



GET MOVING BC

Port Mann/Highway 1 Project
C/o Jody Shimkus, Project Assessment Director
Environmental Assessment Office
PO Box 9426 Stn Prov. Govt.
Victoria, BC V8W 9V1

October 20, 2007

Dear Ms. Shimkus,

Thank you for this opportunity to comment on the environmental assessments you have prepared in relation to the much-needed Port Mann Bridge and Highway 1 expansion projects.

The directors of Get Moving BC, an organization supporting transportation and transit improvements, were extremely impressed with the detail in your agency's assessments. You have clearly looked at this project very closely.

For the vast majority of residents living on the south side of the Fraser River, the Port Mann Bridge and Highway 1 project cannot proceed fast enough: this support has always been well understood and well documented. However, until recently, there has always been disagreement as to the level of support for these projects on the north side of the Fraser.

Thanks to a scientific poll conducted for Get Moving BC by NRG Research Group, there is no longer any question as to the level of support north of the river, at least for the City of Burnaby: 72% of Burnaby residents fully support the twinning of the Port Mann Bridge and the widening of Highway 1. NRG Research Group's work on this poll was impeccable and we have attached a copy of the poll results to this submission.

We should add that NRG Research Group is a leading North American public opinion and market research company, with offices in Vancouver, Calgary and Winnipeg and associated offices in Toronto, Montreal, Halifax and Austin, Texas.

Thank you again for this opportunity to comment and we are pleased to pass along the following detailed comments regarding the environmental aspects of the project, as laid out in your study and in subsequent reports and responses:

OVERVIEW—First, we would like to thank you for posting the comments from various Lower Mainland municipalities on your website, along with your responses to these comments (Port Mann/Hwy1 Project – Proponent Responses to MUNICIPAL Comments on October 17, 2006 Draft Terms of Reference). We were impressed with the detail of your responses.

We would like to make particular note of the submission from the City of Burnaby which seemed to be based on a great many misunderstandings and was, in places, misleading. It was very helpful for us to see your thorough responses to the City of Burnaby's submission and we would like to make particular reference to Item 3.12 where you clarify that:

“Local air quality modeling protocol and study methodology used in this assessment have been used in various BC jurisdictions and have been accepted by GVRD air quality specialists for other highway projects. In Greater Vancouver, municipalities and the GVRD control land use. PMH1 traffic modeling, used as input for air quality modeling, is based on population and employment forecasts, associated with the GVRD and area municipalities' current land use and current/proposed transportation plans known to the Project. Land use decisions are made by municipalities and the GVRD, the proponent uses these projections but does not control decisions”

AGRICULTURE—Get Moving BC concurs that there will be no impact on agricultural land except near 216th St. in Langley. This impact is relatively small and, in fact, a 216th interchange has been planned for two decades. The 216th alignment is preferable to the previous 217A Street plan which would have seen a connector road cut through several kilometres of farmland.

ARCHAEOLOGY— Get Moving BC believes your plan covers this area adequately.

AIR QUALITY—Market demand is a powerful driver of innovation, and the public are clearly demanding more energy efficient cars and reduced greenhouse gas emissions. Get Moving BC believes we will continue to see reductions in vehicle-related greenhouse gas emissions in the next few years as manufacturers respond to market demand with increasingly efficient vehicles. Increased vehicle production levels will inevitably lead to a decrease in the cost of low emission vehicles making these vehicles more affordable to the average consumer.

Ultimately, affordability will drive even more demand for low emission vehicles and fuel even more research into vehicle efficiency. Get Moving BC believes that we are only a few years away from seeing low to no emission vehicles that the average consumer will be able to afford. We believe that, in less than a generation, the vehicles on our roads will be one of the lowest contributors to greenhouse gas emissions.

Get Moving BC also believes that by reducing congestion at the Port Mann Bridge—congestion which often extends for more than six miles—overall greenhouse gas emissions will be reduced because fewer vehicles will be idling unnecessarily and more vehicles will be operating at their optimum levels.

Further reductions in greenhouse gas emissions will also result from the re-introduction of public transit across the bridge and the introduction of HOV lanes in both directions.

Likewise, expansion of the freeway will improve traffic flow between Coquitlam and Burnaby and further reduce congestion and vehicle idling. Improved freeway on and off ramps will allow traffic to merge with the flow more safely, and more easily, which will greatly reduce stop and go driving and vehicle idling at freeway entrances.

CONTAMINATED SITES— Get Moving BC believes your plan covers this adequately.

FISHERIES AND AQUATICS— Get Moving BC believes your plan covers this adequately.

WATER WELLS—Water quality is an issue of great concern in Surrey and Langley where GVRD water supplies are supplemented by municipal water wells and thousands of residents have private well water. Your efforts to identify and protect wells are noted.

NOISE—Always a contentious issue, Get Moving BC believes your plan adequately covers this area of concern. The few homes situated next to the freeway (especially through Burnaby) have been there for many years. We encourage you to continue to consider “neighbourhood” input and to continue working with local municipalities as you have been (where they have chosen to cooperate), and, wherever possible, with individual neighbourhoods on these issues.

SOCIO-COMMUNITY AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC— Get Moving BC believes your plan is consistent with both community and regional growth management strategies. The Metro Vancouver region loses \$1.5 billion annually in traffic delays

related to congestion which adds to the cost to deliver goods to stores and then to the cost of the goods we purchase. This is a massive economic toll that is being placed on the businesses and residents of the Lower Mainland. Many delivery companies now feel the need to have multiple truck depots and staging points located around the lower Mainland, just so they can respond to the needs of the businesses they serve and get their customer's goods to market in a reasonable time. Having multiple truck depots is not something that many trucking firms find themselves needing in other North American cities. It adds to their cost of doing business, but in the Lower Mainland it has become a necessity and the cost is being passed on to consumers.

The freeway widening project and the twinning of the Port Mann Bridge will go a long way toward reducing the pressure these companies are under to have multiple staging depots and it will greatly improve their ability to get goods to market at a reduced cost with less environmental impact.

The Burnaby community will benefit, in particular, from the freeway expansion project considering that freeway overpasses in Burnaby will be made safer and allow for greater north-south traffic flow as a result of the project. This will be especially so at Willingdon which has been a danger spot for many years. This overpass is a hazard to navigate at most times of the day and Burnaby residents have long been expressing the need for improvements. Residents living on Burnaby's west side tend to avoid the Willingdon overpass if at all possible when travelling north and south. Upgrades to this overpass will make north-south travel much safer, will reduce accidents and improve people's enjoyment of life. It is vitally important, therefore, for the City of Burnaby to work with the project's staff to mitigate and improve traffic flow in and out of Burnaby's streets from the freeway in order for the improvements to work for all concerned.

Grandview Highway is another problematic spot. This overpass is congested more than 10 hours a day, especially in the mornings. Working cooperatively with the City of Burnaby and its staff, I am certain that you will be able to improve traffic flow through the Boundary Road traffic lights and in and out of Vancouver. This will reduce vehicle idling in front of the homes on either side of Grandview and vastly improve air quality for the residents of the surrounding neighbourhood.

WILDLIFE AND VEGETATION— Get Moving BC believes your plan covers this adequately.

HERITAGE AND CULTURE— Get Moving BC believes your plan covers this adequately.

TOLLING—Tolling is an important part of managing the demand for Highway 1. It reflects the public’s willingness to move toward a system of user-pay strategies. When used as a form of traffic management, tolling is also an excellent way to encourage people to choose transit options; that is, where these options are available and a where a vehicle is not needed to get a person to meetings or to places where transit doesn’t go. Adding “fast buses” back to the twinned Port Mann, combined with tolling, will make the transit option available and desirable for many commuters.

EFFECTS ON TRAFFIC, TRANSPORTATION, AND ROAD USERS—these are of the utmost interest to our directors. We believe that a twinned Port Mann Bridge and an expanded Highway 1 are absolutely vital to the future of the region. We need more of all types of transportation infrastructure—transit, roads, bridges, bike lanes, light rail, trails, everything. The south Fraser, especially, is woefully underserved in every area of transportation infrastructure.

Polls show that the vast majority of people feel their commute has worsened in the past year, and we need to invest in transportation. We are playing catch-up from decades of poor federal and provincial planning. Get Moving BC supports this project because it will restore bus service to the Port Mann for the first time in 20 years, and improve HOV and transit lines. We also support bringing light rail to 200th Street in Langley and we encourage the Provincial Government to fully fund the Evergreen line as soon as possible.

Furthermore, we believe that a rapid transit line from Lougheed or Braid, over the Port Mann Bridge and out to Abbotsford, should be planned as soon as possible. This will allow local municipalities to begin zoning for future high density business and residential uses around the planned route and thereby reduce the pressures that lead urban sprawl.

With respect to twinning the Port Mann Bridge and the widening Highway 1, there is no question that traffic flow heading east will be greatly improved. However, the improvements, upgrades and additions to the off ramps and interchanges at the western section of Highway 1 in Burnaby and Vancouver will also vastly improve traffic flow heading westward. This improved westward traffic flow will ease congestion greatly and allow frustrated commuters, who currently leave the freeway to take shortcuts through Burnaby neighbourhoods, to remain on the freeway and get to their destinations on time and as planned.

Upgrading overpasses and the on and off ramps to the freeway will also greatly improve traffic flow, and more importantly safety, in the north and south directions for all residents of the Lower Mainland. It is worth noting that 30% of westbound traffic crossing the Port Mann Bridge now leaves the freeway for

Coquitlam instead of continuing through to Burnaby, New Westminster, and Vancouver and beyond.

Overall, Get Moving BC believes that reducing gridlock and congestion means shorter commuting times, more time spent with family, reduced pollution, lower costs for food and other goods delivered by truck, less stress and a better quality of life for everyone. More capacity on the bridge and the highway does not mean that it will fill up overnight with new users. More capacity does mean better traffic flow and a reduction in stress and frustration for commuters. More capacity also allows transit to be added back to the bridge and freeway.

NAVIGATION AND RAIL— Get Moving BC believes your plan covers this adequately.

FIRST NATIONS CONSIDERATIONS— Get Moving BC believes your plan covers this adequately.

RESIDUAL EFFECTS AND CUMULATIVE ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS— Get Moving BC believes your plan covers this adequately.

CONCLUSION— Get Moving BC agrees that we need to twin the Port Mann Bridge and expand Highway 1 to better serve the needs of our growing region. It is important that this be done as quickly as possible to give residents and workers much-needed transportation options such as HOV lanes, bus improvements, and rapid transit. The people of BC have spoken again and again—we want both bridge expansion and transit options. Your assessment shows this can be done with no negative effect on the environment.

Respectfully,

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& Jordan Bateman
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cc: Get Moving BC Advisory Board

Encl: "Survey of Burnaby Residents Regarding Attitudes Toward Development of the Port Mann Bridge and Highway 1," September 2007