

City ups the ante on the Evergreen Line

Burnaby wants Cameron station included up front

BY JANAYA FULLER-EVANS, BURNABY NOW OCTOBER 27, 2010

Burnaby's city council is taking its fight for concessions on the Evergreen Line project to the negotiation table.

Council has requested that the project office specify what commitments it will make regarding the line to Burnaby, and plans to use the response to determine whether or not to negotiate a municipal agreement with the provincial government related to the rapid transit project.

The plan to make the request was part of a city staff report on the project, presented to council Monday night.

Of particular concern is the possibility that Cameron station cannot be added to the line at a later date. Council, including Mayor Derek Corrigan, says it must be included in the project now.

The project includes fewer stations than originally proposed, and Burnaby council is pressing to have the optional Cameron station included, since there are physical requirements that would make it impossible to add it to the system at a later stage.

The six primary stations are Lougheed Town Centre, Burquitlam Plaza, the Port Moody West Coast Express station, the Coquitlam West Coast Express station and a station at Coquitlam City Hall, with access to Douglas College.

There were four additional spots being considered for two optional stations; Cameron in Burnaby, Queens in Port Moody and Falcon and Lincoln in Coquitlam.

Corrigan spoke out in September against the "massive deletion of stations", saying Burnaby would continue to press to have Cameron added to the initial project.

Council debated what concerns should be addressed in the report from the city at Monday night's council meeting.

Coun. Nick Volkow was particularly concerned about the inclusion of Cameron station.

"It boggles my mind that this is even a question," he said at the meeting.

In reference to the density of the area, part of the requirements for putting a station in, he said, "I don't know how much more dense you can get."

He pointed out that Braid station on the Millennium Line, and 29th Avenue Station in Vancouver on

the Expo Line have less density than the area around the proposed Cameron station.

Another concern for council was funding. Until funding is secured, Coun. Sav Dhaliwal said, the city should not proceed with a municipal agreement.

Such an agreement ensures the province can build the project within the city.

City staff had previously prepared a report asking that the government secure funding for the project, go with a light rail system instead of the SkyTrain option, and add Cameron station to the initial plans.

Coun. Colleen Jordan was visibly frustrated that the province would not consider changing its plans for the line to cut the budget, which is currently \$400 million short.

The light rail option would be more affordable than the SkyTrain technology option, she pointed out.

"They won't listen to anything that changes the plan, to make it affordable," she said.

City staff was directed to amend the report to the province to include mention of the funding for the project, and include light rail technology as a preferred option.

The project is expected to cost \$1.4 billion, according to a news release from the ministry.

The federal government is slated to contribute \$417 million, the provincial government would contribute \$410 million, private project partners would contribute \$173 million and TransLink was to have contributed \$400 million.

However, TransLink's budget only allows for maintaining the current system at this time, not for major projects.

TransLink and the province are looking at alternative funding options for the \$400 million, including property tax increases in the region, which TransLink's mayors' council has said it does not support.

The province issued a request for qualifications for three private partners in July, which closed on Sept. 7. There has been no announcement regarding private partners since.

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