLINK AWARDS

2004

Canadian Urban Transit Association

Innovation Award: U-Pass Program

In 2004, TransLink won CUTA's Innovation Award for Vancity U-Pass, its universal transit pass program for university students sponsored by Vancity credit union. Success of the program was immediate, with ridership increasing by 39 per cent at SFU, and 53 per cent at UBC. The program has subsequently been expanded to Capilano College and Langara College.

Exceptional Performance/ Outstanding Achievement: 98 B-Line Richmond- Vancouver

TransLink's B-Line rapid transit bus program won a CUTA award for the innovative features of its new Richmond-Vancouver route. The new route includes a 2.5 km, landscaped median busway on Richmond's main street among other features cited as Canadian firsts. Three B-Line routes operate in future rail transit corridors, and help build a rail-supportive market. The first route was introduced in 1996, and now carries a daily ridership of over 34,000. Among a host of benefits, B-Lines have enabled 20 per cent faster travel times over previous services, and have cut automobile travel by eight million kilometres a year.

2005

Vancity U-Pass wins National Award for Sustainability

TransLink received the Sustainable Community Award from the Federation of Canadian Municipalities and CH2M HILL, an internationally renowned engineering firm specializing in sustainable public infrastructure. The Sustainable Community Award recognizes excellence and innovation in municipal service delivery that advances sustainable community development. After the launch of U-Pass in August 2003, transit quickly became the leading mode of travel to and from both universities. Automobile traffic at both sites has decreased by 10 per cent, reducing GHG emissions by about 21,000 tonnes a year.

2006

Golden Ears Bridge Project awards

In 2006, TransLink's Golden Ears Bridge project collected three awards:

Finance International Magazine's North American Deal of the Year

North American PPP Deal of the Year from Project Finance (Euromoney)

The Gold Award for Project Financing, a national award for innovation and excellence from the Canadian Council for Public Private Partnerships

The new bridge, due to open in 2009, will stimulate the economy by reducing congestion and opening up access to employment, services, and recreational opportunities. It will also provide additional travel options for transit users, cyclists and pedestrians.



2006

Sustainability Award from Fraser Basin Council

TransLink won the Fraser Basin Council's Overall Sustainability Award for its work in developing innovative sustainable transportation initiatives that have significantly reduced greenhouse gas emissions and enhanced air quality.

Among the initiatives cited were: the Vancity U-Pass programs, the Community Pass program, the Jack Bell Ride-Share program, and the TravelSmart program.

2007

GLOBE Foundation National Award for Excellence in Urban Sustainability

TransLink has received a prestigious national award for its Vancouver Transit Centre: the GLOBE Foundation and the Globe and Mail newspaper's award for Excellence in Urban Sustainability. The award recognizes businesses that strike an admirable balance between sustainability and economic viability.

Opened in 2006 and home to TransLink's zero-emission electric trolley buses, Vancouver Transit Centre was lauded for its use of recycled regional materials, Energy Star roof membranes, lots of natural lighting, and a state-of-the-art wastewater treatment plant.

Golden Ears Bridge named Global Deal of the Year

TransLink's Golden Ears Bridge Project was recognized by Infrastructure Journal in the United Kingdom as the prestigious Global Deal of the Year in 2007. This award considers projects in all sectors—not just transportation—throughout the world.

The bridge project's complexity, innovative financing, and fast financing close are the attributes that attracted the award. TransLink's partner, Bilfinger Berger BOT, accepted the award on the project's behalf.

Advertising campaign wins industry award

A series of print advertisements designed to attract new employees to TransLink received highest honours from the American Public Transportation Association. TransLink's Employer Branding and Recruitment Campaign received a first place AdWheel award for Public Relations/Awareness or Education and the Grand Award for Best Campaign.

The ads feature photos of TransLink employees who explain what their jobs mean to them, their families, and community. The series was developed by TransLink's marketing team, with information gathered by TransLink's market research group and creative input from Grey Advertising.

