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CITY OF ABBOTSFORD

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March 24, 2020

File: 0530-03

Mr. Bill Vander Zalm
3553 Arthur Drive
Ladner, BC V4K 3N2

Dear Mr. Vander Zalm:

Re: Proposed South Fraser Community Rail

Thank you for your letter of March 6th in regards to the proposed South Fraser Community Rail (SFCR) (formerly the BC Hydro/Southern Rail/Interurban Rail). I apologize for the delay in getting back to you, but the world has rapidly changed in the last few weeks, and as a City we're working hard to respond appropriately to these events. Thank you for your patience.

Like you, I fully respect the work of the SFCR volunteer group and commend them for their efforts in seeking alternative, green transit in the Fraser Valley. However, I honestly feel that there are some challenges that will make this railway line unworkable as a commuter rail line.

As you are aware, one of my companies, back in 1987/1988, was one of the bidders to purchase the line, which at that time was one of the most successful short-line railroad in North America. As a result, I am very familiar with the agreements that were created and exist today.

I have specific concerns related to the "Master Agreement" between BC Hydro and CP Rail. Although the right of way (or land) is still owned by the province, the trackage above the subgrade (ballast, ties, tie-plates and rail) is owned and managed by CP Rail. Please note the following from the Master Agreement:

- There is a joint section of rail (7miles), also known as the Pratt Livingstone Corridor, of which: "CP Rail shall have the sole control, management and administration of the Joint Section." (Annexure V Section 2.1, 1988 Master Agreement); and
- "This agreement does not contemplate the operation of passenger trains upon the Joint Section by any railway company other than Hydro." (Annexure V Section 2.7, 1988 Master Agreement)

Based on this agreement, CP Rail is free to operate on the joint section in a way that maximizes their benefit. They can, indeed, double track the joint section, as you have mentioned, but their priority would be for freight use. There are already dozens of freight trains currently running along this 7-mile line daily, thus the viability of running a regular passenger transit service is not feasible, particularly as freight traffic continues to Delta Port through the Roberts Bank Rail Corridor. In fact, TransLink's 2019 Report on Interurban Passenger Rail estimates that freight service would increase by "up to 28-38 trains per day by 2021, with some train lengths up to 3,660 metres."

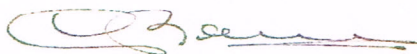
Furthermore, this agreement between BC Hydro and CP Rail is granted in perpetuity and would require the two parties to re-open this agreement.

TransLink's 2019 Report also indicates concerns that I share related to directness and connection to population centres, travel times, the substantial infrastructure investment that would be required in order to meet standards for passenger safety and other construction challenges, and environmental risks as the line travels through the Agricultural Land Reserve. I understand, however, that Translink is recommending that the concept of interurban rail will be further examined through the Transport 2050 process.

I think that it is important to emphasize that the line flows through a number of agricultural communities that do not have the densification to sustain a viable rail transit system. Municipal plans would have to be made to increase density in these areas within the Agricultural Land Reserve and would require significant infrastructure investment. The City of Abbotsford is focused on building "up" and not "out" to create a sustainable community within our urban core.

I appreciate the work done by South Fraser Community Rail. However, with the challenges this concept presents, I believe it is necessary to find other options so we can create the best long-term plan, based on current and forecasted population growth, that will link our region in a sustainable way. A very important regional investment like this would continue to build a thriving region with a strong economy and quality of life for all of our residents.

Yours truly,



Henry Braun
Mayor

- c. Honourable Ed Fast, Member of Parliament for Abbotsford
- Brad Vis, Member of Parliament for Mission-Matsqui-Fraser Canyon
- Tako Van Popta, Member of Parliament for Langley – Aldergrove
- Honourable Darryl Plecas, Speaker of the House and MLA Abbotsford South
- Simon Gibson, MLA Abbotsford – Mission
- Michael de Jong, MLA Abbotsford West
- Council members
- Peter Sparanese, City Manager