

Mayor outlines transport dreams

Oak Bay's Causton envisions train-bus commute

by Carla Wilson, Times Colonist, May 14, 2010

Oak Bay Mayor Chris Causton stepped 20 years into the future this week by sharing some of his transportation dreams that include a commuter train and shuttle buses.

"The opportunities for commuter rail are huge," Causton said during a mayoral address to the Greater Victoria Chamber of Commerce annual general meeting.

He imagines 20-minute-long rides on a commuter rail service running as many as 20 times a day between Langford and Victoria.

"The commuter train would come from Langford right to downtown and up to City Hall. I would run a rail line right up the side, right by Swan's, across Store Street. It would come up and go over Government Street and stop at the mayor's parking spot outside City Hall."

From that downtown location, commuters could get on the main transit route on Douglas Street, in a system fully linked to carry commuters through the region, Causton told about 100 chamber members.

Causton is chairman of the Victoria Regional Transit Commission and sits on B.C. Transit's board of directors. He is also the federal Liberal nominee in Victoria.

He used the South Lake Union Streetcar line in Seattle as an example of what a rail line can accomplish. The 2.1-kilometre long service was promoted by Microsoft co-founder Paul Allen, who owned property in that area. The streetcar runs frequently and has helped spearhead redevelopment of that region, Causton said.

"Twenty years from now I would see a bus lane between Uptown and Tillicum, and Tillicum and McKenzie," he said.

Uptown would also be the hub for a bus running to and from the city's centre. Work finishes this summer on the first phase of the massive Uptown retail and office project, which includes residential in the future, at the site of the Town and Country mall on the 3500-block of Douglas Street.

"A bus that came down Douglas and back up Government Street every 10 minutes in conjunction with redevelopment in the

Uptown area would change the look of the city," Causton said. This bus would run on its own dedicated lanes.

Turning his attention to the Saanich Peninsula, he advocated a shuttle bus running a loop between the Victoria International Airport and the upcoming park-and-ride development which is part of the \$24-million MacTavish Road Interchange, now being constructed.

Long-range plans for "humongous" parking at the airport are unsustainable, Causton said. The shuttle could take passengers to an express bus with few stops, heading to downtown, or out to the ferry terminal.

He's not in favour of the MacTavish Interchange project, saying that \$10,000 would have solved any congestion.

"You could have taken \$24 million and spent it on a runway," Causton said. "It is such a natural thing to do."

A longer runway would make it possible to have direct flights between Victoria and England. The Victoria Airport Authority is seeking government partners for the \$41.2-million plan.

Currently, visitors from England, for example, stop in Vancouver and then have to take another flight from there to fly into Victoria.

E & N
20-min. ride
20 x per day

Douglas Street
Busway
with extensions to
- Tillicum and
- McKenzie

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