

## **News Release**

For Release: December 10, 2014

### **New Coalition Forms to Support Better Transit and Transportation Investment**

Business, labour, environmental, community and other organizations have formed the Better Transit and Transportation Coalition to support the Mayors' Council regional transportation improvement plan for dramatic transit and transportation improvements.

The new Coalition's founding members include the Vancouver Board of Trade; Unifor, Canada's newest and largest private sector union; Tourism Vancouver; Downtown Surrey Business Improvement Association; David Suzuki Foundation; Greater Vancouver Gateway Council; and BC Chamber of Commerce.

"Our coalition is quickly gathering momentum," said Iain Black, CEO of the Vancouver Board of Trade. "We're one proud part of a full range of environmental, labour, transportation, tourism, health and other groups, and together we're focused on fighting congestion through transit and transportation improvements."

Ian Bruce, science and policy manager at the David Suzuki Foundation added, "With a million more people moving to the Lower Mainland, investing in a better transit and transportation network is one of the most crucial decisions the region can make to build healthier communities and improve quality of life. Choosing to invest in the region will mean a better environment with less traffic, cleaner air to breathe, and more transportation and transit options for everyone."

"Whether you ride the bus, SkyTrain, SeaBus, West Coast Express or any combination of those, our riders see the urgent need for better transit service just to deal with existing demand, let alone what happens when Metro Vancouver grows by 1 million more people over 30 years," said Unifor BC Area Director Gavin McGarrigle. Unifor represents over 30,000 members in BC, including 5,000 transit operators, mechanics, SeaBus and maintenance workers in Metro Vancouver in Union locals 111 and 2200.

"The Mayors' Council plan not only quickly improves transit service with 25% more buses, it will give those driving to work or school the option to leave the car at home and take transit, which is better for our environment," McGarrigle said, adding that the BC Federation of Labour, representing over 500,000 unionized workers across the province, unanimously supported a resolution Unifor Local 111 introduced to endorse a Yes in the referendum.

"The real enemy here is traffic congestion," said Elizabeth Model, CEO of the Downtown Surrey Business Improvement Association, also a founding member of the Coalition. "The Mayors transit and transportation plan is designed for future generations, with a clear focus on increased goods movement, and it contains plans for managing congestion more effectively over the next 30 years. It starts with a specific 10-year plan that will begin next year if the public approves it in the regional Referendum."

## **Better Transit + Transportation Coalition**

“This is a significant moment in time where Metro residents and businesses can decide between a strong economy and job creation or more congestion and less service,” said John Winter, CEO of the BC Chamber of Commerce, a founding Coalition member. “The Mayors' plan is a proactive opportunity for Metro businesses and residents to get the region's goods and people moving, which in turn will help keep our economy more competitive internationally by keeping traffic congestion costs and impacts down.”

One of the Coalition's first initiatives has been circulating a Pledge for interested citizen groups and organizations to sign. It states:

*“One of the most important decisions facing Metro Vancouver for the next generation is the 2015 Referendum on transit, transportation, and goods and people movement. A positive outcome is a crucial step to expand transportation options, strengthen our economy, reduce pollution, improve the health of our communities, and help make this region a more affordable place to live.”*

In addition to the diverse collection of organizations who comprise the Better Transit and Transportation Coalition, other groups - including student and educational organizations, medical health officers and others - have also already signed on to its pledge.

The Mayors' Council will be voting on December 11, on whether or not to proceed with the mail-in ballot question and recommended revenue source.

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### **For more information:**

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