

Dear Mayor Fortin:

I am severely disappointed with your lack of leadership in promoting a modern rail system along the Douglas Corridor and was shocked when what little up-Island rail we once had was severed on your watch and, now, the fundamentally necessary rail lines are stripped from your new lifting-span bridge.

Council has made one decision after the other to weaken the rail opportunities, thereby limiting our choice to the billion dollar Transit LRT farce running to Langford — an ill-conceived and colossal waste of money — when we already have a rail-bed to Langford which only needs a new rail/bicycle/pedestrian fixed-link bridge to a downtown Douglas Corridor "Victoria Station" - a cheaper and better integrated solution.

By your own estimates -

a new fixed-link rail bridge may cost	\$ 35 million
an initial track up-grade	\$ 15 million
a splendid Victoria Station could be built for	\$ 20 million
curb-side track along the Douglas Corridor	\$ 30 million

- all for a grand total of	\$100 million

This is exactly 1/10th of Transit's \$1 billion.

The \$15 million has now come through to repair the 125 year-old tracks and preserve rail service on the Island but it is only a trial with ancient equipment and patched-up tracks. A modern, rapid system is needed instead - and would be a far better place for the remaining \$900 million.

When Saanich completes the Douglas Corridor greenway to the Uptown exchange, builds the exchange with the Sooke-Sidney line and extends that rail-line to it's borders, Saanich will become the central link in the CRD rail system.

The obvious and numerous advantages of an extended Douglas Corridor rail line, between James Bay and Tolmie Avenue, with an intersecting Up-Island rail-

line connecting us with most Island communities is a sought-after Green solution. You and your Council have failed to support that and have let the future liveability of Victoria slip badly, ensuring a permanent, polluting traffic-sewer of buses, trucks and cars along our principal street, right past City Hall.

I have already given my advice, once personally in Chambers to you and Council at the last OCP open house, and have commented on the fact that rail was never even mentioned on your Draft 30-year OCP. I have also urged you and Council to embrace rail as the obvious solution to the tired and tacky 'third-world' feeling of closed stores, noisy, stinking buses and the host of beggars in downtown Victoria; this to be replaced by a thriving city-centre that has a special human appeal, where trams quietly bring customers to business, people to their jobs, to the arts and entertainment while visitors can enjoy easy access to our attractions - the essence of a modern city.

Instead of the business-as-usual attitude, freezing us into last-century thinking of the individual driver's right to 'own' the roads and use the curb-sides for parking, couldn't you, as Mayor, envision the streets being returned to the pedestrian and take pride on a stroll along the green avenue of busy stores with offices and apartments above, served by widened sidewalks, with frequent, modern, free, electric, curb-side trams to whisk you quickly, smoothly and silently anywhere along the Corridor, spreading your choices throughout Downtown?

Wide bicycle lanes and designated power-chair lanes would keep those hazards off the sidewalks and permitting them also to move more smoothly and quickly across town. Emergency vehicles could also benefit from the tram's priority traffic signals while quietly using the centre lanes without the din of sirens trying to clear traffic out of their way. Commercial and other vehicular traffic would be limited to sharing Douglas between 10pm and 6am - and within a few years they will all be electric for night-time silence.

We citizens need strong, decisive action by City Hall coupled with a broad vision for our future in a 30-year OCP with a sustainable integrated transportation system. I see very little of that, especially regarding coping with traffic and

moving pedestrians, and I am severely disappointed in the limited vision of those who are supposed to be leading our city into the near future.

Come on, all of you, read up a little and get on with decisions for the future that must be taken NOW to fill the functions for which you were elected. A trove of useful urban and inter-urban rail information for this region is available at islandtransformations.org to help you reach the same conclusion that numerous cities around the world are flocking to: rail is a better way to move people than cars - it is the only solution to the traffic, parking and pollution problems that plague all cities.

When we eventually walk along this urban garden and have restored Douglas Street from traffic chaos to pedestrian calm, we can reclaim our title of "City of Gardens" taken from us by Portland with it's ever-expanding rail network and it's attractive and liveable downtown.

It is not too late to upgrade your OCP and present a complete, sustainable, integrated, green transportation system for our city, highlighting rail along the Douglas Corridor with a connecting Up-Island line and a tram hub at Hillside, to serve that mall, Camosun and UVic and, from that hub, tram lines could eventually branch out along Gorge and even Government. As this basic system is expanded in the next few years, the Fort/Oak Bay line should be made a priority and another line considered to serve the Royal Jubilee Hospital.

Health care services for all age groups, higher education facilities, affordable housing and liveable streets, will be our new hallmarks and now is the moment to invest in the future that we all want - and can afford with the increased tax base that development along the rail lines will bring.

Jeremy Watney