

Mayors' Council for Regional Transportation
c/o Mayor Brad West, Chair
Sent via email

October 1, 2024

Re: BC NDP Response to Mayors' Council for Regional Transportation

Dear Mayor West and the Mayors' Council for Regional Transportation,

Thanks for the opportunity to share our plans with you. High-quality transportation is a key priority for us at the BC NDP. Please take some time to review our platform in greater detail in the upcoming days for more details.

The BC NDP's response to your questions can be found below.

- 1. Do you agree that public transit is an essential service in B.C.'s urban regions, that all levels of government must continue to invest in, so we can keep people and goods moving, improve affordability, unlock new housing, and reduce GHGs?**

We lose valuable time with family and friends when we spend our days behind the wheel. Being stuck in traffic is hard on our schedules, wallet, and the environment. Some will continue to drive for a variety of reasons.

Public transit is a critical part of the BC NDP's plan for an affordable and connected province. It will be necessary in the coming years to facilitate more use of public and active transit, and we can achieve this by ensuring it's affordable, convenient, and reliable.

Expansions in rapid transit, especially bus rapid transit corridors, will be valuable where there is more to do to connect city hubs and address growing ridership. People should be able to move safely and rapidly across the region for appointments, classes or to visit family. Please take time to go through our platform when it is released in the coming days as the BC NDP will make a number of significant public transit commitments.

We'd also encourage you to reflect on John Rustad's track record on transportation. Not only did his government fail to fund critical transportation infrastructure, they

also slashed transit options for people who needed them most; they eliminated bus passes for people with disabilities and made it more expensive, via bridge tolls, for people to drive to work, despite doing little to provide alternatives.

2. Do you support beginning to build the Access for Everyone Plan starting in 2025?

David Eby and the BC NDP are proud to have partnered on the *Transport 2050 10-Year Priorities*, now the *Access to Everyone Plan*, which outlines the commitments needed from all levels of government to enhance strategic planning, expand bus networks, improve infrastructure, hire and retain more staff capacity while strengthening partnerships with First Nations. We also plan to accelerate our movement toward the CleanBC goal of doubling trips taken via walking, cycling, and other kinds of active networks by 2030.

We will partner with the Mayors' Council on addressing current and future service expansion opportunities to meet increases in population and transit demand.

John Rustad showed his true colours on sustainable transportation the last time he was a cabinet minister. He made big promises, like expanded Skytrain service in Surrey - and then failed to deliver. His government refused to fund transportation improvements when they had the chance. With Rustad's Conservatives in charge, we can expect even more extreme cuts. Why fund sustainable transportation and work to reduce greenhouse gas emissions if you think climate change is a hoax?

We understand why mayors are concerned about transit funding. Rustad believes in smaller government and deep tax cuts which can only be paid by cutting billions, raising fares, and resuming tolls for bridges. If elected, we would continue to work in partnership with the Mayors' Council on improved regional transportation. We simply can't afford the alternative.

3. Will your government create a new, long-term \$3.4 billion Access for Everyone Fund that identifies \$500 million annually in new operating revenues for Translink and invests \$2.9 billion annually, on average – including from federal funding programs like the Canada Public Transit Fund – towards the new capital projects in the Access for Everyone Plan?

Please take some time to go through our platform on transportation when it is released in the upcoming days. Sustainable transportation is one of the BC NDP's top priorities for the election. Unlike Rustad, who appears to believe that public transit and infrastructure can be improved through wishful thinking, we know that transportation projects don't get off the ground without a sound strategy and realistic funding. Raising fares and implementing tolls will not bring in the funding we need to build and maintain a high-quality transportation system.

People in BC want to get from point A to point B quickly and easily. But, we also want to do it responsibly. More rapid transit within and between our communities would drastically reduce traffic congestion, collisions, and climate emissions. David Eby and the BC NDP will partner with the Mayors' Council on this important work.

4. Do you support working with the Mayor's Council to review and improve the TransLink governance model to ensure that elected regional mayors are accountable to the public for decision-making at the agency commensurate with its growing responsibilities and revenues?

Like you, David Eby and the BC NDP know that sustainable, affordable, and high-quality public transportation is a lifeline for British Columbians. No one should be surprised by the results of your survey on this topic; the public highly values public transport, and would be very concerned to see it deprioritized by the incoming government.

This idea concerns us as well. A Conservative government under John Rustad would deliver predictable results on transit – big promises, inadequate funding, and deep cuts to services, starting with the people who rely on transit the most.

We'll do what it takes to future-proof our transportation system. That's what British Columbians want, and it's what they expect. David Eby and the BC NDP will continue its partnership with the Mayors' Council as it's the best way to deliver results and be publicly accountable. If elected, we will work with Mayors' Council and First Nations to push Ottawa for our fair share so that we can deliver affordable, safe, reliable transit.