



## Developers say transit must be supported by density

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The provincial government's proposed expansion of Lower Mainland rapid transit will support regional growth as long as it can also compel municipalities to increase density along its routes, development experts say.

On Monday, Premier Gordon Campbell and Transportation Minister Kevin Falcon promised \$14 billion worth of transit expansion. That includes the \$2-billion Canada line, from downtown to Vancouver International Airport and Richmond, but also an increased commitment to the Evergreen line through to the Tri-Cities, an expansion of the Expo SkyTrain line to Guildford Town Centre, and a new extension from Broadwaystation to the University of B.C.

"The question mark we're grappling with as an industry is if [governments] are going to put this infrastructure in the ground, who's going to be responsible for ensuring land use matches the transportation plan," Maureen Enser, executive director of the Urban Development Institute's Pacific chapter, said in an interview.

"Is [responsibility for planning] at the regional level? Is it the province? How much autonomy or power do local governments have?"

Enser added that the development industry would like to see significant incentives for local governments to increase density along the new routes, because zoning to accommodate growth has been "hit or miss" along existing rapid-transit corridors.

Enser said the Evergreen line, which has been on the books for several years now, and the proposed Surrey SkyTrain expansion in particular, are important developments because the Tri-Cities and Fraser Valley are expected to accommodate some 70 per cent of the overall region's future growth.

Jennifer Podmore Russell, managing partner of the development research firm MPC Intelligence, added that development patterns along existing SkyTrain lines and the Canada line show that "there is huge demand by consumers to be located on those lines so they can be less dependent on cars."

- EVERGREEN LINE: A \$1.4-billion, 11-km line connecting Lougheed Town Centre with Coquitlam Town Centre, scheduled for completion in 2014.

On the books since 2003, Enser said some development has already been built

in anticipation of the Evergreen Line's arrival, particularly around Coquitlam Centre.

But she added that the final route for the line has yet to be determined, and developers still worry about whether governments will support adequate density along its length.

However, Warren Gill, an urban geographer at Simon Fraser University, said Port Moody has also made "really good decisions" in developing its Newport Village in anticipation of Evergreen.

"To be able to serve it with rapid transit will make [Newport Village] really blossom," he added.

- EXPO LINE EXPANSION: A \$3.1-billion project to double capacity on the existing line and build a six-km extension in Surrey to Guildford Town Centre and on to King George Highway, scheduled completion 2020.

Gill said the extension will travel through a less-developed section of Surrey that is projected to absorb a great deal of growth, and it fits nicely with the City of Surrey's plans to turn its Central City into an urban core.

Enser added that Surrey is particularly attractive for development because land values are cheaper compared with communities closer to Vancouver, including the Tri-City region, and builders can offer less expensive housing relative to downtown.

"[Surrey] council is anxious to see development in the community and create a sense of place there," Enser said. "That is very important. It is a very proactive council."

Podmore Russell added that the additional rapid bus lanes proposed for King George Highway to south Surrey, along Fraser Highway to Langley City and from north Langley across the new Golden Ears bridge, promise to make Langley more of an urban node.

- UBC LINE: A \$2.8-billion, 11-km rapid-transit line from Broadway Station to UBC, scheduled for completion by 2020.

"That's the toughest one," Gill said, because the extension will cut through the most developed corridor, and in a community that is still living through the disruptions caused by construction of the Canada Line being trenched down Cambie Street.

Gill added that the UBC line will probably have to be underground to receive public support, but there "are some real issues to be debated" around whether its tunnel is dug by an underground boring machine, or whether another cut-and-cover trench, similar to Cambie's Canada Line, would be accepted.

However, in building it, Vancouver would have to take the opportunity to increase density at points such as Broadway and Arbutus for the expansion to

be effective, Gill said.

He added that the city has done a good job in allowing increased density along Broadway and Second on the Canada Line.

Vancouver missed, however, in not zoning for higher densities around the Broadway SkyTrain station where its two existing lines converge, Gill said.

"This is the challenge," Gill added. "Now, with [Mayor Sam Sullivan's] ecodensity program, I think he's trying to address it."

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