

## Light rail gaining speed

Victoria News December 17, 2010 6:00 AM

[http://www.bclocalnews.com/vancouver\\_island\\_south/victorianews/opinion/111966344.html](http://www.bclocalnews.com/vancouver_island_south/victorianews/opinion/111966344.html)

Rapid transit, likely in the form of light rail, is coming to Douglas Street. That much seems certain now that councils from the region's two heavyweight municipalities have come out in favour of such a plan.

Victoria and Saanich agree the main thoroughfare leading into the heart of the city is the logical place to create a corridor in which to transport people into the suburbs.

It's easy to support this plan, as no concrete costs have been presented to the public. And while we're sure the eventual price tag will be hefty, we think the time is now to begin building transit infrastructure that will benefit the entire region.

The Douglas corridor, with its massive volume of daily traffic, makes sense for a light-rail solution. The West Shore continues to grow and we anticipate it will remain one of the fastest-growing communities on the Island, if not the province.

However, plans to enhance rapid transit must also

consider existing population centres poorly served, historically, by public transportation. Some established neighbourhoods already have more people than some of the projected populations the Douglas corridor will serve.

If we strive to become a truly sustainable city, care needs to be taken to find ways to break established habits. If we look at other communities' experiences light rail has a better chance than the bus of convincing people to leave their vehicles at home.

Without any light-rail infrastructure in place, it might seem implausible to begin talking about adding routes to the University of Victoria, Swartz Bay or the airport.

While such developments might be a long way off, it's never too soon to begin preparing for the day when the public will demand such a service. The voices are growing already, as evidenced by the outspoken support we've seen to taking the first step at light rail in Greater Victoria.

## Victoria city council chooses Douglas Street as rapid transit route

Roszan Holman Victoria News December 14, 2010

There will be no "spreading the pain" of rapid transit through the downtown core.

[http://www.bclocalnews.com/vancouver\\_island\\_south/victorianews/news/111867294.html](http://www.bclocalnews.com/vancouver_island_south/victorianews/news/111867294.html)

*An artist's rendering of the proposed Douglas Street corridor. B.C. Transit*

Ideas of splitting the north- and south-bound corridor between two streets have put been aside. Instead, Victoria council has endorsed Douglas Street as the sole rapid-transit route south of Hillside Avenue.

The future corridor is slated to begin downtown, travel north to Uptown and west through View Royal and Langford.

"It's going to be different," said Mayor Dean Fortin. "Some people say, 'I want to go back (to the days) where I had a lot of room to drive my car and park in front. But we can't go back,'" he said, warning the population of Greater Victoria has grown and will continue to grow.

In 2008, B.C. Transit unveiled a similar rapid-transit corridor along Douglas Street. The business community widely condemned the proposal and the plans were quickly abandoned. This time, B.C. Transit is proceeding much more cautiously, with extensive community consultation, surveys of business owners and their customers.

Results of the survey by R.A. Malatest & Associates found strong support for rapid transit. Of the 500 business or property owners surveyed, 73 per cent support it. Customers' support was stronger, at 82 per cent.

Ken Kelly of the Downtown Victoria Business Association applauded the consultation to date, but warned it needs to continue.

The key, he said, will be consulting "block by block" with property and business owners, discussing their concerns and the details of any plans.

There are many big decisions remaining. In the new year,



B.C. Transit will ask for input from affected municipalities about their preferred alignment for the rapid transit.

There are two options on the table. The first is curbside, where traffic lanes separate the north- and south-bound rapid-transit lines. The second option is "side-running," where rapid-transit lanes in both directions run adjacent to each other, on one side of the road.

Research by B.C. Transit shows the side-running option has some clear advantages.

"The parking impacts and the impacts to businesses (are) narrow and focused on one side of the street, rather than on two sides of the street," said Erin Flett, senior transit planner.

That option also boasts easier connections to east-west transit and easier use for pedestrians. Either option will eliminate 154 parking spaces along Douglas south of Hillside.

Another upcoming decision is around preferred technology.

B.C. Transit is considering two options: light rail and rapid bus. Public input has indicated a strong preference for light rail, and Victoria councillors also pushed this option on Thursday. At this point, there are no cost estimates available for either option.