



**AGENDA FOR THE REGULAR MEETING OF COUNCIL HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER AND ELECTRONICALLY (HYBRID) FROM CITY HALL, 141 WEST 14<sup>TH</sup> STREET, NORTH VANCOUVER, BC, ON MONDAY, APRIL 15, 2024 AT 6:00 PM**

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*The City of North Vancouver respectfully acknowledges that this Council meeting is held on the traditional and unceded territories of the Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish) and Səlílwətał (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations.*

**CALL TO ORDER**

**APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

1. Regular Council Meeting Agenda, April 15, 2024

**ADOPTION OF MINUTES**

2. Regular Council Meeting Minutes, April 8, 2024

**PUBLIC INPUT PERIOD**

**CONSENT AGENDA**

Items \*3 and \*4 are listed in the Consent Agenda for consideration.

**BYLAW – ADOPTION**

- \*3. “Street and Traffic Bylaw, 1991, No. 6234, Amendment Bylaw, 2024, No. 9022”  
(Electric Kick Scooter Pilot)

**REPORT**

- \*4. Appointment of North Shore Designate to E-Comm Board – 2024-2025 Term and Proxyholder for E-Comm Board Annual General Meeting

**DELEGATION**

Stephen von Sychowski, President, Vancouver and District Labour Council, and Joyce Griffiths, Community Member – Insourcing HandyDART

**CORRESPONDENCE**

5. Stephen von Sychowski, President, Vancouver and District Labour – Insourcing HandyDART

**PRESENTATION**

2024 Low Mow Meadow Program – Acting Manager, Parks and Natural Spaces

**REPORTS**

6. Low Mow Meadow Program
7. 2024-2028 Financial Plan Bylaw

**BYLAW – FIRST, SECOND AND THIRD READINGS**

8. “Financial Plan for the Years 2024 to 2028 Bylaw, 2024, No. 9016”

**PUBLIC CLARIFICATION PERIOD**

**COUNCIL INQUIRIES / REPORTS**

**NEW ITEMS OF BUSINESS**

**NOTICES OF MOTION**

**RECESS TO CLOSED SESSION**

**REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE (CLOSED SESSION)**

**ADJOURN**

## **CALL TO ORDER**

## **APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

1. Regular Council Meeting Agenda, April 15, 2024

## **ADOPTION OF MINUTES**

2. Regular Council Meeting Minutes, April 8, 2024

## **PUBLIC INPUT PERIOD**

The Public Input Period is addressed in sections 12.20 to 12.28 of “Council Procedure Bylaw, 2015, No. 8500.” The time allotted for each speaker addressing Council during the Public Input Period is 2 minutes, with the number of speakers set at 5 persons. Speakers’ comments will be audio recorded, as well as live-streamed on the City’s website, and will form part of the public record.

Speakers may only speak on the same matter once in a 3-month period.

Speakers during the Public Input Period are permitted to join the meeting in person in the Council Chamber or electronically via Webex. There are 2 ways to sign up to speak during the Public Input Period.

- 1) **IN PERSON:** Speakers who choose to participate in person must sign the speaker list located outside the Council Chamber between 5:30 and 5:50pm on the day of the Council meeting.
- 2) **ELECTRONICALLY VIA WEBEX:** Speakers who choose to participate electronically must pre-register by 12:00 noon on the day of the Council meeting by completing the online form at [cnv.org/PublicInputPeriod](http://cnv.org/PublicInputPeriod), or by phoning 604-990-4234. These pre-registrants will receive instructions by email or phone on the afternoon before the Council meeting.

If a speaker has written material to accompany their comments, the material must be sent to the Corporate Officer at [clerks@cnv.org](mailto:clerks@cnv.org) no later than 12:00 noon on the day of the Council Meeting.

The Public Input Period provides an opportunity for comment only and places the speaker’s concern on record, without the expectation of a response from Council. Speakers must comply with the General Rules of Conduct set out in section 5.1 of “Council Procedure Bylaw, 2015, No. 8500” and may not speak with respect to items as listed in section 12.25(2).

Speakers are requested not to address matters that refer to items from a concluded Public Hearing/Public Meeting or to Public Hearings, Public Meetings and Committee meetings when those matters are scheduled on the same evening’s agenda, as an opportunity for public input is provided when the particular item comes forward for discussion.

Please address the Mayor as “Your Worship” or “Mayor, followed by their surname”. Councillors should be addressed as “Councillor, followed by their surname”.

## **CONSENT AGENDA**

Items \*3 and \*4 are listed in the Consent Agenda for consideration.

### **RECOMMENDATION:**

THAT the recommendations listed within the “Consent Agenda” be approved.

## **START OF CONSENT AGENDA**

### **BYLAW – ADOPTION**

- \*3. “Street and Traffic Bylaw, 1991, No. 6234, Amendment Bylaw, 2024, No. 9022”  
(Electric Kick Scooter Pilot)

### **RECOMMENDATION:**

THAT “Street and Traffic Bylaw, 1991, No. 6234, Amendment Bylaw, 2024, No. 9022” (Electric Kick Scooter Pilot) be adopted, signed by the Mayor and Corporate Officer and affixed with the corporate seal.

## **REPORT**

- \*4. Appointment of North Shore Designate to E-Comm Board – 2024-2025 Term and Proxyholder for E-Comm Board Annual General Meeting  
– File: 01-0230-20-0016/2024

Report: Acting Corporate Officer, April 3, 2024

### **RECOMMENDATION:**

PURSUANT to the report of the Acting Corporate Officer, dated April 3, 2024, entitled “Appointment of North Shore Designate to E-Comm Board – 2024-2025 Term and Proxyholder for E-Comm Board Annual General Meeting”:

THAT District of North Vancouver Mayor Mike Little be nominated to serve as the North Shore designate to the E-Comm Board of Directors for the 2024-2025 term, such Board to be elected by the E-Comm Board of Directors at the Annual General Meeting on June 20, 2024;

AND THAT Mayor Mike Little be designated as nominee to attend the Annual General Meeting of the Shareholders for the purpose of voting the City of North Vancouver shares.

## **END OF CONSENT AGENDA**

## **DELEGATION**

Stephen von Sychowski, President, Vancouver and District Labour Council, and  
Joyce Griffiths, Community Member

Re: Insourcing HandyDART

*Item 5 refers.*

## **CORRESPONDENCE**

5. Stephen von Sychowski, President, Vancouver and District Labour Council,  
February 23, 2024 – File: 16-8500-01-0001/2024

Re: Insourcing HandyDART

### **RECOMMENDATION:**

THAT the correspondence from Stephen von Sychowski, President, Vancouver and District Labour Council, dated February 23, 2024, regarding “Insourcing HandyDART”, be received for information and with thanks.

## **PRESENTATION**

2024 Low Mow Meadow Program – Acting Manager, Parks and Natural Spaces

*Item 6 refers.*

## **REPORTS**

6. Low Mow Meadow Program – File: 12-6240-01-0001/2024

Report: Acting Manager, Parks and Natural Spaces, April 10, 2024

### **RECOMMENDATION:**

PURSUANT to the report of the Acting Manager, Parks and Natural Spaces, dated April 10, 2024, entitled “Low Mow Meadow Program”:

THAT staff be directed to initiate a permanent low mow meadow program within Parks and Boulevards.

## **REPORTS – Continued**

7. 2024-2028 Financial Plan Bylaw – File: 05-1700-03-0001/2024

Report: Chief Financial Officer, April 3, 2024

### **RECOMMENDATION:**

PURSUANT to the report of the Chief Financial Officer, dated April 3, 2024, entitled “2024-2028 Financial Plan Bylaw”:

THAT “Financial Plan for the Years 2024 to 2028 Bylaw, 2024, No. 9016” be considered.

*Item 8 refers.*

## **BYLAW – FIRST, SECOND AND THIRD READINGS**

8. “Financial Plan for the Years 2024 to 2028 Bylaw, 2024, No. 9016”

### **RECOMMENDATION:**

THAT “Financial Plan for the Years 2024 to 2028 Bylaw, 2024, No. 9016” be given first and second readings;

AND THAT “Financial Plan for the Years 2024 to 2028 Bylaw, 2024, No. 9016” be given third reading.

## **PUBLIC CLARIFICATION PERIOD**

The Public Clarification Period is limited to 10 minutes in total and is an opportunity for the public to ask a question regarding process or clarification on an item on the Regular Council Agenda. The Public Clarification Period concludes after 10 minutes and the Regular Council Meeting reconvenes.

## **COUNCIL INQUIRIES / REPORTS**

### **NEW ITEMS OF BUSINESS**

### **NOTICES OF MOTION**

### **RECESS TO CLOSED SESSION**

THAT Council recess to the Committee of the Whole, Closed Session, pursuant to the *Community Charter*, Sections 90(1)(c) [labour relations] and 90(1)(i) [legal advice], and where required, Council considers that the matters could reasonably be expected to harm the interests of the City if they were held in public.

## **REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE (CLOSED SESSION)**

### **ADJOURN**



**MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF COUNCIL HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER AND ELECTRONICALLY (HYBRID) FROM CITY HALL, 141 WEST 14<sup>TH</sup> STREET, NORTH VANCOUVER, BC, ON MONDAY, APRIL 8, 2024**

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**PRESENT**

**COUNCIL MEMBERS**

Mayor L. Buchanan  
Councillor H. Back\*  
Councillor D. Bell  
Councillor A. Girard  
Councillor J. McIlroy  
Councillor S. Shahriari  
Councillor T. Valente

*\*participated electronically*

**STAFF MEMBERS**

L. McCarthy, CAO  
B. Pearce, Deputy CAO  
P. DeJong, Acting Corporate Officer  
J. Peters, Manager, Legislative and Election Services  
L. Sawrenko, Chief Financial Officer  
P. Manarovici, Controller  
H. Granger, City Solicitor  
K. Magnusson, Director, Engineering, Parks and Environment  
S. Galloway, Director, Planning and Development  
J. Draper, Deputy Director, Planning and Development  
R. de St. Croix, Manager, Planning (City Design and Planning)  
E. Elliott, Manager, Transportation  
M. Lam, North Shore Mobility Options Coordinator  
E. Doran, Director, People and Culture  
C. Stevens, Manager, Strategic Initiatives  
A. Gibbs, Sr. Manager, Communications and Engagement  
H. van Gelderen, Legislative Services Advisor  
S. Friesen, Administrative Coordinator

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 pm.

**APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

Moved by Councillor Valente, seconded by Councillor Shahriari

1. Regular Council Meeting Agenda, April 8, 2024

**CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY**

R2024-04-08/1

**ADOPTION OF MINUTES**

Moved by Councillor McIlroy, seconded by Councillor Valente

2. Regular Council Meeting Minutes, March 11, 2024

**CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY**

R2024-04-08/2

Moved by Councillor McIlroy, seconded by Councillor Valente

3. Special Council Meeting Minutes, March 22, 2024

**CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY**

R2024-04-08/3

## **PROCLAMATION**

Mayor Buchanan declared the following proclamation:

Autism Acceptance Month – April 2024

## **PUBLIC INPUT PERIOD**

Moved by Councillor Bell, seconded by Councillor Girard

THAT the Public Input Period be extended to hear all the speakers listed on the sign-up sheet.

**CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY**

- Patrick Stafford-Smith, North Vancouver, spoke regarding Item 10 – 2024 Property Tax Increase Distribution Options.
- Aline Burlone, North Vancouver, spoke regarding the Alternative Approval Process and communication of the process to the public.

Councillor Shahriari recused himself at 6:09 pm, declaring a conflict of interest with respect to the proximity of a property he owns to a proposed application for the property located at 120-128 East 14<sup>th</sup> Street.

- Brett Hurst, North Vancouver, spoke regarding the proposed application for the property located at 120-128 East 14<sup>th</sup> Street, the rate of construction in central Lonsdale, traffic and parking congestion.
- Richard Short, North Vancouver, spoke regarding the proposed application for the property located at 120-128 East 14<sup>th</sup> Street and statements attributed to the property owner on their website.
- Mehdi Razaghi, North Vancouver, spoke regarding the proposed application for the property located at 120-128 East 14<sup>th</sup> Street, traffic congestion and challenges for local businesses on the 100 block of East 14<sup>th</sup> Street.
- Pat Tracey, North Vancouver, spoke regarding the proposed application for the property located at 120-128 East 14<sup>th</sup> Street, construction and congestion on the 100 block of East 14<sup>th</sup> Street.

Councillor Shahriari returned to the meeting at 6:19 pm.

- Sarah Robertson, North Vancouver, spoke regarding affordable housing and more development in the City.

## **CONSENT AGENDA**

Moved by Councillor Bell, seconded by Councillor Valente

THAT the recommendations listed within the “Consent Agenda” be approved.

**CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY**



## **START OF CONSENT AGENDA**

### **CORRESPONDENCE**

4. Board in Brief, Metro Vancouver Regional District, March 22, 2024  
– File: 01-0400-60-0006/2024

Re: Metro Vancouver – Board in Brief

Moved by Councillor Bell, seconded by Councillor Valente

THAT the correspondence from Metro Vancouver, dated March 22, 2024, regarding the “Metro Vancouver – Board in Brief”, be received and filed.

**(CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY BY CONSENT)**

R2024-04-08/4

### **BYLAWS – ADOPTION**

5. “Zoning Bylaw, 1995, No. 6700, Amendment Bylaw, 2023, No. 8957” (Jadasi Development (880 W 15<sup>th</sup>) Ltd. / Gateway Architecture, 880 West 15<sup>th</sup> Street, CD-759)

Moved by Councillor Bell, seconded by Councillor Valente

THAT “Zoning Bylaw, 1995, No. 6700, Amendment Bylaw, 2023, No. 8957” (Jadasi Development (880 W 15<sup>th</sup>) Ltd. / Gateway Architecture, 880 West 15<sup>th</sup> Street, CD-759) be adopted, signed by the Mayor and Corporate Officer and affixed with the corporate seal.

**(CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY BY CONSENT)**

R2024-04-08/5

6. “Housing Agreement Bylaw, 2023, No. 8958” (Jadasi Development (880 W 15<sup>th</sup>) Ltd. / Gateway Architecture, 880 West 15<sup>th</sup> Street, CD-759, Rental Housing Commitments)

Moved by Councillor Bell, seconded by Councillor Valente

THAT “Housing Agreement Bylaw, 2023, No. 8958” (Jadasi Development (880 W 15<sup>th</sup>) Ltd. / Gateway Architecture, 880 West 15<sup>th</sup> Street, CD-759, Rental Housing Commitments) be adopted, signed by the Mayor and Corporate Officer and affixed with the corporate seal.

**(CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY BY CONSENT)**

R2024-04-08/6

## **CONSENT AGENDA – Continued**

### **BYLAWS – ADOPTION – Continued**

7. “Housing Agreement Bylaw, 2024, No. 9018” (Anthem Sunshine Developments Ltd., 149 West 3<sup>rd</sup> Street, CD-744, Rental Housing Commitments)

Moved by Councillor Bell, seconded by Councillor Valente

THAT “Housing Agreement Bylaw, 2024, No. 9018” (Anthem Sunshine Developments Ltd., 149 West 3<sup>rd</sup> Street, CD-744, Rental Housing Commitments) be adopted, signed by the Mayor and Corporate Officer and affixed with the corporate seal.

**(CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY BY CONSENT)**

R2024-04-08/7

### **REPORT**

8. UBCM Community Emergency Preparedness Fund Grant Application – Emergency Support Services Equipment and Training – File: 01-0360-20-0057/2024

Report: Director, North Shore Emergency Management, March 22, 2024

Moved by Councillor Bell, seconded by Councillor Valente

PURSUANT to the report of the Director, North Shore Emergency Management, dated March 22, 2024, entitled “UBCM Community Emergency Preparedness Fund Grant Application – Emergency Support Services Equipment and Training”:

THAT the application submitted to the UBCM Community Emergency Preparedness Fund (CEPF) under the stream of “2024 Emergency Support Services Equipment and Training” for the “Modernizing Emergency Support Services (ESS) on the North Shore under Emergency and Disaster Management Act (EDMA)” project in the amount of \$120,000.00 be endorsed;

AND THAT the District of North Vancouver, in partnership with North Shore Emergency Management (NSEM), be authorized to manage the project and funds.

**(CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY BY CONSENT)**

R2024-04-08/8

## **END OF CONSENT AGENDA**

### **DELEGATION**

Igor Bjelac, Director, Ali Haeri, Treasurer, and Reihaneh Mirjani, Vice President, Immigrant Link Centre Society

Re: Increasing Food Security through Zero Food Waste

Igor Bjelac, Ali Haeri and Reihaneh Mirjani, Immigrant Link Centre Society, provided a PowerPoint presentation regarding “Increasing Food Security through Zero Food Waste” and responded to questions of Council.

## **CORRESPONDENCE**

9. Melody Moheb, Director of Public Relations, Immigrant Link Centre Society, October 30, 2023 – File: 01-0230-01-0001/2024

Re: Increasing Food Security through Zero Food Waste

Moved by Councillor McIlroy, seconded by Councillor Girard

THAT the correspondence from Melody Moheb, Director of Public Relations, Immigrant Link Centre Society, dated October 30, 2023, regarding “Increasing Food Security through Zero Food Waste”, be received for information and with thanks.

**CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY**

R2024-04-08/9

## **REPORTS**

10. 2024 Property Tax Increase Distribution Options – File: 05-1970-05-0005/2024

Report: Chief Financial Officer, March 27, 2024

Moved by Councillor Girard, seconded by Councillor McIlroy

PURSUANT to the report of the Chief Financial Officer, dated March 27, 2024, entitled “2024 Property Tax Increase Distribution Options”:

THAT an across the board 2024 Property Tax Increase of 6.9% be endorsed;

AND THAT staff bring forward a Tax Rate Bylaw (2024) that must be adopted before May 15, 2024 in accordance with the *Community Charter*.

**CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY**

R2024-04-08/10

11. Provincial Electric Kick Scooter Pilot Project Extension – File: 16-8330-05-0001/1

Report: North Shore Mobility Options Coordinator, March 27, 2024

Moved by Councillor Valente, seconded by Councillor McIlroy

PURSUANT to the report of the North Shore Mobility Options Coordinator, dated March 27, 2024, entitled “Provincial Electric Kick Scooter Pilot Project Extension”:

THAT the City of North Vancouver’s participation in the Provincial Electric Kick Scooter Pilot Project be continued from April 2024 to April 2028;

AND THAT “Street and Traffic Bylaw, 1991, No. 6234, Amendment Bylaw, 2024, No. 9022” (Electric Kick Scooter Pilot) be given first, second and third readings.

**CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY**

R2024-04-08/11

## **BYLAW – FIRST, SECOND AND THIRD READINGS**

12. “Street and Traffic Bylaw, 1991, No. 6234, Amendment Bylaw, 2024, No. 9022”  
(Electric Kick Scooter Pilot)

Moved by Councillor Valente, seconded by Councillor McIlroy

THAT “Street and Traffic Bylaw, 1991, No. 6234, Amendment Bylaw, 2024, No. 9022” (Electric Kick Scooter Pilot) be given first and second readings;

AND THAT “Street and Traffic Bylaw, 1991, No. 6234, Amendment Bylaw, 2024, No. 9022” (Electric Kick Scooter Pilot) be given third reading.

**CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY**

R2024-04-08/12

## **PUBLIC CLARIFICATION PERIOD**

Nil.

## **COUNCIL INQUIRIES**

Nil.

## **COUNCIL REPORTS**

Councillor Valente reported on his attendance at the Harvest Project and Simon Fraser University “Making Ends Meet Poverty Simulation” at the Wallace Venue on April 7, 2024.

## **NEW ITEMS OF BUSINESS**

Nil.

## **NOTICES OF MOTION**

Nil.

## **RECESS TO CLOSED SESSION**

Moved by Councillor Shahriari, seconded by Councillor McIlroy

THAT Council recess to the Committee of the Whole, Closed Session, pursuant to the *Community Charter*, Section 90(1)(k) [proposed service], and where required, Council considers that the matters could reasonably be expected to harm the interests of the City if they were held in public.

**CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY**

The meeting recessed to the Committee of the Whole, Closed Session, at 7:41 pm and reconvened at 9:25 pm.

**REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE (CLOSED SESSION)**

Moved by Councillor Bell, seconded by Councillor Valente

THAT the following items from the Committee of the Whole (Closed Session), of April 8, 2024, be ratified:

- 13. The Shipyards 5<sup>th</sup> Year Celebration – File: 13-6740-01-0001/2024

Report: Manager, The Shipyards and Waterfront, March 27, 2024

Moved by Councillor McIlroy, seconded by Councillor Girard

PURSUANT to the report of the Manager, The Shipyards and Waterfront, dated March 27, 2024, entitled “The Shipyards 5<sup>th</sup> Year Celebration”:

THAT staff be directed to hold a Shipyards 5<sup>th</sup> year celebration;

THAT staff be directed to explore sponsorship from community partners;

AND THAT the report of the Manager, The Shipyards and Waterfront, dated March 27, 2024, entitled “The Shipyards 5<sup>th</sup> Year Celebration”, remain in the Closed session.

R2024-04-08/13

- 14. Proposed Service – File: 06-2240-02-0001/1

Report: Deputy Director, Civic Development and Strategic Initiatives,  
March 27, 2024

PURSUANT to the report of the Deputy Director, Civic Development and Strategic Initiatives, dated March 27, 2024, regarding a proposed service:

THAT the wording of the resolution and the report of the Deputy Director, Civic Development and Strategic Initiatives, dated March 27, 2024, remain in the Closed session.

R2024-04-08/14

**CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY**

**ADJOURN**

Moved by Councillor Shahriari, seconded by Councillor Girard

THAT the meeting adjourn.

**CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY**

The meeting adjourned at 9:26 pm.

*“Certified Correct by the Acting Corporate Officer”*

\_\_\_\_\_  
ACTING CORPORATE OFFICER

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THE CORPORATION OF THE CITY OF NORTH VANCOUVER

BYLAW NO. 9022

A Bylaw to amend “Street and Traffic Bylaw, 1991, No. 6234”

The Council of The Corporation of the City of North Vancouver, in open meeting assembled, enacts as follows:

1. This Bylaw shall be known and cited for all purposes as “**Street and Traffic Bylaw, 1991, No. 6234, Amendment Bylaw, 2024, No. 9022**” (Electric Kick Scooter Pilot).
2. “Street and Traffic Bylaw, 1991, No. 6234” is amended as follows:
  - A. In Section 302, by deleting the definition of “Electric Kick Scooter” and replacing with the following:

“Electric Kick Scooter means a motorized device as defined in the Electric Kick Scooter Regulation, effective April 5, 2024;”
  - B. In Section 302, by deleting the definition of “Electric Kick Scooter Regulations” and replacing with the following:

“Electric Kick Scooter Regulations means the Electric Kick Scooter Regulation, effective April 5, 2024;”

READ a first time on the <> day of <>, 2024.

READ a second time on the <> day of <>, 2024.

READ a third time on the <> day of <>, 2024.

ADOPTED on the <> day of <>, 2024.

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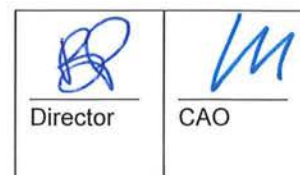
MAYOR

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CORPORATE OFFICER

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The Corporation of **THE CITY OF NORTH VANCOUVER**  
**OFFICE OF THE DEPUTY CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER**  
**CITY CLERK'S DEPARTMENT**

**REPORT**

To: Mayor Linda Buchanan and Members of Council

From: Peter DeJong, Acting Corporate Officer

Subject: APPOINTMENT OF NORTH SHORE DESIGNATE TO E-COMM BOARD  
– 2024-2025 TERM AND PROXYHOLDER FOR E-COMM BOARD  
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Date: April 3, 2024 File No: 01-0230-20-0016/2024

*The following is a suggested recommendation only. Refer to Council Minutes for adopted resolution.*

**RECOMMENDATION**

PURSUANT to the report of the Acting Corporate Officer, dated April 3, 2024, entitled "Appointment of North Shore Designate to E-Comm Board – 2024-2025 Term and Proxyholder for E-Comm Board Annual General Meeting":

THAT District of North Vancouver Mayor Mike Little be nominated to serve as the North Shore designate to the E-Comm Board of Directors for the 2024-2025 term, such Board to be elected by the E-Comm Board of Directors at the Annual General Meeting on June 20, 2024;

AND THAT Mayor Mike Little be designated as nominee to attend the Annual General Meeting of the Shareholders for the purpose of voting the City of North Vancouver shares.

**ATTACHMENTS**

1. Correspondence from E-Comm 9-1-1, dated March 27, 2024 (CityDocs [2501434](#))
2. Section 4.2 of the Members' Agreement (CityDocs [2501434](#))
3. Common Questions and Background (CityDocs [2501434](#))

## DISCUSSION

The North Shore municipalities of City of North Vancouver, District of North Vancouver, District of West Vancouver and Village of Lions Bay share one (1) Director on the Board of E-Comm Emergency Communications for British Columbia Incorporated (E-Comm) per section 4.2 of the Members' Agreement (attached).

By agreement of the municipalities, former District of North Vancouver Mayor Richard Walton served as the North Shore representative to the E-Comm Board for many years until last year when District of North Vancouver Mayor Mike Little took over as the designated Board representative for the municipalities in the North Shore group, and also as proxyholder for the City.

For the reasons set out in the attached correspondence from E-Comm, they are respectfully requesting agreement on the re-nomination of Mayor Little for the coming 2024-2025 term.

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED:

*for*   
\_\_\_\_\_  
Peter DeJong  
Acting Corporate Officer

VIA EMAIL – c/o [CityCouncil@cnv.org](mailto:CityCouncil@cnv.org)

April 5, 2024

Mayor Linda Buchanan and Council  
City of North Vancouver  
141 West 14th Street  
North Vancouver, BC V7M 1H9

Dear Mayor Buchanan and Council,

**RE: E-Comm Board of Directors Designate — 2024-2025 Term**

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The Annual General Meeting (the “Meeting”) of the shareholders (the “Members”) of E-Comm *Emergency Communications for British Columbia Inc.* (“E-Comm”) will be held on Thursday, June 20, 2024 and, at that time, the Board of Directors (the “Board”) will be elected by the Members for the 2024-2025 term.

**Selection of Nominee for 2024-2025 Term**

The Members’ Agreement sets out how the Board of Directors will be elected. For your reference, we attach a copy of section 4.2 of the Members’ Agreement, headed “Designation and Election of Directors” as Schedule “A” of this letter.

Your organization falls into the Designated Grouping that is described in subsection 4.2.1.5. Under Section 4.2.1.5, your Designated Group of Members is entitled to nominate one mutually agreed upon individual for election to the Board of Directors of E-Comm. At present, your grouping is comprised of these municipalities:

	Class A	Class B
City of North Vancouver	2	1
District of North Vancouver	1	1
District of West Vancouver	1	1
Village of Lions Bay	1	-

**Nominee Request**

Mayor Mike Little, District of North Vancouver represents your municipality on the E-Comm Board of Directors.

In 2023 alone, the E-Comm Board of Directors saw 10 of the 18 nominated Directors turnover (twice in one jurisdiction) affecting the Board’s ability to govern the organization effectively. Given the significant transformation underway at E-Comm and the considerable learning curve that new Directors experience before feeling fully engaged and able to contribute, the re-nomination of Mayor Little will provide the organization with consistency as we continue to move E-Comm forward.

Because your Designated Grouping must mutually agree upon your nominee, **we respectfully request that the City of North Vancouver confer with the other members of your grouping to confirm the re-nomination Mayor Little for the coming term.**

**Alternate Nominees**

In the event that the City of North Vancouver does not re-nominate the current Director, it is requested that the nominee possess the experience, skills, and attributes to effectively serve the best interests of all Members and our other stakeholders. The nominee does not need to be an elected official and can be city staff or another individual connected to your municipality. E-Comm is specifically looking to fill the gaps identified in the most recent Board of Directors Skills Matrix, which highlighted the need for Directors with the following expertise:



- Financial Literacy and Audit
- Information Technology
- Risk and Compliance
- Stakeholder Relations

We note too, E-Comm's objectives to broaden the participation of individuals from underrepresented and marginalized backgrounds, identities and lived experiences. We are working towards ensuring diversity of thought, perspective, and lived experience at the board level.

**Next steps**

We kindly request that you reply to us with written confirmation by Wednesday, May 1, 2024, of your nominee's name and contact information to the E-Comm Board for the 2024-2025 term.

**FAQ**

We have included an FAQ document which provides additional information regarding the nomination of Directors to the E-Comm Board as Schedule "B".

**AGM Voting Representative**

Please note that nominating a director is a separate process from designating a representative to vote your share(s) at the Annual General Meeting (the "AGM") in June. As such, we will contact you again in mid-May with the Notice of AGM and request that you designate one individual to attend the Annual General Meeting of the Shareholders to vote the City of Abbotsford share(s). If you prefer, you can designate your nominee to vote your share(s), which is quite common amongst Shareholders.

If you have any questions, do not hesitate to get in touch with me using the contact information below.

Sincerely,



Li-Jeen Broshko, KC  
Corporate Secretary

c | 604-375-0333  
e | LBroshko@ecomm911.ca

cc Mayor Mike Little, E-Comm Board Director  
Peter De Jong, City of North Vancouver, Acting Corporate Officer

Agency established for the purposes of holding a Class A Share in place of that Special User becomes a Member.

#### **4. BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

##### **4.1 BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

The Company shall have a Board comprised of not less than three nor more than twenty-five directors, with the actual number of directors as determined by the Class A Members as provided below.

##### **4.2 DESIGNATION AND ELECTION OF DIRECTORS**

4.2.1 The Members shall be entitled to designate directors as hereinafter provided:

4.2.1.1 one individual designated by the BCEHS;

4.2.1.2 one individual designated by Vancouver;

4.2.1.3 one individual designated by the Vancouver Police Board;

4.2.1.4 one individual designated by the following group:

(a) each Police Board which directly holds a Class A Share or Class B Share, other than Vancouver Police Board and Delta Police Board; and

(b) each Police Board which has a Class A Share or Class B Share in respect of Police Services held by its respective municipality, other than Vancouver Police Board and Delta Police Board;

4.2.1.5 such number of individuals as are set forth below, to be designated by the following designated group of Class A Members or Class B Members (each group being called a "Designated Group of Members"), if one or more of the Municipalities within a Designated Group of Members is a Class A Member or a Class B Member, as hereinafter set forth:

No. of Individuals which may be Designated	Designated Group of Members
1	West Vancouver, North Vancouver City, North Vancouver District and Lions Bay
1 or 2	2 individuals if Burnaby, together with any one or more of New Westminster, Coquitlam, Port Moody, Port Coquitlam, Anmore and Belcarra are a Member; provided however that if Burnaby is not a



Member, any one or more of New Westminister, Coquitlam, Port Moody, Port Coquitlam, Anmore and Belcarra which is a Member can designate 1 individual to be a director

- 1 Richmond
- 2 Surrey, White Rock, Langley City and Langley District
- 1 Delta and the Delta Police Board
- 1 Maple Ridge, Pitt Meadows and Mission
- 1 Abbotsford, Chilliwack and Fraser Valley Regional District
- 1 Squamish, Lillooet and Sechelt;

and

- 4.2.1.6 One individual designated by all other Members holding Class A Shares and Metro Vancouver, other than as set forth in Sections 4.2.1.1 to 4.2.1.5, inclusive.
- 4.2.2 The RCMP, and in replacement therefor upon the Government Agency referred to in Section 3.7.1 becoming a Class A Member, that Government Agency, shall be entitled to designate one individual to act as director.
- 4.2.3 If provided in a Special User Agreement entered into pursuant to Section 3.7.2 or if otherwise authorized by the Board under Section 4.11.3, each Special User, and in replacement therefor upon the Government Agency for that Special User referred to in Section 3.7.2 becoming a Class A Member, that Government Agency, shall be entitled to designate one individual to act as director.
- 4.2.4 The group comprised of: the Capital Regional District and those Vancouver Island police agencies, including any RCMP detachment, to which the Company provides police dispatching services shall be entitled to designate one individual to act as director.
- 4.2.5 The Provincial government, acting through the Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General, whether it holds a Class A Share or not, shall be entitled to designate two individuals to act as directors.
- 4.2.6 Subject as hereinafter provided, the directors designated pursuant to Sections 4.2.1, 4.2.2, 4.2.3 and 4.2.4 shall designate five additional persons, independent from the Members, to be directors the Company (the "Independent Directors"), who have an interest or expertise in the Purpose or the Company Services to be provided by the Company.

- 4.2.7 The Members agree to vote their Class A Shares for the election as directors of the persons designated pursuant to Sections 4.2.1, 4.2.2, 4.2.3, 4.2.4, 4.2.5 and 4.2.6.
- 4.2.8 For the purposes of Section 4.2.1.5, upon anyone or more Municipalities within a Designated Group of Members becoming a Class A Member or a Class B Member, such Municipality or Municipalities will be entitled to designate the individual to be a director for the purposes of Section 4.2.1.5. As additional Municipalities within that Designated Group of Members become Class A Members or Class B Members, as the case may be, such additional Municipalities shall be deemed to have agreed to the individual as designated and elected a director for that Designated Group of Members and no changes will be required to be made with respect to any such individual, unless such individual shall cease to be a director in any other manner such as resignation, until the next following annual general meeting or annual consent resolution. Prior to any annual general meeting or annual consent resolution of the Class A Members, a Designated Group of Members shall agree on the individual to be designated by them for the purpose of Section 4.2.1.5 within a time period sufficient for that individual's name to be placed before the Class A Members, as determined by the Board.

#### **4.3 VACANCIES ON BOARD**

Any vacancies on the Board created by an individual designated under Section 4.2.1, 4.2.2, 4.2.3, 4.2.4 or 4.2.5 shall be filled by an individual designated by the Member or Members who designated the individual who is no longer a director, the Special User who designated the individual who is no longer a director, or the Provincial government, as the case may be, and any vacancies in any Independent Directors shall be filled by the remaining directors in accordance with Section 4.2.6.

#### **4.4 NO RESTRICTIONS ON AFFILIATION TO MEMBERS**

Directors designated pursuant to Section 4.2.1 may be appointed or elected officials from a Member or may be persons from the general public with no affiliation to a Member.

#### **4.5 REMUNERATION FOR DIRECTORS**

Directors shall be entitled to fees for acting as a director of the Company, as determined in an Authorized Operating Budget. All directors may be paid reasonable expenses incurred when acting as directors.

#### **4.6 QUORUM AT DIRECTORS MEETINGS**

The quorum for all meetings of the Board shall consist of a majority of the directors. Meetings of the Board shall be held in accordance with the Articles of the Company and this Agreement.

#### **4.7 EXECUTIVE MEMBER OF THE BOARD**

## Board of Directors: Common Questions & Background

**Q. How should the nominating resolution of our council/board read?**

- A. Exact wording is at the discretion of your organization; however council/board motions should include the name of the nominee, specification of the E-Comm of Directors (the “Board”) term (e.g. 2024-2025) and reference to election at the Annual General Meeting of E-Comm shareholders (the “Members”).

For example “THAT (enter municipality/board/organization) nominate (name) to serve as the nominee of (municipality/board/organization) to the Board for the 2024-2025 term, such Board to be elected by the Members at the June 20, 2024 Annual General Meeting.”

**Q. What is the role of the Board ?**

- A. The Board is responsible for stewardship of the entire E-Comm organization – it provides strategic oversight of the business and affairs of the company. The Directors are also the most senior representatives of the organization to the public and our stakeholders. To conduct its work efficiently, the Board has three standing committees: Finance, Governance and Public Affairs, and People and Culture (the “Committees”).

**Q. Who elects the Board?**

- A. The Members elect the Board at the Annual General Meeting (the “AGM”) of the Company. A members’ agreement among the Members (the “Members’ Agreement”) sets out who may select nominees to the Board. Nominating entities are expected to select their nominee and advise the Corporate Secretary of the name of their nominee by May 1, 2024 – the candidate is then put forward for election by the Members-at-large at the AGM in June 2024.

**Q. What time commitment is required of Directors?**

- A: The Board typically holds five regular meetings each year, during business days, typically for four hours. The meeting schedule is published well in advance. The Committees also meet five times each year, during the business day, for approximately two hours each meeting.

Two additional sessions occur annually: a Board orientation session for new Directors (typically half-day) and a strategic planning session (typically 1-2 full-days).

As a best governance practice, the Board does expect a high attendance rate from its Directors.

**Q. Why is the Directors term only one year? Can we nominate someone for more than one term?**

- A. E-Comm’s Articles specify a term of one year. Nominating entities may advise the Corporate Secretary in writing if they wish their nominee’s name to stand for election for a specific number of terms (e.g. four). However, the Corporate Secretary must confirm in writing each year that the standing nomination remains intact, however there will be no further action for the nominating entity unless they wish to make a change from their previous direction.



## **E-Comm Board of Directors: Common Questions & Background**

In the case of nominating entities that are part of a grouping, the Corporate Secretary must receive written confirmation from each nominating entity of the standing nomination, including specification of number of terms. The direction must be consistent among all members of the grouping; otherwise all members of the grouping must be contacted each year asking for confirmation of the nomination.

**Q. If my organization/municipality is part of a grouping, do we have to agree on the nominee?**

A. The Members' Agreement specifies that each designated group of members shall agree on their individual nominee. Consultation on a mutually-agreeable nominee should be undertaken prior to advising the Corporate Secretary of the name of the nominee.

**Q. What is the difference between nominating a Board Director and sending someone to the AGM?**

A. The individual board nominees, once elected at the AGM, will serve on the Board throughout the coming year, attending various board and committee meetings, and participating in the supervision of the organization's affairs. Your organization's representative at the AGM is simply the person who attends the AGM that day on behalf of your organization, and votes your share on any resolutions or votes which occur at the AGM that day. That person's role and duties cease after the AGM has adjourned.

**Q. Why do you contact us in March when the Board is not appointed by Members until June?**

A. We provide sufficient notice of the process to allow for conferring with other Members of Member groupings, council and or other motions that may be required.

**Q. What do Directors receive for remuneration?**

A. Meeting rates are \$397 per meeting (for Directors who are not full-time employees of a Member, the Provincial Government or special user), twice that amount for meetings longer than four hours in duration. Board meetings are generally less than four hours.

**Q. Who do I contact with questions?**

A. Li-Jeen Broshko, KC, Corporate Secretary, 604-375-0333

# E-Comm Board of Directors: Common Questions & Background

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## About the Annual General Meeting

**Q. What is an AGM?**

A. A general meeting of all the Members is required to occur at least once annually under the *Business Corporations Act* (BC), which regulates E-Comm’s corporate governance.

**Q. What happens at an AGM?**

A. The compulsory items on the agenda are the election of directors, the appointment (or reappointment) of the auditors, and the presentation of previous year’s financial statements. Usually, a number of additional items are also placed on the agenda, such as a general report from the directors, or presentations on new initiatives. Special business items could also be dealt with (such as changing the Corporate Articles), but Members would receive notice of any special business with the notice of meeting.

**Q. Who should attend AGM?**

A. A representative of the Member should attend the AGM to vote on the matters listed above including electing the Board.

**Q. What are Members entitled to vote on?**

A. Holders of Class A shares have one vote per share on all matters requiring a vote at the AGM, including any items of special business. Class B shares are generally non-voting, except for matters which involve certain fundamental changes – these are listed and specified in the Articles.

**Q. What is the voting process at the AGM?**

A. Votes are conducted by a simple show of hands (voting cards) unless a Member demands at the meeting that a formal ballot or “poll” vote occur on a particular resolution.

**Q. What if no one can attend, can we proxy our vote?**

A. Yes. A Member can appoint a proxyholder (in writing) to attend and vote on the Member’s behalf at the AGM. The proxyholder need not be a Member themselves.

Proxies must be in writing, must specify the name of the Member, the identity of the proxyholder, and reference the AGM in question. They must be signed by an authorized signatory of the Member. Proxies must be pre-registered with E-Comm at least 3 business days prior to the AGM.

**Q. How will my shares be voted if I return a proxy?**

A. Proxies usually grant the proxyholder the ability to vote on all matters at the meeting, in their discretion. If a Member wishes, it can restrict that discretionary power by stating in the proxy form that its shares

## **E-Comm Board of Directors: Common Questions & Background**

must be voted in a certain manner on specified resolutions or votes which it anticipates will be before the meeting. Such language, if included, needs to be clear and unambiguous.

**Q. Can a proxy be revoked?**

A. Once granted, proxies can also be revoked, but written revocation signed by the Member must be given to E-Comm at least one business day prior to the AGM.

**Q. Who chairs the AGM?**

A. E-Comm's Articles specify that the chair of the Board will also chair the AGM.

**Q. How important is it that we send someone?**

A. As a Member we strongly urge in-person attendance to ensure shares are represented.

**Q. What if I have a question about the AGM?**

A. Contact Li-Jeen Broshko, KC, Corporate Secretary, 604-375-0333

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# VANCOUVER and DISTRICT LABOUR COUNCIL

February 23, 2024

Julie Peters, Manager  
Legislative and Election Services  
City of North Vancouver  
141 West 14<sup>th</sup> St.  
North Vancouver, BC V7M 1H9

Reviewed by:

CAO

Dear Julie,

On behalf of the Save Our HandyDart Coalition, and Vancouver & District Labour Council, I'd like to request a delegation to city council.

We would like to speak about our campaign to improve HandyDart service and repatriate it to the public service. Our ask is for city council to become a signatory to our open letter to Minister of Transportation, Rob Fleming. The letters calls for the following actions:

1. Fulfill TransLink's original pledge to limit the percentage of taxi trips to 7% or lower of total HandyDART trips.
2. Develop and conduct an unbiased Public Sector Comparator (PSC) with a multiple accounts evaluation containing rider and worker input, to compare insourcing to continued outsourcing while taking into account safety and service quality.
3. Develop and implement a plan to bring HandyDART in-house as a subsidiary of TransLink, including providing provincial and federal funds for permanent facilities for an expanded and electric HandyDART fleet.

A copy of the open letter is attached. I have also attached a report which provides background on the issues being addressed by our campaign.

Yours truly,

Stephen von Sychowski  
President, VDLC

Encl.  
svs/eb  
moveUP



**Open Letter to Rob Fleming, Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure; and Dan Coulter, Minister of State for Infrastructure and Transit**

Re: Insourcing HandyDART

Dear Minister Fleming and Minister Coulter,

We are an alliance of unions, disability advocates, and other groups who are writing to you out of concern for the worsening crisis transpiring at Metro Vancouver's HandyDART system.

HandyDART is crucial infrastructure for some of Metro Vancouver's most vulnerable populations, but for years now it has been unable to provide adequate service levels that meet demand. [A recent report](#)<sup>1</sup> found that last year, TransLink provided just half the service per senior as it had in 2008. This failure means that every day, riders are stranded without any safe, reliable means of getting to kidney dialysis appointments, cancer treatments, adult daycare facilities, and other essential services. It also means social isolation for many HandyDART riders.

The primary reason why TransLink is unable to provide adequate HandyDART service is not budget shortfall, but because the various private contractors that have operated HandyDART over the last several years have all been unable to attract and retain enough staff to do the work properly. The solution to this crisis is not to find yet another private contractor to come in and prioritize its bottom line over service quality—rather, we are advocating for HandyDART to be brought in house as a subsidiary of TransLink.

Although riders and workers have pushed for insourcing HandyDART for years, TransLink has leaned into its contracting model by using private taxi cabs to provide HandyDART service. In the last quarter of 2023, 25% of HandyDART service was performed by taxis, which is up from 23% earlier in 2023 and far exceeds TransLink's previous commitment to limit taxi trips to 7% of service.

TransLink has repeatedly reneged on such promises. In 2016, TransLink's CEO at the time committed to conduct a Public Sector Comparator containing a multiple accounts evaluation that would take rider and worker input into account while comparing the costs and benefits of continued outsourcing to insourcing at HandyDART. Instead, TransLink hired a privatisation-friendly corporate consulting firm to conduct a strictly financial analysis which not only ignored considerations of safety and service quality, but also lacked any transparency in its methodology and authorship.

Outsourcing this essential public service to private contractors such as First Transit (now Transdev) and subcontractors in the form of various taxi companies has resulted in chaotic mismanagement and lowered safety standards in addition to labour shortage. Although in years past TransLink has spoken to these issues in its strategic plans, no aspect of this worsening crisis was addressed in *Transport 2050*. In fact, the terms 'HandyDART', 'custom transit', and 'paratransit' are completely absent from the *Transport 2050* executive summary.

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://ecoplaning.ca/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/Access-for-Everyone-Final-2023-03-20.pdf>

*Transport 2050* is yet another demonstration of how as a contracted service, HandyDART is deprioritized and TransLink can essentially wash its hands of these problems. We are calling on the Province to prevent the continued hollowing-out of this vital public service.

We are writing to you because, in the words of Minister Heyman in his introduction to *Transport 2050*, the provincial government has been a “proud senior partner in developing *Transport 2050* since its inception.” TransLink receives provincial funding, has a legislated responsibility to consider provincial policy priorities, and has had its decision-making structure shaped by provincial legislation. We will no longer accept broken commitments and finger-pointing among various levels of government. Ultimately, the buck stops at the Provincial government, which is why we are asking you to support this initiative to bring HandyDART in-house.

**We call on you to take your role as senior partner seriously, and immediately direct the TransLink Board to:**

1. Fulfill TransLink’s original pledge to limit the percentage of taxi trips to 7% or lower of total HandyDART trips.
2. Develop and conduct an unbiased Public Sector Comparator (PSC) with a multiple accounts evaluation containing rider and worker input, to compare insourcing to continued outsourcing while taking into account safety and service quality.
3. Develop and implement a plan to bring HandyDART in-house as a subsidiary of TransLink, including providing provincial and federal funds for permanent facilities for an expanded and electric HandyDART fleet.

Sincerely,

Amalgamated Transit Union Local 1724  
BC Federation of Union Retirees (BC FORUM)  
BC Federation of Labour  
Burnaby City Council  
Council of Senior Citizens’ Organizations of BC (COSCO)  
Council of Canadians - Vancouver  
CUPE BC  
Disability Alliance BC  
Langley City Council  
Langley Human Dignity Coalition  
Langley Seniors in Action  
Mayor Brad West, Port Coquitlam  
Mayor Eric Woodward, Langley Township  
Mayor Linda Buchanan, North Vancouver  
Mayor Mike Hurley, Burnaby  
Mayor Nathan Pachal, Langley City  
Mayor Patrick Johnstone, City of New Westminster  
New Westminster & District Labour Council  
Richmond Poverty Reduction Coalition  
Sunshine Coast Labour Council  
Vancouver District Labour Council  
Vancouver Elementary and Adult Educators’ Society Local 39-1 (BCTF)



# Access for Everyone?

## Publicly Operated HandyDART In Metro Vancouver

March 2023



By Eric Doherty – Ecopath Planning  
[www.ecoplanning.ca](http://www.ecoplanning.ca)

For Amalgamated Transit Union Local 1724



### **About the Author**

Eric Doherty is the principal of Ecopath Planning. His consulting practice focuses on improving community resiliency and livability, including for people with disabilities, while reducing greenhouse gas emissions and other environmental impacts. His education includes an MA from the UBC School of Community and Regional Planning, where he specialized in transportation planning. Examples of his other projects are available at [www.ecoplanning.ca](http://www.ecoplanning.ca)

### **Amalgamated Transit Union Local 1724**

ATU Local 1724 represents the workers in the Greater Vancouver regional area with the paratransit service known as HandyDART. We are the operators, office workers, mechanics and road supervisors that serve the elderly and those with special needs. More information is available at [www.atu1724.com](http://www.atu1724.com)

Cover photo – TransLink - <https://buzzer.translink.ca/2021/03/translink-launches-handydart-modernization-program/>

Photographs by Eric Doherty except as noted

Updated in Sept 2023 to correct an error in Figure 4 and associated text

## Contents

Summary .....	4
1) Introduction & context .....	10
The promise of Transport 2050 – Access for Everyone .....	10
Provincial and regional district responsibility .....	11
2) Aging population, growing HandyDART demand, and human rights .....	12
TransLink acknowledged HandyDART crisis in 2017, but not in Transport 2050 .....	15
Legislature committee recommends more HandyDART .....	17
COVID has created more need for HandyDART .....	17
Indigenous peoples and disability .....	18
3) Public HandyDART essential for increasing and improving service .....	19
The public solution .....	21
Proper public sector comparator needed .....	24
4) Electrification of HandyDART requires permanent facilities.....	25
5) Multiple Benefits of Quality HandyDART .....	26
6) Access for Everyone – sidewalks, bus lanes, rolling & more.....	28
7) Reallocating investment to meet Transport 2050 goals .....	30
The transportation planning and advocacy gap .....	30
8) Conclusion.....	32
Appendix - History of the HandyDART crisis.....	35
HandyDART Riders’ Alliance creates pressure for increased service .....	36
Public sector comparator promised & canceled.....	37
TransLink acknowledges HandyDART crisis .....	39
NDP promises action – Human Rights complaint .....	40
Move to replace HandyDART service with taxis .....	41

## Summary

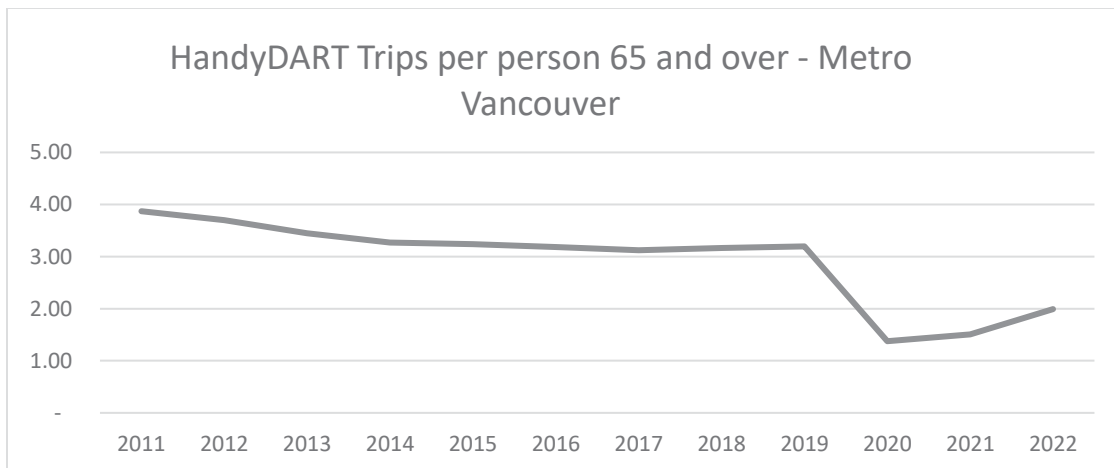
In early 2022 The TransLink Mayors’ Council and Board of Directors adopted Transport 2050, which aims to create a “fairer and more just and inclusive transportation system that truly delivers on the promise of Access for Everyone.” TransLink admits that in “the past, transportation justice has not been central to our regional mission and so, as a region, we have catching up to do.”

However, not only does Transport 2050 mostly ignore the challenge of population aging it also makes HandyDART riders almost invisible. HandyDART (and associated terms like paratransit and custom transit) are barely mentioned.

This is not only a TransLink responsibility. The minister responsible for TransLink states that the provincial government has been a “partner in developing Transport 2050 since its inception.” TransLink is a creation of the provincial government, receives provincial funding, and has a legislated responsibility to consider all relevant provincial objectives including those regarding HandyDART provision.

The rates of disability for British Columbia range from 13% for the 15 to 24 age group to 51% for people 75 and over. This year the oldest people in the baby boom generation turn 78, and in the coming decade providing the services and urban environment older seniors need will be a defining social and political challenge in Metro Vancouver and across the country.

### HandyDART service per senior was dropping even before pandemic

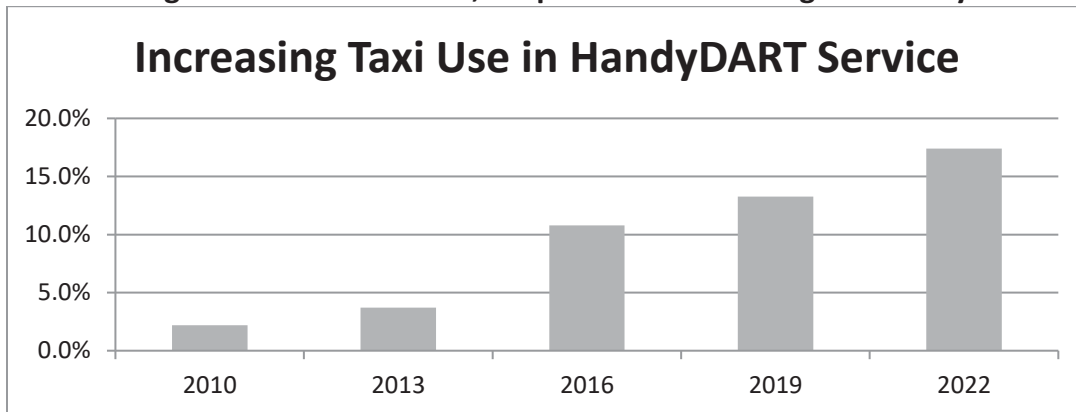


The number of HandyDART trips per person 65 and over declined significantly between 2011 and 2019, as shown in the graph above. In 2019, before the COVID pandemic, TransLink provided twenty two percent less HandyDART service per person 65 and over

than in 2008. *In 2022, with demand again outstripping supply as pandemic restrictions eased, TransLink provided 1.99 trips per senior, only half the HandyDART service per person 65 and over than in 2008.*

In 2022 the percentage of taxi trips also reached 17%, reflecting the inability of the private contractor to attract, train, and retain workers in a tight labour market. This also seems to reflect a disregard for targets set in TransLink plans – the previous TransLink 10 Year Plan called for reducing the percentage of taxi trips to 7% by 2021.

**Taxi usage has climbed to 17%, despite TransLink’s target of 7% by 2021**



Experience in Metro Vancouver and elsewhere shows that substituting taxis for dedicated custom transit vehicles results in sub-standard safety and service, often without any real reduction in costs.

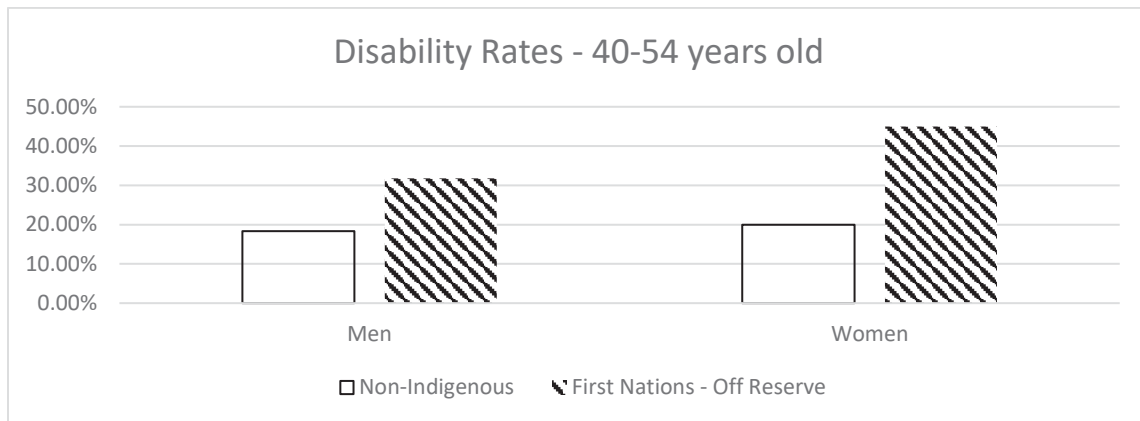
In 2017 the Mayors’ Council on Regional Transportation noted that TransLink’s 2017 “10-Year Vision . . . will still leave Metro Vancouver with about half of the accessible transit trips per capita that are provided in other similar Canadian cities, including the Capital Region.” The same report states that HandyDART service “expansion in the Mayors’ Vision is expected to address the increased demand to some degree, but analysis shows that it is likely insufficient to catch up or keep pace with need.”

The Legislature’s Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services budget consultation reports have also recommended “increasing accessible transportation options such as HandyDART” (or similar wording) for several years running.

Disabilities caused by COVID-19 will increase the need for HandyDART service, and other mobility options for people with disabilities, in both the short and long term. These disabilities will also reduce the availability of workers able to do the physically and mentally demanding work of operating a HandyDART vehicle and assisting passengers.

Transport 2050 notes that Indigenous people emphasized the need for “improved accessibility for people with disabilities and mobility challenges.” However, it does not recognize that Indigenous people have much higher rates of disability than the general population. For example, the rate of disability for First Nations women 40 to 54 years old is 45%, more than double the rate for non-Indigenous women the same age as shown below.

**The disability rate of First Nations women is more than double that of non-Indigenous women 40-54 years old**



If Access for Everyone is to include Indigenous Peoples, TransLink needs to greatly improve accessibility for persons with disabilities (including HandyDART service) region wide but particularly on reserve lands and other areas with high indigenous populations.

**Public HandyDART Provision Essential for Increasing and Improving service**

The rationale for contracting out transit services has been that as workers have less job security working for a private contractor, wages will be enough lower to offset the corporations profit margin and additional administrative expenses. However, with an aging population and the effects of the COVID pandemic, transit agencies across North America are having great difficulty attracting and retaining enough qualified workers.

**Stability is crucial for attracting and retaining qualified workers**

Over the last few years, TransLink’s HandyDART operations have been in the hands of four different corporations. Every time a new contractor takes over, years of efficiency gains are lost as new management implements new procedures. Employee morale suffers along with efficiency, quality of service, and workplace health & safety. Stability is crucial for attracting and retaining qualified workers.

Contacting out also means that TransLink staff do not gain the knowledge and experience they would if involved directly in HandyDART operations. It seems likely that Transport 2050 would not have the glaring gaps it has regarding aging and HandyDART if TransLink staff were directly involved in providing HandyDART service.

Large for-profit operators have a history of performance issues that affect riders and consume large amounts of transit agency staff time – including problems related to low wages and resulting staff turnover. Part of the problem is that it is impractically complex to align public service with the profit motive in large public transit systems – a contract that covered all aspects of quality service would be enormously complex and difficult to enforce.

Multiple disability rights organizations have supported in-house HandyDART service as a way to improve staff retention, on the basis that experienced operators provide better and more sensitive service.

The intractable problems with contracting out custom transit services, and the recognition of the benefits of living wages and decent working conditions, have resulted in a number of jurisdictions directly providing paratransit as a public service. The Regional District of Nanaimo, City of Nelson, District of Powell River and the Sunshine Coast Regional District all chose to provide BC Transit HandyDART and conventional transit directly as a public service rather than pay a multinational corporation to do so.

The BC government’s recent decision that about 5,000 health care workers should be “once again directly employed by the government and health authorities” was based on the evidence that “employees who feel secure and safe in their jobs provide higher-quality care for people, and in turn employers can attract and retain staff at a higher and more consistent level.”

**Proper public sector comparator needed**

At this point, it is essential that TransLink conduct a proper and unbiased Public Sector Comparator (PSC) to compare the costs and benefits of continued outsourcing to insourcing of HandyDART. TransLink committed to do a multiple accounts evaluation PSC in 2016, but then reneged on this commitment.

HandyDART riders should be involved in selecting the criteria to be considered. And the union representing HandyDART workers should be involved in selecting the company to do the work, and have input into the design of the PSC. The full PSC, not just a summary, should be made public.

### **Electrification of HandyDART requires permanent facilities**

Electric transit vehicles have multiple benefits for riders including quieter smoother operation, and better air quality inside and outside the vehicle. These benefits are more important for HandyDART riders, many of whom have conditions exacerbated by pollution, than for the general public. Transitioning TransLink’s conventional bus fleet to quiet clean electric power while leaving the HandyDART fleet burning fossil fuels would be discriminatory and incompatible with the Transport 2050 commitment to equity.

However, it is not practical to electrify TransLink’s HandyDART fleet without permanent, publicly owned, operations and maintenance centres. All of TransLink’s HandyDART centres are leased temporary facilities. These, sometimes substandard, temporary facilities are also a factor in high staff turnover – substandard facilities translate into substandard working conditions.

It is time for TransLink to do what BC Transit Victoria has already done, and get funding from the provincial and federal governments for permanent operations centres with equipment for charging electric HandyDART vehicles. This would shift a significant proportion of the cost of HandyDART from TransLink’s operating budget to a capital expense. Capital expenses are eligible for federal and provincial funding, so this could be a major financial benefit for TransLink.

### **Multiple benefits of quality HandyDART**

There are many benefits to providing good quality transit service that is accessible to all, and poor quality paratransit is never a good choice. Quantifying the economic and social benefits of improving HandyDART service are beyond the scope of this study. But, given the costs and negative social consequences of inadequate service, improving HandyDART service is a very good investment.

*Failing to increase the amount of high-quality door-to-door custom transit service would impose substantial costs on the public health system and family care givers, as well as infringing on the rights of the increasing population of people living with disabilities.*

### **Access for Everyone – sidewalks, bus lanes, rolling & more**

Improving the conventional transit system, the sidewalk network, and numerous other features of our communities is essential to creating the “Access for Everyone” that Transport 2050 claims to aim for. Many, but not all, of these measures are mentioned in Transport 2050. And there is considerable potential to moderate the increase in HandyDART service that will be required, with adequate investment and re-allocation of road space. Some of these changes can also increase the efficiency of HandyDART service.

Some of the measures that have the potential to increase accessibility and moderate the need for HandyDART service increases include:

- Increasing regular transit service frequencies, and using larger buses, to reduce overcrowding.
- Improving transit priority measures, including transit lanes that can be used by HandyDART, and equipping HandyDART vehicles to activate transit signal priority.
- Installing accessible public washrooms at major transit transfer points.
- Creating many more high-quality bike and roll routes, and welcoming people riding power wheelchairs and mobility scooters to use these facilities.
- Building and improving sidewalks and crosswalks region wide. Transit is not accessible without good quality sidewalks all the way to and from the transit stop.
- Improving bus stops, with more transit shelters with spaces to sit and park wheelchairs out of the rain.
- Locating affordable housing, including for seniors and people with disabilities, in walkable areas with good quality transit.

Even with all these measures, a large increase in HandyDART service still will be needed.

### **Reallocating investment to meet Transport 2050 goals**

The provincial government has set a target of reducing light duty vehicle kilometres traveled 25% by 2030, and is making action to meet this target central to the forthcoming BC Clean Transportation Action Plan. And it makes no sense to spend billions widening highways if your objective is to have much less traffic in the future.

Funding should be shifted away from highway expansion, which makes traffic worse and increases greenhouse gas pollution, to public transit infrastructure including permanent facilities for an expanded and electric HandyDART fleet.

**A balanced examination of insourcing HandyDART should be one of the first steps towards Access for Everyone**

In 2021 the Capital Regional District (CRD) voted to advocate for transportation investments that contribute to meeting regional sustainable transportation, affordability, and greenhouse gas reduction targets. A similar policy in Metro Vancouver could see billions of dollars shifted to transit capital projects, including new permanent HandyDART facilities, over the next decade.

### **Conclusion**

TransLink has some catching up to do, and a balanced examination of insourcing HandyDART should be one of the first steps towards Access for Everyone.



## 1) Introduction & context

This report documents a compelling case for a HandyDART system in Metro Vancouver that is publicly operated (rather than being contracted out), has highly prioritized access to the road network along with transit buses, and is electrified along with the rest of TransLink’s fleet. It is also crucial that HandyDART service is increased to meet the present need and keep up with the increasing number of people with disabilities in the region, which is largely linked to our aging population.

The promise of “Access for Everyone”, set out by TransLink and the Government of BC in Transport 2050, cannot be met without meeting these conditions.

HandyDART is a custom transit service for people with physical and/or cognitive disabilities who cannot use the regular transit system for at least some trips. HandyDART is not just for older seniors. The people who benefit from HandyDART include children on their way to school and specialized programs, young adults on their way to work and medical appointments, and middle-aged people going to rehabilitation programs. Any one of us – even young able-bodied people – could be using these kinds of services next year on a temporary or permanent basis; however, the probability of needing custom transit service increases greatly with age.

### The promise of Transport 2050 – Access for Everyone

In early 2022 The TransLink Mayors’ Council and Board of Directors adopted Transport 2050, which boldly promises “Access for Everyone”.<sup>1</sup> Their message lists key “Challenges and Opportunities”, which include:

- “the accelerating climate emergency whose destructive impacts we are now clearly feeling”
- “the affordability crisis leaving many struggling”
- “relationship with Indigenous Peoples”
- “recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic”

Notably absent from this list of challenges, and Transport 2050 as a whole, is Metro Vancouver’s aging population. Population aging translates to a higher number of people with disabilities (as discussed in section 2 below).

The Mayors’ Council and Board states that “each of these challenges also present us with an opportunity to do better — to become the just, equitable, inclusive, and carbon-free region we aspire to be.” P4

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<sup>1</sup> [www.translink.ca/plans-and-projects/strategies-plans-and-guidelines/transit-and-transportation-planning/transport-2050](http://www.translink.ca/plans-and-projects/strategies-plans-and-guidelines/transit-and-transportation-planning/transport-2050)

By ignoring the challenges of our aging population, Transport 2050 repeats the mistakes of the past, at the same time as promising to change and do better in the future:

“The transportation future we want is one where no one gets left behind.

To create this fairer and more just and inclusive transportation system that truly delivers on the promise of Access for Everyone, we need to take steps to help lessen the struggles and reduce the barriers that people face. In the past, transportation justice has not been central to our regional mission and so, as a region, we have catching up to do.” P 19

Not only does Transport 2050 mostly ignore the challenge of population aging it also makes HandyDART riders almost invisible. HandyDART (and associated terms like paratransit and custom transit are barely mentioned). The one HandyDART shown in the whole document is far in the background, behind a skateboarder. Making the most vulnerable transit riders invisible is a serious flaw in a document that is supposed to guide transportation in Metro Vancouver in the next crucial decade and beyond. TransLink has some serious “catching up to do.”

### **Provincial and regional district responsibility**

Transport 2050 also promises to break down the conflicting silos that have led to so many contradictory policies, and so much finger pointing between levels of government, in the past. It includes a letter from George Heyman, then Minister Responsible for TransLink, claiming that the provincial government has been a “partner in developing Transport 2050 since its inception” and that they are “supportive of the steps Transport 2050 takes towards advancing reconciliation and social equity to make it easier for everyone to travel around the region and access opportunities” (p 5).

Similar promises have been made in the past, but there are some indications that the provincial government may be making a real change of direction. The upcoming Clean Transportation Action plan is one example of the potential for positive change at the provincial level.

It is helpful to recognize that TransLink is a creation of the provincial government, receives provincial funding, and has a legislated responsibility to consider all relevant provincial objectives including those regarding paratransit (HandyDART) provision.

Transport 2050 notes that the “South Coast British Columbia Transportation Authority Act requires TransLink to “consider regional land use objectives, provincial transportation and economic objectives, and provincial and regional environmental and emissions reduction objectives.” P 35

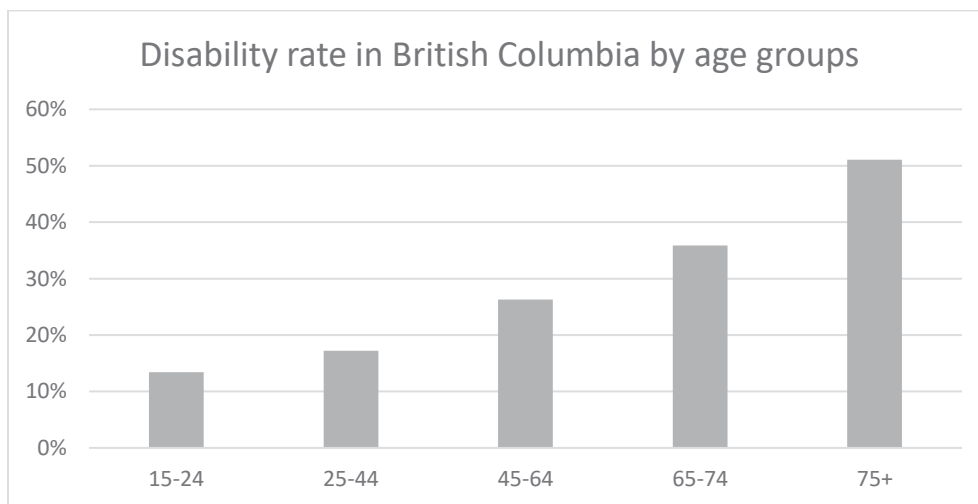
## 2) Aging population, growing HandyDART demand, and human rights

In 2017 the Mayors’ Council on Regional Transportation released a backgrounder titled *HandyDART: A Backbone of Provincial Healthcare*, which notes that TransLink’s 2017 “10-Year Vision . . . will still leave Metro Vancouver with about half of the accessible transit trips per capita that are provided in other similar Canadian cities, including the Capital Region.”<sup>2</sup>

**“Providing the services and urban environment older seniors need will be a defining social and political challenge”**

In the same year, Statistics Canada was conducting the most recent Canadian Survey on Disability. The rates of disability for British Columbia, ranging from 13% for the 15 to 24 age group to 51% for people 75 and over, are shown in Figure 1 below.

**Figure 1 – Disability increases with age, particularly past age 70**



Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Survey on Disability<sup>3</sup>

The 2021 census revealed important information on Canada’s aging population. The Canadian Press reported that “seniors over the age of 85 are the fastest-growing age group in the country, marking another milestone on the slow march to what experts warn will be a crisis in care for the country’s elders. . . . The pace of aging is expected to accelerate with every new candle added to the boomer generation’s birthday cake.”<sup>4</sup>

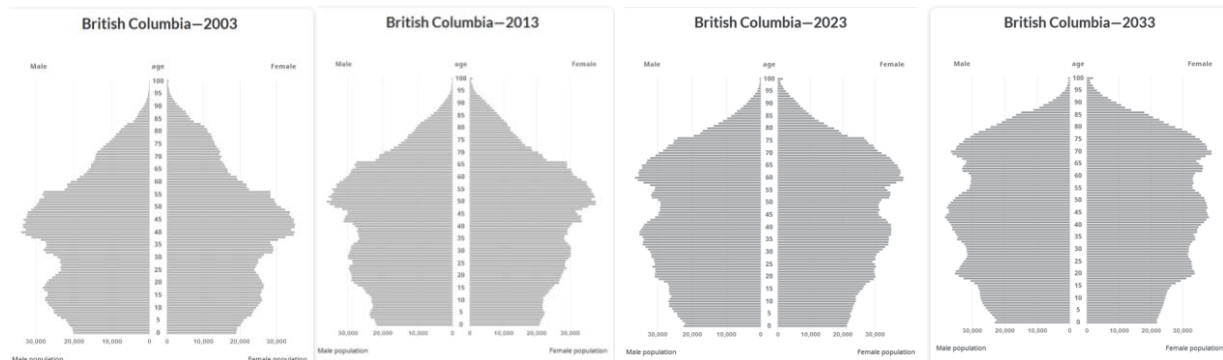
<sup>2</sup> [ecoplanning.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Mayors-Council-HandyDART-backgrounder-April-2017.pdf](https://ecoplanning.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Mayors-Council-HandyDART-backgrounder-April-2017.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> [www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/71-607-x/71-607-x2019035-eng.htm](https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/71-607-x/71-607-x2019035-eng.htm)

<sup>4</sup> [www.timescolonist.com/national-news/2021-census-shows-number-of-seniors-over-85-expected-to-triple-in-next-25-years-5303975](https://www.timescolonist.com/national-news/2021-census-shows-number-of-seniors-over-85-expected-to-triple-in-next-25-years-5303975)

This year the oldest people in the baby boom generation turn 78, and in the coming decade providing the services and urban environment older seniors need will be a defining social and political challenge in Metro Vancouver and across the country. Figure 2, the Statistics Canada age ‘pyramids’ (which become less and less pyramid shaped over time) below illustrate the scale of change over the past two decades and the coming one.

**Figure 2 – Age ‘pyramids’ show impact of Baby Boom generation aging 2003 - 2033**



Source: [www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2021/dp-pd/dv-vd/pyramid/index-en.htm](http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2021/dp-pd/dv-vd/pyramid/index-en.htm)

The boomer generation is generally healthier and more active than previous generations, but disability increases sharply after age 70. A key question is how to provide the needed services so a larger proportion of older seniors can live independently, and transportation is a key and often neglected component of that.

The Canadian Press notes that “Wait-lists for long-term care beds can already stretch on for years, leaving people stuck in hospitals because there is nowhere else for them to go, or families struggling to care for their loved ones at home.” But the boomer generation had fewer children than previous generations, so a larger proportion don’t have family to provide care such as driving them to medical appointments and social activities. In addition, a significant proportion of the children of boomers don’t own cars or have driver’s licences. Meeting the “Access for Everyone” aspiration of Transport 2050 means that people with disabilities of any age should not have to have family who can drive them in order to live well.

More HandyDART service can reduce long-term care and hospital stay expenses. The BC Seniors Advocate states “On average, a long-term care bed costs taxpayers \$27,740 more per year than two hours of daily home support.”<sup>5</sup> Good paratransit service is one of the crucial supports that allows people to live independently.

<sup>5</sup> [www.seniorsadvocatebc.ca/osa-reports/report-home-support-review/](http://www.seniorsadvocatebc.ca/osa-reports/report-home-support-review/)

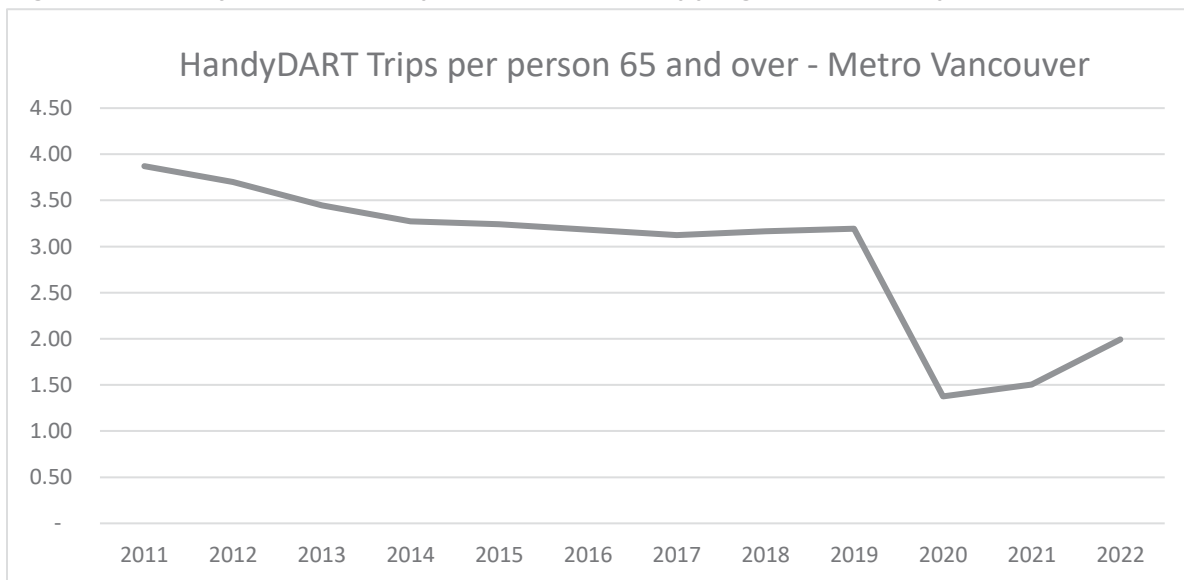
During the pandemic, substandard privatized long-term care cost lives and drove the societal recognition that public and non-profit provision of services to vulnerable populations is superior to what for-profit corporations provide.

TransLink held the number of HandyDART trips per capita approximately constant over the last decade, until the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the number of HandyDART trips per person 65 and over declined significantly between 2011 and 2019 as shown in Figure 3 below. In 2011 TransLink was providing 3.87 trips per year for every person 65 and over (down from 4.07 in 2008). By 2013, when the crisis of HandyDART service was documented in the report *Metro Vancouver’s Aging Population and the Need for Improved HandyDART Service*, and widely reported in the media, the level had dropped to 3.45.<sup>6</sup> From 2017 to 2019 the levels ranged from 3.12 to 3.19 trips per person 65 and over.

**The number of people with disabilities will increase at almost twice the rate of population growth**

In 2019, before the COVID pandemic, TransLink provided twenty two percent less HandyDART service per person 65 and over than in 2008. *In 2022, with demand again outstripping supply as pandemic restrictions eased, TransLink provided 1.99 trips per senior, only half the HandyDART service per person 65 and over than in 2008.*

**Figure 3 - HandyDART service per senior was dropping even before pandemic**



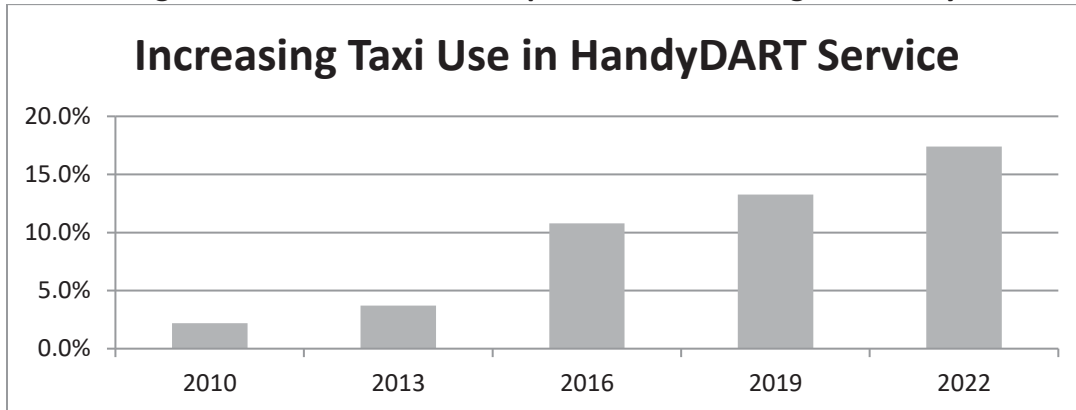
Data Sources: TransLink Data & Statistics Canada. Table 17-10-0135-01 Population estimates<sup>7</sup>

<sup>6</sup> [ecoplanning.ca/wp-content/uploads/2011/01/ATU-HandyDART-Report-Final-Nov-15-2013.pdf](http://ecoplanning.ca/wp-content/uploads/2011/01/ATU-HandyDART-Report-Final-Nov-15-2013.pdf);  
[www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/handydart-trip-denials-up-670-since-2008-says-group-1.2433056](http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/handydart-trip-denials-up-670-since-2008-says-group-1.2433056)

<sup>7</sup> January 2023 [www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/tv.action?pid=1710013501](http://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/tv.action?pid=1710013501)

In 2022 the percentage of taxi trips also reached 17%, reflecting the inability of the private contractor to attract, train, and retain workers in a tight labour market. This also seems to reflect a disregard for targets set in TransLink plans – the previous TransLink 10 Year Plan called for reducing the percentage of taxi trips to 7% by 2021.

**Figure 4 Taxi usage has climbed to 17%, despite TransLink’s target of 7% by 2021<sup>8</sup>**



Source: TransLink data

Experience in Metro Vancouver and elsewhere shows that substituting taxis for dedicated custom transit vehicles results in sub-standard safety and service, often without any real reduction in costs. The low pay and resulting high turnover in the taxi industry creates intractable problems. These serious issues with taxis in HandyDART service are discussed in the Appendix, and in more detail in the 2017 report *Metro Vancouver’s Aging Population and the need for Quality HandyDART Service*.<sup>9</sup>

According to Human Resources and Skill Development Canada, due to an aging population, the number of people with disabilities in Canada will increase at almost twice the rate of population growth through 2036.<sup>10</sup> Metro Vancouver has many of the specialized medical facilities in British Columbia, such as the G.F. Strong Rehabilitation Centre. Many with severe disabilities and serious medical conditions – particularly older people – will likely relocate here to access specialized healthcare in the coming years.

### **TransLink acknowledged HandyDART crisis in 2017, but not in Transport 2050**

In March 2017 TransLink published documents revealing that TransLink provides less HandyDART service per capita than comparable transit agencies. One document states:

<sup>8</sup> 2022 data updated to correct an error in the original version of this report.

<sup>9</sup> [ecoplanning.ca/wp-content/uploads/2011/01/Quality-HandyDART-Final-Oct-16-2017.pdf](http://ecoplanning.ca/wp-content/uploads/2011/01/Quality-HandyDART-Final-Oct-16-2017.pdf)

<sup>10</sup> HRDC (2011) *Federal Disability Report* Figure 1.9.

Demand for HandyDART Currently Outstrips Supply and is Anticipated to Grow: Up until late 2016, there had been no increase in HandyDART service since 2009 . . . we heard from many customers that it can be difficult to get a trip when needed and that many customers have stopped calling out of frustration. In addition, HandyDART is currently providing fewer trips per capita than our peer custom transit agencies, which indicates that there is likely latent demand for the service. Furthermore, recent BC Stats projections indicate the number of people in Metro Vancouver aged 70 or older will increase by 55% over the next ten years, which could translate into a greater need for HandyDART service, as the incidence of disabilities increases at this age.

**The 10-Year Vision would still leave Metro Vancouver with half the service provided in similar Canadian cities**

The same report states that HandyDART service “expansion in the Mayors’ Vision is expected to address the increased demand to some degree, but analysis shows that it is likely insufficient to catch up or keep pace with need.”<sup>11</sup>

The next month, the Mayors’ Council chimed in with this statement:

“The 10-Year Vision will increase this service by 30% [but] will still leave Metro Vancouver with about half of the accessible transit trips per capita that are provided in other similar Canadian cities, including the Capital Region. This service shortfall is in large part a reflection of the lack of provincial support for this service. . .

The Mayors’ Council is calling on all B.C. political parties to . . . commit to improving service above and beyond the 30% increase proposed in the 10-Year Vision, so our residents have access services at a level comparable to other major Canadian cities.<sup>12</sup>

Unfortunately, there is no real acknowledgement of the need for increased HandyDART service in Transport 2050. The terms “HandyDART”, “custom transit” and “paratransit” are completely absent from the Transport 2050 executive summary. Transport 2050 does discuss the impacts of our aging population, stating “As our population ages, seniors transitioning away from driving — and encountering new accessibility challenges — will require more safe and comfortable choices, particularly as more people ‘age in place.’”

**TransLink provided twenty two percent less HandyDART service per person 65 and over in 2019 than in 2008.**

<sup>11</sup> Custom Transit Service Delivery Review: Outcomes and Recommendations (March 22, 2017) [handydartriders.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/HandyDART-Service-Review-March-2017.pdf](http://handydartriders.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/HandyDART-Service-Review-March-2017.pdf)

<sup>12</sup> [mayorscouncil.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/Backgrounder-HandyDART-1.pdf](http://mayorscouncil.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/Backgrounder-HandyDART-1.pdf)



However, this passage is found on page 161 and is not followed up with any substantive discussion of the need for improved HandyDART service.

Transport 2050 could be a step backwards, not forward, in TransLink's journey towards providing "Access for Everyone".

### **Legislature committee recommends more HandyDART**

The Legislature's Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services BC Budget consultation reports have recommended "increasing accessible transportation options such as HandyDART" (or similar wording) for several years running including 2023.<sup>13</sup>

*A large and rapid increase in HandyDART service is needed to restore service to pre-COVID levels and reverse this reduction in service relative to need.*

Adequate HandyDART service is essential for many seniors and people with disability to live independently rather than going into long-term care, and the ongoing COVID pandemic will add to the need.

### **COVID has created more need for HandyDART**

A significant, but not yet well documented, percentage of the Canadian population has been disabled by COVID-19 already. Some of these disabilities will be permanent, and some will last for years. Those affected include all age groups including children, younger working age people, and seniors who were healthy and active before contracting COVID.<sup>14</sup>

Disabilities caused by COVID-19 will increase the need for HandyDART service, and other mobility options for people with disabilities, in both the short and long term. These disabilities will also reduce the availability of workers able to do the physically and mentally demanding work of operating a HandyDART vehicle and assisting passengers.

The ongoing COVID pandemic is having severe impacts on older seniors and people with disabilities.<sup>15</sup> The federal *COVID-19 Disability Advisory Group Report* documented access related harms including "social isolation and loss of access to supports [and] loss of access to services crucial to well-being, including occupational therapy, mental health services, and maintenance/repairs of disability aids."<sup>16</sup> Improved HandyDART service is one way of reducing this ongoing harm.

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<sup>13</sup> Quote is from p96 of Budget 2022 report -

[www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/governments/finances/budget/consultations](http://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/governments/finances/budget/consultations)

<sup>14</sup> E.g. [www.scientificamerican.com/article/a-tsunami-of-disability-is-coming-as-a-result-of-long-covid-19/](http://www.scientificamerican.com/article/a-tsunami-of-disability-is-coming-as-a-result-of-long-covid-19/); [www.theguardian.com/world/commentisfree/2022/mar/30/long-covid-coronavirus-covid-pandemic-health](http://www.theguardian.com/world/commentisfree/2022/mar/30/long-covid-coronavirus-covid-pandemic-health); [www.webmd.com/covid/news/20230306/long-covid-takes-toll-on-health-care-system](http://www.webmd.com/covid/news/20230306/long-covid-takes-toll-on-health-care-system)

<sup>15</sup> [theyee.ca/Analysis/2022/03/30/Stop-Leaving-Disabled-People-Behind/](http://theyee.ca/Analysis/2022/03/30/Stop-Leaving-Disabled-People-Behind/)

<sup>16</sup> [www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/corporate/disability-advisory-group/reports/2020-advisory-group-report.html#h2.03](http://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/corporate/disability-advisory-group/reports/2020-advisory-group-report.html#h2.03)

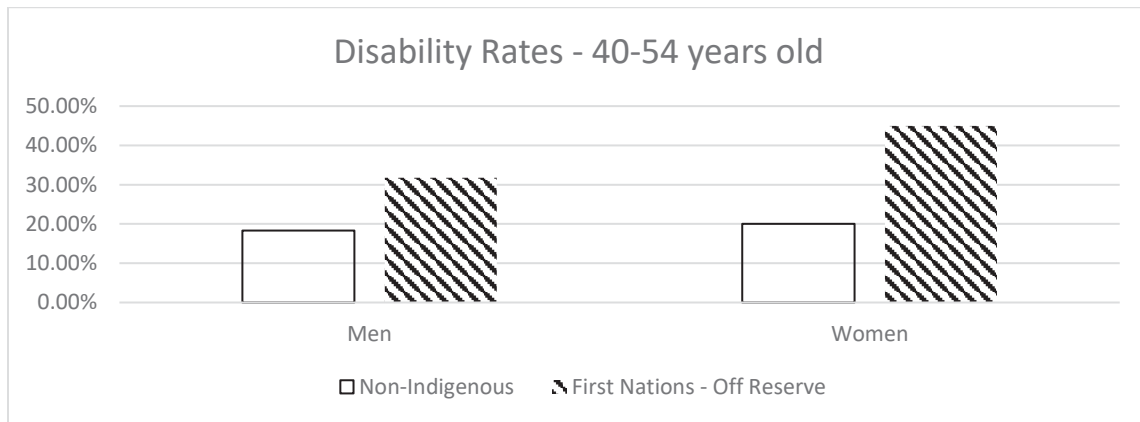


### Indigenous peoples and disability

Transport 2050 notes that Indigenous people emphasized the need for “improved accessibility for people with disabilities and mobility challenges” in the consultation phase. However, crucial context is missing from Transport 2050.

The British Columbia Aboriginal Network on Disability Society (BCANDS) asserts that the “Indigenous population of Canada experience a disability rate much higher than that of the general population, at approximately 30% to 35%”.<sup>17</sup> This is backed up by Statistics Canada, which produced a study of disability rates of Indigenous peoples in Canada for the first time in 2019.<sup>18</sup> For example, the rate of disability for First Nations women 40 to 54 years old is 45%, more than double the rate for non-Indigenous women the same age as shown in Figure 5 below.<sup>19</sup>

**Figure 5. The disability rate of First Nations women is more than double that of non-Indigenous women 40-54 years old**



Source: Statistics Canada - *Indigenous people with disabilities in Canada* (2019).

In this study Statistics Canada states that

“In Canada, disability is defined using the social model of disability, which takes into account not just a person’s impairments or task difficulties, but also the added impact of environmental barriers to create disability. These environmental barriers can be . . . attitudinal resulting in discrimination and exclusion.”

By this definition, inadequate transit service (particularly HandyDART service) increases disability rates among Indigenous people and the general population rather than merely worsening conditions for persons with disabilities.

<sup>17</sup> [www.bcands.bc.ca/](http://www.bcands.bc.ca/)

<sup>18</sup> [www.straight.com/news/1336741/statistics-canada-reports-high-rates-disability-among-inuit-metis-and-reserve-first](http://www.straight.com/news/1336741/statistics-canada-reports-high-rates-disability-among-inuit-metis-and-reserve-first);

<sup>19</sup> P3 [www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/en/pub/89-653-x/89-653-x2019005-eng.pdf?st=OX64TB2s](http://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/en/pub/89-653-x/89-653-x2019005-eng.pdf?st=OX64TB2s)

TransLink 2050 states that:

“Indigenous communities were purposefully isolated from society, causing marginalization, economic disparity, and impacts on the health and safety of Indigenous Peoples. TransLink collectively acknowledges that past decisions have shaped our region’s current transportation system, including access and mobility options being unavailable for many Indigenous communities” P 10.

These health impacts combined with the lack of “access and mobility options” translate to elevated disability rates. If Access for Everyone is to include Indigenous Peoples, TransLink needs to greatly improve accessibility for persons with disabilities (including HandyDART service) region wide but particularly on reserve lands and other areas with high indigenous populations.

### **3) Public HandyDART essential for increasing and improving service**

The rationale for contracting out transit services has been that as workers have less job security working for a private contractor, wages will be enough lower to offset the corporations profit margin and additional administrative expenses. However, with an aging population and the effects of the COVID pandemic, transit agencies across North America are having great difficulty attracting and retaining enough qualified workers.

Decent wages, working conditions and future prospects are now essential for attracting enough workers to maintain, never mind increase, service. And TransLink is failing to attract and retain workers to their HandyDART service.

Over the last few years, TransLink’s HandyDART operations have been in the hands of four different corporations. TransLink terminated their contract US based MV Transportation group (MVT Canadian Bus) and entered into a contract with UK-based FirstGroup in 2017. This transfer was controlled by TransLink, but nevertheless caused considerable disruption.

However, in 2021, EQT AB of Sweden bought out FirstGroup’s North American operations and subsequently separated the transit and school bus operations. In 2022 EQT sold the division that operates HandyDART for TransLink to Transdev, which is headquartered in France. TransLink had no control over these two transfers between multinational corporations.

Every time a new contractor takes over, years of efficiency gains are lost as new management implements new procedures. Employee morale suffers along with efficiency, quality of service, and workplace health & safety.

The cost of HandyDART is inflated due to the funding of profit and the cost of administering contracted out services meanwhile creating instability that conventional transit is not burdened by. Stability is crucial for attracting and retaining qualified workers and there is presently a nearly unprecedented shortage of qualified workers.

Contacting out also means that TransLink staff do not gain the knowledge and experience they would if involved directly in HandyDART operations. It seems likely that Transport 2050 would not have the glaring gaps it has regarding aging and HandyDART if TransLink staff were directly involved in providing HandyDART service.

The original shift of all TransLink HandyDART services from mainly non-profit contractors to the series of for profit corporations had decidedly mixed results. The consolidation to one contract reduced some of the previous problems with trips between zones served by different contractors. However, other problems emerged with service quality and efficiency. The 2012 TransLink Commissioner's report states:



HANDYDART RIDER SPEAKS TO MEDIA

“The consolidation of operations to one contractor does not appear to have produced any economies of scale. Instead, slippage has occurred in service cost efficiency and effectiveness, as well as productivity.”<sup>20</sup>

The privatization of HandyDART services also had a negative impact on HandyDART riders, including poor service and a strike largely resulting from MVT's attempt to eliminate pensions for workers.<sup>21</sup>

**A contract that covered all aspects of quality service would be enormously complex and difficult to enforce**

Privatization in conventional public transit service has a poor track record – most notably the disastrous experience from the UK, including the London Underground ‘public private partnership’ which cost the public billions and went bankrupt in 2007.<sup>22</sup> The problems with trying to create and enforce contracts that create financial incentives for providing good service have proven to be immense, and the failures

<sup>20</sup> Shirocca Consulting (2012) TransLink Efficiency Review. P 42.

<sup>21</sup> Matthew Burrows (Nov 25, 2009) *Georgia Straight* “HandyDart strike leaves disabled passengers out in the cold”

<sup>22</sup> E.g. Todd Litman (2011) *Contrasting Visions of Urban Transport - Critique of “Fixing Transit: The Case For Privatization”* Victoria Transport Policy Institute [vtpi.org/cont\\_vis.pdf](http://vtpi.org/cont_vis.pdf); CUPE (2008) *Metronet P3 failure ‘spectacular’*; Centre for Civic Governance (2016) *Back in House: Why local governments are bringing services home.* [columbiainstitute.eco/research/our-latest-publication-is-out-back-in-house-workbook-why-local-governments-are-bringing-services-home/](http://columbiainstitute.eco/research/our-latest-publication-is-out-back-in-house-workbook-why-local-governments-are-bringing-services-home/)

have been extremely costly both in terms of financial cost and the impact of poor transit service on individuals and society.

In the conventional transit sector large for-profit operators have a history of performance issues that affect riders and consume large amounts of transit agency staff time – including problems related to low wages and resulting staff turnover. As one former public sector manager with experience with contracting out put it:

“If you had a contractor that wanted to run the business and not maximize their profit at every turn, then it would be fine . . . As it tends to work out, you’re spending 85 percent of the time making sure that they’re doing everything in the contract instead of doing the things you need to be doing”<sup>23</sup>

The idea that the poor treatment of employees and poor service to riders goes hand in hand is illustrated by the fact that some full time paratransit drivers in the US have to rely on food stamps to feed their children. For example, speaking at an event organized by the Washington Interfaith Network (an affiliate of the Metro Vancouver Alliance) Karen Reed spoke about how her and her daughter rely on social services and were homeless for three months despite her working far more than full time hours for First Transit.<sup>24</sup> Corporations that pay substandard wages and impose miserable working conditions when they can get away with it cannot be expected to treat vulnerable riders with any more consideration.

**Poor treatment of employees and poor service to riders goes hand in hand**

### **Private Contracts Impractically Complex**

In the book *A Very Public Solution* the late Australian transportation planning professor Paul Mees put forward a compelling and well documented case that for-profit companies should not be involved in coordinating and planning functions in conventional public transit. Mees explains that it is impractically complex to align public service with the profit motive in large public transit systems.<sup>25</sup> The same argument applies to custom transit – a contract that covered all aspects of quality service would be enormously complex and difficult to enforce.

### **The public solution**

In 2005 the Coalition of HandyDART Users (CHU) published a report calling for HandyDART to be operated as a subsidiary of TransLink rather than being contracted out. One of the

<sup>23</sup> Zusha Elinson (March 9, 2013) “MV Transportation woes go beyond Tahoe” *Lake Tahoe News*. [laketahoenews.net/2013/03/mv-transportation-woes-go-beyond-tahoe](http://laketahoenews.net/2013/03/mv-transportation-woes-go-beyond-tahoe)

<sup>24</sup> Video by ATU Local 689 (Jan 10, 2015) *Metro Access Operator Karen Reed tells Mayor Bowser of Perils of Outsourcing Buses in the District*. <https://youtu.be/NybfVVtwaA>

<sup>25</sup> (2000) *A very public solution: Transport in the dispersed city*. Melbourne University Press.

main justifications for this proposed change was to improve staff retention, as they believed that experienced operators provide better and more sensitive service:

“The two things that handyDART users care about the most are:

- 1) expanding the availability and flexibility of rides, and
- 2) a safe and professional service with well-trained drivers.

Custom transit employees are the people we interact with every day. Drivers have a job that is very distinct from that of conventional bus drivers, including:

- Experience, training and sensitivity with a range of disabilities, conditions and impairments.
- Provision of a door-to-door service.
- Planning custom routes.
- Safety and securement of passengers.
- One-on-one attention for passengers.

For those of us using handyDART, the employees we most appreciate are those with experience and sensitivity. These are qualities and abilities that drivers develop through serving customers with a variety of needs over time. This is why it is CHU’s position that longevity and training of employees is crucial to a safe, quality service for us – and why we are proposing a permanent subsidiary. The instability of the current contracting process undermines staff longevity.”<sup>26</sup>

Custom transit drivers facing substandard pay and working conditions quit as soon as they find better jobs, and the only way to overcome this is to improve wages, benefits and working conditions. A TRB report asserts that the “difficulty in hiring, training, and retaining qualified paratransit drivers will continue to be a problem in the paratransit industry until the industry finds a way to compensate quality drivers.”<sup>27</sup>

Given the poor track record that for-profit companies have for service quality and cost effectiveness, CHU’s recommendation that HandyDART be operated as a publicly owned subsidiary of TransLink should be seriously considered.

As Washington D.C.-area disability rights advocate Carol Tyson said at a transit forum in 2015, “the system that encourages privatization and discourages ensuring workers are paid living wages and benefits is intertwined with the system that denies the supports and services that people with disabilities need to remain in the community.”<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Ann Vrlak (2005) *Engaging the Future: Making HandyDART a TransLink Subsidiary*. Coalition of handyDART Users. P 13. [handydartriders.ca/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/Engaging-Future-2005.pdf](http://handydartriders.ca/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/Engaging-Future-2005.pdf)

<sup>27</sup> Roy Lave & Rosemary Mathias (2000) *State of the Art of Paratransit*. Transportation Research Board. Pp 3-4

<sup>28</sup> (Oct 14, 2015) DC Fair Transit Forum [https://youtu.be/fVV-rextu\\_0?t=3m36s](https://youtu.be/fVV-rextu_0?t=3m36s)

### Examples of shifts to In-house provision

The intractable problems with contracting out custom transit services, and the recognition of the benefits of living wages and decent working conditions, have resulted in a number of jurisdictions directly providing the service as a public service. Some examples include:

- In 2015, Calgary HandiBus was taken over and amalgamated with Access Calgary. The HandiBus operators become Calgary Transit employees.<sup>29</sup>
- The City of Ottawa took over the operation of Para Transpo in 2007 after numerous problems with the service First Bus Canada was providing.<sup>30</sup>
- After a scathing audit, in 2015 the Alberta municipality of Wood Buffalo (Fort McMurray) announced it would terminate its 15 year contract with Tok Transit after only two years and deliver both conventional and Paratransit in-house.<sup>31 32</sup> According to one media report “many of the complaints the auditors heard centred around specialized transit provided to seniors and people with disabilities.”<sup>33</sup>
- In 2016 the Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority took over managing the VTA Paratransit service directly after the FBI raided the offices of the company operating their paratransit service, to investigate allegations of over billing.<sup>34</sup>

These are examples of the “growing international trend” of ‘insourcing’ services that were previously contracted out.<sup>35</sup> A prime example of the trend is the BC government’s recent decision that about 5,000 health care workers should be “once again directly employed by the government and health authorities”.<sup>36</sup> A government media release regarding this insourcing decision states that “Evidence has shown that employees who feel secure and safe in their jobs provide higher-quality care for people, and in turn employers can attract and retain staff at a higher and more consistent level.”<sup>37</sup>

<sup>29</sup> City of Calgary (May 6, 2015) *Calgary HandiBus employees joining Calgary Transit family* [newsroom.calgary.ca/calgary-handibus-employees-joining-calgary-transit-family](https://newsroom.calgary.ca/calgary-handibus-employees-joining-calgary-transit-family)

<sup>30</sup> Hugh Adami (Sept 2, 2013) Ottawa Citizen “For disabled mom, Para Transpo’s a tough call” [ottawacitizen.com/news/ottawa%20%20area/public-citizen-for-disabled-mom-para-transpos-a-tough-call](https://ottawacitizen.com/news/ottawa%20%20area/public-citizen-for-disabled-mom-para-transpos-a-tough-call)

<sup>31</sup> Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo (2015) *FAQ: New Era For Transit in Wood Buffalo*.

<sup>32</sup> Centre for Civic Governance (2016) *Back in House: Why local governments are bringing services home*. [columbiainstitute.eco/research/our-latest-publication-is-out-back-in-house-workbook-why-local-governments-are-bringing-services-home/](https://columbiainstitute.eco/research/our-latest-publication-is-out-back-in-house-workbook-why-local-governments-are-bringing-services-home/)

<sup>33</sup> Rebekah Benoit (2015) “RMWB commits in-house transit services will be better after terminating contract” [fortmacconnect.ca](https://fortmacconnect.ca)

<sup>34</sup> NBC Bay Area (Nov. 3, 2016) *FBI Raids Paratransit Operator Prompting VTA to Scramble to Help Disabled Riders* [nbcbayarea.com/news/local/FBI-Raids-Paratransit-Operator-Prompting-VTA-to-Scramble-For-Alternate-Plans-399884971.html](https://nbcbayarea.com/news/local/FBI-Raids-Paratransit-Operator-Prompting-VTA-to-Scramble-For-Alternate-Plans-399884971.html)

<sup>35</sup> Keith Reynolds, Gaetan Royer and Charley Beresford (21 Sep 2016) *Like London and Paris, Sooke BC Is Voting Privatization Out of Style*. [theyee.ca/Opinion/2016/09/21/Sooke-Voting-Privatization-Out/](https://theyee.ca/Opinion/2016/09/21/Sooke-Voting-Privatization-Out/)

<sup>36</sup> [theyee.ca/News/2022/12/20/Health-Workers-Celebrate-After-Bitter-Battle-Rights/](https://theyee.ca/News/2022/12/20/Health-Workers-Celebrate-After-Bitter-Battle-Rights/)

<sup>37</sup> *Cleaning, dietary workers coming back in-house at B.C. hospitals* (Aug 30 2021) [news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2021HLTH0157-001703](https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2021HLTH0157-001703)



The Regional District of Nanaimo, City of Nelson (Regional District of Central Kootenay), District of Powell River and the Sunshine Coast Regional District all chose to provide BC Transit HandyDART and conventional transit directly as a public service rather than pay a multinational corporation to do so.<sup>38</sup>

### **Proper public sector comparator needed**

At this point, it is essential that TransLink conduct a proper and unbiased Public Sector Comparator (PSC) to compare the costs and benefits of continued outsourcing to insourcing of HandyDART.

Corporate consulting firms like PwC and KPMG are highly biased to favor privatization. Rachel Tansey of the Corporate Europe Observatory refers to them as “Professional (privatisation of) services firms.”<sup>39</sup>

In 2015 I recommended that HandyDART riders be involved in selecting an outside group to conduct a participatory Multiple Accounts Evaluation PSC. I also suggested that public confidence in the results would be enhanced if the group doing the work was conducted by a smaller firm and led by professionals with a code of conduct requiring clear and accurate communications with the public.

In 2016, then TransLink CEO Kevin Desmond committed to a ‘public sector comparator’ to evaluate the costs and benefits of bringing HandyDART in-house as part of a “Custom Transit Service Delivery Review . . . in response to a number of questions that had been raised at TransLink Board meetings, particularity around responsiveness to customer concerns, and the standards and quality of HandyDART and taxi services, and the HandyDART service model.” The “Stakeholder Advisory Committee [was supposed to help develop] evaluation criteria for service delivery models”<sup>40</sup>

The Custom Transit Service Delivery Review initially included a Multiple Accounts Evaluation (MAE) of service delivery models. Multiple Accounts Evaluation allows multiple factors, such as safety and quality of service to be evaluated (TransLink regularly uses MAE evaluations in evaluating projects such as rapid transit lines).

However, at some stage the MAE was terminated, and only a financial analysis was done. TransLink hired PwC to do the financial review. PwC is one of the scandal-prone big international accounting & consulting partnerships “the most secretive of all large global

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<sup>38</sup> [www.bctransit.com/about/funding-and-governance/regional](http://www.bctransit.com/about/funding-and-governance/regional); [mypowellrivernow.com/33024/news/service-provider-change-coming-for-paratransit-and-handydart/](http://mypowellrivernow.com/33024/news/service-provider-change-coming-for-paratransit-and-handydart/)

<sup>39</sup> [corporateeurope.org/en/power-lobbies/2017/06/creeping-privatisation-healthcare](http://corporateeurope.org/en/power-lobbies/2017/06/creeping-privatisation-healthcare)

<sup>40</sup> *Custom Transit Service Delivery Review* [translink.ca/en/Plans-and-Projects/Custom-Transit-Service-Review.aspx](http://translink.ca/en/Plans-and-Projects/Custom-Transit-Service-Review.aspx) (accessed Sept. 21, 2017).

institutions.”<sup>41</sup> It is also one of the firms the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives identifies as having “potential conflict of interest, because accurate auditing would sometimes speak against corporate practices that yield general consulting revenues” such as contracting out and ‘private public partnerships.’<sup>42</sup> The names and qualifications of the people who did the financial analysis were not included in the thin and vaguely worded report summary that was released to the public.

PwC was apparently not informed that the MAE had been cancelled and wrote that: “The outputs from the PSC were incorporated into the final Multiple Account Evaluation (“MAE”) used by TransLink and the project Stakeholder Advisory Committee to prepare the final recommendation to the TransLink Board.”[sic]<sup>43</sup>

As should be expected, PwC’s report suggested that contracting out would save money, apparently on the basis that wage rates and benefits would be suppressed compared to in-house provision.

This time a proper, transparent, Public Sector Comparator is needed. HandyDART riders should be involved in selecting the criteria to be considered. And the union representing HandyDART workers should be involved in selecting the company to do the work, and have input into the design of the PSC. The full PSC, not just a summary, should be made public.

#### **4) Electrification of HandyDART requires permanent facilities**

Electric transit vehicles have multiple benefits for riders including quieter smoother operation, and better air quality inside and outside the vehicle. These benefits are more important for HandyDART riders, many of whom have conditions exacerbated by pollution, than for the general public. Transitioning TransLink’s conventional bus fleet to quiet clean electric power while leaving the HandyDART fleet burning fossil fuels would be discriminatory and incompatible with the Transport 2050 commitment to equity.

With provincial, federal and regional funds, BC Transit Victoria has built a new permanent HandyDART centre to “respond to the growing needs for handyDART services in Greater Victoria [with] infrastructure to support a fully electric fleet... installed during

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<sup>41</sup> [michaelwest.com.au/pwc-scandal-whos-guarding-the-guards-nobody/](http://michaelwest.com.au/pwc-scandal-whos-guarding-the-guards-nobody/)

<sup>42</sup> Stuart Murray (2006) *CCPA*. Value for Money? Cautionary lessons about P3s from British Columbia. p 32 [policyalternatives.ca/sites/default/files/uploads/publications/BC\\_Office\\_Pubs/bc\\_2006/P3\\_value\\_for\\_money.pdf](http://policyalternatives.ca/sites/default/files/uploads/publications/BC_Office_Pubs/bc_2006/P3_value_for_money.pdf)

<sup>43</sup> (March 2017) TransLink Custom Transit Service Delivery Review: Public Sector Comparator Executive Report for Public Board Meeting. P2 [handydartriders.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/TL-HandyDART-Public-Sector-Comparator-March-2017.pdf](http://handydartriders.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/TL-HandyDART-Public-Sector-Comparator-March-2017.pdf)



construction”<sup>44</sup> In contrast, TransLink has a detailed Low Carbon Fleet Transition Plan that fails to even mention HandyDART.<sup>45</sup>

Multiple manufacturers are already taking orders for electric vehicles suitable for HandyDART use. Many of the present HandyDART vehicles are based on the Ford Transit chassis, and Ford is already taking orders for the electric Transit chassis. As a major purchaser of paratransit vehicles and small buses TransLink is well positioned to lead in the testing of new types of electric vehicles and charging systems rather than passively waiting as other transit agencies to do so.

However, it is not practical to electrify TransLink’s HandyDART fleet without permanent, publicly owned, operations and maintenance centres. All of TransLink’s HandyDART centres are leased temporary facilities. These, sometimes substandard, temporary facilities are also a factor in high staff turnover – substandard facilities translate into substandard working conditions and erode staff morale. If HandyDART lags far behind the rest of the transit system in electrification, this will also erode morale and make it harder to attract and retain qualified operators.

**Capital expenses (particularly for the electrification of transit) are eligible for federal and provincial funding, so this could be a major financial benefit for TransLink**

It is time for TransLink to do what Victoria has already done and get funding from the provincial and federal governments for permanent operations centres with equipment for charging electric HandyDART vehicles. This would shift a significant proportion of the cost of HandyDART from TransLink’s operating budget (which is largely funded by property taxes and fares) to a capital expense. Capital expenses (particularly for the electrification of transit) are eligible for federal and provincial funding, so this could be a major financial benefit for TransLink.

## 5) Multiple Benefits of Quality HandyDART

There are many benefits to providing good quality transit service that is accessible to all, and poor quality paratransit is never a good choice. Accessible transit, including HandyDART, evolved as our society acknowledged the benefits of allowing people with physical and/or cognitive disabilities to live and participate in society rather than being physically segregated in institutions or isolated at home.

A report by the Canadian Urban Transit Association (CUTA) asserts that even a small reduction in the barriers to employment and education for people with disabilities would

<sup>44</sup> [www.bctransit.com/viewroyal/handydart](http://www.bctransit.com/viewroyal/handydart)

<sup>45</sup> [www.translink.ca/news/2020/february/translink%20low%20carbon%20fleet%20strategy](http://www.translink.ca/news/2020/february/translink%20low%20carbon%20fleet%20strategy); [www.translink.ca/-/media/translink/media-releases/2021/january/translink\\_low\\_carbon\\_fleet\\_transition\\_plan\\_update\\_2021\\_01\\_18.pdf](http://www.translink.ca/-/media/translink/media-releases/2021/january/translink_low_carbon_fleet_transition_plan_update_2021_01_18.pdf)

have annual economic benefits in the hundreds of millions of dollars. The study also suggests that reductions in health care costs with improvements to accessible transit would be substantial.<sup>46</sup> There are economic benefits of freeing family care-givers to seek employment and costs borne by the public health system to forcing people with disabilities into institutions.

This CUTA report also identifies substantial safety benefits to accessible transit improvements. People 70 and older get into more crashes per kilometre than any other group except young males.<sup>47</sup> Without good options, people will be tempted to keep driving even when their ability to do so safely is impaired.

**Accessible transportation services are a key component in helping seniors to stay active, involved and engaged in their communities**

With an aging population, it will be essential to have high quality programs, and transportation to these programs, so that older people with disabilities can fully participate in their communities. The Council of Senior Citizens' Organizations of BC (COSCO) asserts that "Accessible transportation services are a key component in helping seniors to stay active, involved and engaged in their communities."<sup>48</sup> Custom transit services such as HandyDART are essential for meeting the growing demand not met by regular transit service.

Quantifying the economic and social benefits of improving HandyDART service, along with improvements to the rest of the transit system, are beyond the scope of this study. But, given the costs and negative social consequences of inadequate service, improving HandyDART service is a very good investment.

*Failing to increase the amount of high-quality door-to-door custom transit service would impose substantial costs on the public health system and family care givers, as well as infringing on the rights of the increasing population of people living with disabilities. And given the shortage of qualified workers, it is impractical to provide the volume and quality of service needed without insourcing the (presently outsourced) HandyDART service in Metro Vancouver as discussed in section 2 above.*

<sup>46</sup> CUTA (2013) *Value Case for Accessible Transit in Canada*. [cutaactu.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/cutareport\\_valuecaseforaccessibletransitincanada.pdf](http://cutaactu.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/cutareport_valuecaseforaccessibletransitincanada.pdf)

<sup>47</sup> Statistics Canada (2011) *Profile of seniors' transportation habits*. [statcan.gc.ca/pub/11-008-x/2012001/article/11619-eng.htm](http://statcan.gc.ca/pub/11-008-x/2012001/article/11619-eng.htm)

<sup>48</sup> (April 2013) *COSCO News*. P 10

## 6) Access for Everyone – sidewalks, bus lanes, rolling & more

It is tempting to think that the answer to providing accessible transportation is simply to force some of the people who now use HandyDART onto the regular transit system, which is now equipped with low-floor buses and other features to reduce barriers for people with disabilities. This approach is exactly the opposite of what Transport 2050 promises regarding equity, as it would likely result in many of the most vulnerable HandyDART passengers becoming isolated and unable to access transit.<sup>49</sup>

Transport 2050 includes a “bold vision to build out an extensive network of transit that is both fast (competitive with cars) and reliable, travelling in dedicated lanes, free from congestion” (P 29). If this is done in a way that maximizes the benefits for HandyDART, including equipping HandyDART vehicles to activate transit signal priority, it could significantly improve HandyDART cost effectiveness, speed, and reliability.

Improving the conventional transit system, the sidewalk network, and numerous other features of our communities is essential to creating the “Access for Everyone” that Transport 2050 claims to aim for. Many, but not all, of these measures are mentioned in Transport 2050. And there is considerable potential to moderate the increase in HandyDART service that will be required, with adequate investment and re-allocation of road space. Some of these changes can also increase the efficiency of HandyDART service.

Some of the measures that have the potential to increase accessibility and moderate the need for HandyDART service increases include:

- Increasing regular transit service frequencies, and using larger buses, to reduce overcrowding. Overcrowding makes accessing transit very difficult, and even dangerous, for many people with disabilities.
- Improving transit priority measures, including transit lanes (and busways on bus rapid transit routes) that can be used by HandyDART vehicles and equipping HandyDART vehicles to activate transit signal priority.
- Installing accessible public washrooms at rapid transit stations and major transit transfer points.
- Creating more spaces on buses for wheelchairs, mobility scooters and baby carriages. Most buses have only two spaces, and these are often full on some routes.



**MOBILITY SCOOTER ON PROTECTED BIKE & ROLL LANE**

<sup>49</sup> E.g. [www.straight.com/news/jean-swanson-handydart-users-oppose-proposed-application-procedures-sure-to-reduce-ridership](http://www.straight.com/news/jean-swanson-handydart-users-oppose-proposed-application-procedures-sure-to-reduce-ridership)

- Extend the scope of the “walking, cycling, and transit skills training, resources, and support programs” promised in Transport 2050 to include wheelchairs and mobility scooters.<sup>50</sup>
- Creating many more high-quality bike and roll routes, with changes in regulations and signage to clarify that people riding power wheelchairs and mobility scooters are permitted and encouraged to use these facilities.<sup>51</sup>
- Building and improving sidewalks and crosswalks region wide. Transit is not accessible without good quality sidewalks all the way to and from the transit stop. One dangerous street crossing can make a trip dangerous and terrifying for a frail senior with mobility disabilities.
- Improving bus stops, with more transit shelters with spaces to sit and park wheelchairs out of the rain.
- Making bus stops accessible to wheelchairs. Significant progress has been made in making bus stops accessible, but many bus stops are still not accessible.
- Clarifying Transport 2050’s ambition regarding making electric bicycles and micromobility devices affordable for people living on low incomes to explicitly prioritize mobility scooters and wheelchairs.<sup>52</sup>
- Locating the services used by people with disabilities, including medical facilities, on major transit routes. And improving transit service and reliability to existing facilities.
- Locating affordable housing, including for seniors and people with disabilities, in walkable areas with good quality transit.

Many of these improvements would require cooperation between multiple levels of government and funding agencies, and Transport 2050 is a significant step forward in that it proposes coordinated action led by TransLink.

**Bus stops are only accessible if the neighbourhood has good sidewalks and crosswalks**

These changes also involve considerable amounts of money – for example providing increased transit capacity and building sidewalks will likely cost billions in capital costs alone. In the case of transit overcrowding at peak periods, on some routes improved HandyDART service might be more cost effective than increasing regular service enough to allow reasonable and reliable access for vulnerable riders.

Other changes, such as concentrating health care facilities and employment in walkable areas with good quality accessible transit, will realistically happen only over decades and only with much stronger commitment from governments, including municipalities and the

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<sup>50</sup> Section 4.2.6. p 183.

<sup>51</sup> For current background on the use of wheelchairs and mobility scooters on bike and roll routes see [www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/city-council-bike-lane-pilot-1.6218673](http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/city-council-bike-lane-pilot-1.6218673)

<sup>52</sup> Transport 2050 messaging regarding wheelchairs and mobility scooters is inconsistent. See sections 3.2.2 and 3.2.4

province. So far, the implementation of regional plans has been inconsistent – making it more difficult for people with disabilities to get where they need to go.

## 7) Reallocating investment to meet Transport 2050 goals

People with disabilities tend to have much lower incomes than people who do not. This is largely related to the barriers to employment they face, resulting in both lower income during working years and lower retirement income. According to the Disability Without Poverty Network, about one in five people who reported an activity limitation live in poverty. Individuals relying on the Persons with Disability benefit live well below the poverty line – the Statistics Canada Low Income Cut Off.<sup>53</sup>

People with disabilities living in poverty need affordable transportation. Even regular transit fares for using HandyDART are a barrier. The half-price taxi saver coupons available from TransLink are far too expensive for many to use regularly, even for short trips; the social expectation to tip taxi drivers poses an additional barrier.

People with disabilities face significant barriers in getting to potential employment locations, given that many cannot drive even if able to purchase and operate a reliable car or accessible van.

### The transportation planning and advocacy gap

One of the acknowledged failures of regional planning in Metro Vancouver has been the failure to coordinate transportation and land use planning to concentrate employment and residential development in transit and pedestrian friendly areas. For example, the provincial government took on \$4.2 billion in debt for the expansion of Highway 1 and the Port Mann Bridge. The project was funded despite being opposed by the Regional District Board on the basis that it conflicted with regional transit-oriented land use objectives and would stimulate automobile dependant residential and commercial land use.

**While employment is an important issue, so is the ability to participate fully in society. People with disabilities have a right to social activity and to access recreation facilities**

Neither TransLink nor the Metro Vancouver Regional District have shown real leadership on transportation planning in the region in recent years, instead allowing the provincial government to proceed with billions of dollars of highway expansion projects (without even opposing federal funding going to these projects instead of transit improvements).

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<sup>53</sup> Disability Without Poverty Network (2012) *Overdue: The Case for Increasing the Persons with Disabilities Benefit in BC*. P5.

As a result of this failure of regional planning, much of the recent employment growth has been located in automobile-dominated office parks or other locations with poor transit service and incomplete sidewalk networks. Even young people without disabilities find accessing these new employment locations by transit and walking a severe challenge. Given that many older buildings are not wheelchair accessible, this means that many of the newer accessible worksites are inaccessible without HandyDART – even for the proportion of people with disabilities who can use regular transit.

While employment is an important issue, so is the ability to participate fully in society. Lower income people, including people of all ages with disabilities, have a right to social activity and to access recreation facilities and parks. Restricting HandyDART service, or imposing higher fares, would further isolate those in deep poverty. Social isolation is associated with a wide range of negative physical and mental health impacts, so inadequate HandyDART service translates to increased health care costs and shorter lifespans for some of the most vulnerable.

In an ideal world Metro Vancouver would rapidly be transitioning to an age-friendly region with greatly improved access for people with disabilities. But the fact is that people with disabilities are living and looking for work where many recently developed areas are inaccessible without an automobile or custom transit. Improved HandyDART service is essential for overcoming the barriers exacerbated by recent regional planning and transportation infrastructure decisions.

As discussed above, TransLink is legislatively obligated to consider provincial policy objectives. The provincial government has set a target of reducing light duty vehicle kilometres traveled 25% by 2030, and is making action to meet this target central to the forthcoming BC Clean Transportation Action Plan.<sup>54</sup> And it makes no sense to spend billions widening highways if your objective is to have much less traffic in the future.

The obvious implication is that funding should be shifted away from highway expansion, which makes traffic worse and increases greenhouse gas pollution, to public transit infrastructure including permanent facilities for an expanded and electric HandyDART fleet.

**A similar policy in Metro Vancouver could see billions of dollars shifted to transit**

In 2021 the Capital Regional District (CRD) unanimously approved a groundbreaking new policy on transportation infrastructure prioritization in the region. Greater Victoria's regional district is now prepared to advocate for transportation investments that contribute to meeting regional sustainable transportation, affordability, and greenhouse gas reduction

<sup>54</sup> [www.pibc.bc.ca/sites/default/files/internal\\_pages\\_pdfs/planning-west/PIBC-PW-Winter2022-CleanBC-Roadmap-PG22-24-Web.pdf](http://www.pibc.bc.ca/sites/default/files/internal_pages_pdfs/planning-west/PIBC-PW-Winter2022-CleanBC-Roadmap-PG22-24-Web.pdf); [www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/industry/electricity-alternative-energy/transportation-energies/clean-transportation-policies-programs/clean-transportation-action-plan](http://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/industry/electricity-alternative-energy/transportation-energies/clean-transportation-policies-programs/clean-transportation-action-plan)



targets. As a result, the region could see hundreds of millions of provincial and federal dollars invested in electric rapid bus lines, cycling routes, and sidewalks instead of highway expansion projects.<sup>55</sup>

A similar policy in Metro Vancouver could see billions of dollars shifted to transit capital projects, including new permanent HandyDART facilities, over the next decade. This could go a long way towards meeting the affordability and equity objectives TransLink set out in Transport 2050. TransLink is the obvious choice to lead these advocacy efforts.

## 8) Conclusion

This report:

- Points out that Transport 2050 aims to create a “fairer and more just and inclusive transportation system that truly delivers on the promise of Access for Everyone” and admits that TransLink has “catching up to do.”
- Notes that Transport 2050 mostly ignore the challenge of population aging.
- Shows that rates of disability increase greatly with age, that Metro Vancouver’s population is aging rapidly, and asserts that in the coming decade providing the services and urban environment older seniors need will be a defining social and political challenge.
- Documents that the number of HandyDART trips per person 65 and over declined significantly between 2011 and 2019.
- Shows that 2022 TransLink provided only half the HandyDART service per person 65 and over than in 2008.
- Points out that the percentage of taxi trips also reached 17% in 2022, compared to TransLink’s target of reducing taxi use to 7% by 2021.
- Documents that substituting taxis for dedicated custom transit vehicles results in sub-standard safety and service.
- Notes that 2017 TransLink admitted that it provides only “about half of the accessible transit trips per capita that are provided in other similar Canadian cities” and that much more service is needed.
- Quotes the Legislature’s Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services recommendation to increase “accessible transportation options such as HandyDART.”
- Asserts that disabilities caused by COVID-19 will increase the need for HandyDART service, and reduce the availability of workers able to be HandyDART operators.
- Points out that Indigenous people have much higher rates of disability than the general population, and asserts that if Access for Everyone is to include Indigenous

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<sup>55</sup> [www.capitaldaily.ca/news/opinion-crd-must-push-province-to-fund-rapid-bus-instead-of-expanding-highways](http://www.capitaldaily.ca/news/opinion-crd-must-push-province-to-fund-rapid-bus-instead-of-expanding-highways)

Peoples, TransLink needs to greatly improve accessibility for persons with disabilities.

- Asserts that public HandyDART provision is essential for increasing and improving service because:
  - The rationale for contracting out transit services was based on contractors' ability to get away with lower wages and benefits than the public sector.
  - With an aging population and the effects of the COVID pandemic, transit agencies across North America are having great difficulty attracting and retaining qualified workers.
  - Over the last few years, TransLink's HandyDART operations have been in the hands of four different corporations. Every time a new contractor takes over, years of efficiency gains are lost and employee morale suffers along with efficiency and quality of service.
  - Stability is crucial for attracting and retaining qualified workers.
  - For-profit operators have a history of performance issues that affect riders and consume large amounts of transit agency staff time – including problems related to low wages and resulting staff turnover.
  - Multiple disability rights organizations have supported in-house HandyDART service as a way to improve staff retention, on the basis that experienced operators provide better and more sensitive service.
- Points out that the BC government's recent decision that about 5,000 health care workers should be "once again directly employed by the government and health authorities" was based on evidence that "employees who feel secure and safe in their jobs provide higher-quality care for people, and in turn employers can attract and retain staff at a higher and more consistent level."
- Notes that TransLink committed to do a multiple accounts evaluation Public Sector Comparator (PSC) in 2016, but then reneged on this commitment.
- Asserts that TransLink must conduct a proper and unbiased PSC to compare the costs and benefits of continued outsourcing to insourcing of HandyDART.
- Proposes that HandyDART riders should be involved in selecting the criteria to be considered. And the union representing HandyDART workers should be involved in selecting the company to do the work, and have input into the design.
- Asserts that transitioning TransLink's conventional bus fleet to quiet clean electric power while leaving the HandyDART fleet burning fossil fuels would be incompatible with the Transport 2050 commitment to equity.
- Documents that it is not practical to electrify TransLink's HandyDART fleet without permanent operations and maintenance centres, and asserts that substandard, temporary facilities are a factor in high staff turnover.
- Asserts that TransLink should do what BC Transit Victoria has already done, and get funding from the provincial and federal governments for permanent operations centres.



- Notes that capital expenses are eligible for federal and provincial funding, so permanent HandyDART centres could be a major financial benefit for TransLink.
- Asserts that failing to improve HandyDART service would impose substantial costs on the public health system and family care givers, as well as infringing on the rights of the increasing population of people living with disabilities.
- Proposes improving the conventional transit system, the sidewalk network, and numerous other features of our communities, as well as improving HandyDART service, to create the “Access for Everyone” that Transport 2050 claims to aim for.
- Notes that the provincial government has set a target of reducing light duty vehicle kilometres traveled 25% by 2030, and it makes no sense to spend billions widening highways if your objective is to have much less traffic in the future.
- Proposes that TransLink should advocate for shifting provincial and federal funding away from highway expansion, which makes traffic worse and increases greenhouse gas pollution, to public transit infrastructure including permanent facilities for an expanded and electric HandyDART fleet.

In conclusion, TransLink has some catching up to do, and a balanced examination of insourcing HandyDART should be one of the first steps towards Access for Everyone.

## Appendix - History of the HandyDART crisis

When elected mayors and councillors sat on the TransLink Board from 1999 to 2007, they increased HandyDART service hours by about 5% per year to keep up with demand. But after then Premier Gordon Campbell and Transport Minister Kevin Falcon imposed an appointed board in 2008 everything changed.

Once the appointed board was in place, HandyDART service hours were frozen and HandyDART trip denials soared. The situation for conventional transit was similar. In 2008, the Provincial Liberals unveiled a grandiose pre-election transit plan.<sup>56</sup> After the election they reneged on many of their transit promises and cancelled planned conventional transit bus service increases.

Most transit agencies have long acknowledged that an aging population will require more custom transit service. For example, BC Transit's 2011 long range plan for the Victoria area states: "The aging population will increase the demand for handyDART and other custom transit services in the future. This will require an increase in resources."<sup>57</sup> The same report notes that there is likely a hidden demand for HandyDART service by people who have given up on requesting service due to a lack of capacity.

The City of Vancouver's Persons with Disabilities Advisory Committee (PWDAC) responded to the service freeze and proposed that HandyDART funding and service be increased to meet the needs of the increasing population of people with disabilities. They also opposed invasive processes to screen HandyDART applicants as a way of reducing costs:

**The Liberal government attempted to cover up the crisis they created**

"Access Transit (TransLink) has been contemplating a new process to deal with increasing demand for HandyDART without increasing funding to meet the need. The process they are contemplating is an invasive, time-consuming, and upsetting process, which would discourage many people, especially persons with language issues, developmental disabilities, persons who are older, frail or confused, from applying for HandyDART. In essence, it solves the problem of not enough HandyDART rides by eliminating the most vulnerable of users."<sup>58</sup>

<sup>56</sup> E.g. Kenneth Chan (2015) *The \$14 billion transit plan the B.C. Liberals conveniently forgot* [dailyhive.com/vancouver/the-14-billion-transit-plan-the-b-c-liberals-conveniently-forgot](http://dailyhive.com/vancouver/the-14-billion-transit-plan-the-b-c-liberals-conveniently-forgot)

<sup>57</sup> BC Transit (2011) *Transit Future Plan: Victoria Region*. P30. [www.bctransit.com/victoria/transit-future/victoria-transit-future-plan](http://www.bctransit.com/victoria/transit-future/victoria-transit-future-plan)

<sup>58</sup> (2011) *Issues and Concerns about the Translink Report: "Moving Forward: Improving Metro Vancouver's Transportation Network."* p15

The impact on people who need the service the most should be considered with regard to the type and quality of service offered, not just the formal screening process. If people with severe disabilities find that the service does not meet their needs, they will be screened out and not use the service. The cost of this silent screening process may not show up on TransLink's financial statements, but the individuals, families and the public health care system will pay the price.

The 2013 report *Metro Vancouver's Aging Population and the Need for Improved HandyDART Service* documented that trip denials soared by over 600% between 2008 and 2012.<sup>59</sup> Shortly after the report was published, and the soaring trip denials were widely reported in the media, the contractor and TransLink re-defined trip denials – apparently to disguise the crisis.<sup>60</sup> One headline resulting from TransLink and the contractor's re-definition of denial and misleading communications was "HandyDART trip denials plummet."<sup>61</sup> Instead of increasing HandyDART service, the provincial Liberal government seemingly attempted to cover up the crisis they created.

### **HandyDART Riders' Alliance creates pressure for increased service**

In 2013 the HandyDART Riders Alliance was formed. This group of HandyDART riders and allies greatly increased the media coverage of the freeze in HandyDART service, and the resulting crisis.

After the 2013 election, the provincial Liberal government imposed a referendum requirement on new funding for TransLink, but made the TransLink Mayors' Council responsible for developing the plan to be voted on. The provincial Liberal government also imposed a very rushed timeline, ensuring that through public consultation would be impossible. The HandyDART Riders' Alliance and allies had to scramble to mount a campaign to get the Mayors Council to include funding for increased HandyDART service in their plan. The mayors' plan was released in June 2014 and included a 30% increase in HandyDART bus service hours over 10 years. The HandyDART Riders' Alliance campaigned for the yes side in the referendum on the basis of this commitment. The referendum did not pass, but the Mayors' hastily drafted plan became the de-facto transit plan for the region.

**TransLink  
committed to  
considering  
taking  
HandyDART in-  
house**

The HandyDART Riders' Alliance succeeded in keeping the HandyDART crisis in the public eye throughout 2014 and 2015. And after the HandyDART Riders' Alliance organized a large

<sup>59</sup> [ecoplanning.ca/wp-content/uploads/2011/01/ATU-HandyDART-Report-Final-Nov-15-2013.pdf](http://ecoplanning.ca/wp-content/uploads/2011/01/ATU-HandyDART-Report-Final-Nov-15-2013.pdf)

<sup>60</sup> E.g. CBC (Nov 19, 2013) HandyDART trip denials up 670% since 2008, says group. [cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/handydart-trip-denials-up-670-since-2008-says-group-1.2433056](http://cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/handydart-trip-denials-up-670-since-2008-says-group-1.2433056)

<sup>61</sup> Michael Mui, 24 Hours Vancouver (December 16, 2014)

presence at the December 2015 TransLink board meeting, the TransLink board chair Barry Forbes was interviewed by the Vancouver Sun and said:

All of us were pretty moved by the comments from the folks . . . We are concerned. We had an offer to work with these folks more and we want to do that. We will consider (taking HandyDART) in-house.

The Vancouver Sun also interviewed HandyDART riders:

At the meeting, Pam Winthrop said she drives her 20-year-old son from Ladner to Richmond every day so he can get a HandyDart to his Vancouver school. He never arrives on time. Bet Tuason, who is on kidney dialysis, said he has passed out three times — and has had to be resuscitated — while waiting for HandyDart to show up, while Sandra Bryan has missed her medical appointments and claims she has been abused by the HandyDart call centre after she complained.

Beth McKellar, who suffered a spinal cord injury 16 years ago, urged TransLink to do the right thing, noting that many people are told to take taxis instead of HandyDart, and wind up stranded because there are none available.<sup>62</sup>

**Public sector comparator promised & canceled**

At this same TransLink board meeting I recommended that HandyDART riders be involved in selecting an outside group to conduct a participatory Multiple Accounts Evaluation Public Sector Comparator (PSC). I also suggested that public confidence in the results would be enhanced if the group doing the work was conducted by a smaller firm and led by professionals with a code of conduct requiring clear and accurate communications with the public, such as Registered Professional Planners.

In June 2016, TransLink CEO Kevin Desmond committed to involving HandyDART riders in designing a ‘public sector comparator’ to evaluate

the costs and benefits of bringing HandyDART in-house as part of a “Custom Transit Service Delivery Review . . . in response to a number of questions that had been raised at TransLink Board meetings, particularly around responsiveness to customer concerns, and the standards and quality of HandyDART and taxi services, and the



**HANDYDART RIDERS’ ALLIANCE PUT QUALITY OF SERVICE ON PUBLIC AGENDA**

<sup>62</sup> Kelly Sinoski, Vancouver Sun (Dec 9, 2015) “TransLink to consider taking HandyDart in house” [vancouver.sun.com/news/local-news/translink-to-consider-taking-handydart-in-house](http://vancouver.sun.com/news/local-news/translink-to-consider-taking-handydart-in-house)

HandyDART service model.” The “Stakeholder Advisory Committee [was supposed to help develop] evaluation criteria for service delivery models”<sup>63</sup>

The HandyDART Riders’ Alliance media release in response stated that they were “very pleased with the significant commitments made by TransLink’s CEO Kevin Desmond at today’s board meeting.”

The Custom Transit Service Delivery Review initially included a Multiple Accounts Evaluation (MAE) of service delivery models as recommended by Ecopath Planning and requested by the HandyDART Riders’ Alliance. Multiple Accounts Evaluation allows multiple factors, such as safety and quality of service to be evaluated (TransLink regularly uses MAE evaluations in evaluating projects such as rapid transit lines).

However, at some stage the MAE was terminated, and only a financial analysis was done. TransLink hired PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) to do the financial review, one of the firms the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives identifies as having “potential conflict of interest, because accurate auditing would sometimes speak against corporate practices that yield general consulting revenues” such as contracting out and ‘private public partnerships.’<sup>64</sup> The names and qualifications of the people who did the financial analysis were not included in the report summary that was released to the public.

PwC was apparently not informed that the MAE had been cancelled and wrote this in their Public Sector Comparator (PSC) report: “The outputs from the PSC were incorporated into the final Multiple Account Evaluation (“MAE”) used by TransLink and the project Stakeholder Advisory Committee to prepare the final recommendation to the TransLink Board.”[sic]<sup>65</sup>

**It is not clear if these decisions were made by TransLink or by the provincial Liberal government**

### **Promised Increase Diverted to Taxis**

In September 2016, the new TransLink CEO announced that \$820,000 was going to increase HandyDART service as an emergency top up to meet demand, and that 90% of this would go to HandyDART buses. In fact, the data provided by TransLink shows that slightly *less* than the ‘budgeted’ number of HandyDART bus trips were delivered (also slightly less than

<sup>63</sup> *Custom Transit Service Delivery Review* [translink.ca/en/Plans-and-Projects/Custom-Transit-Service-Review.aspx](http://translink.ca/en/Plans-and-Projects/Custom-Transit-Service-Review.aspx) (accessed Sept. 21, 2017).

<sup>64</sup> Stuart Murray (2006) *CCPA. Value for Money? Cautionary lessons about P3s from British Columbia.* p 32 [policyalternatives.ca/sites/default/files/uploads/publications/BC\\_Office\\_Pubs/bc\\_2006/P3\\_value\\_for\\_money.pdf](http://policyalternatives.ca/sites/default/files/uploads/publications/BC_Office_Pubs/bc_2006/P3_value_for_money.pdf)

<sup>65</sup> (March 2017) TransLink Custom Transit Service Delivery Review: Public Sector Comparator Executive Report for Public Board Meeting. P2 [handydartriders.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/TL-HandyDART-Public-Sector-Comparator-March-2017.pdf](http://handydartriders.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/TL-HandyDART-Public-Sector-Comparator-March-2017.pdf)

delivered in 2015), and instead taxi trips were increased by almost 30%.<sup>66</sup> This resulted in a record high of 10.8% taxi trips, up from less than 1% in 2008 and 3.7% in 2013.

In November 2016, the appointed TransLink Board and the Mayors' Council both voted unanimously to approve a 'Phase One Plan' which includes a 15% HandyDART increase over 3 years, starting in January 2017. This was a faster increase than what was originally in the mayors plan, and is a recognition that the need for HandyDART greatly exceeds the supply. TransLink staff and executives assured the HandyDART Riders Alliance that this increase would be in the form of HandyDART bus hours, not trips using taxis.

### **TransLink acknowledges HandyDART crisis**

In March 2017 TransLink published documents revealing that TransLink provides less HandyDART service per capita than comparable transit agencies. One document states:

Demand for HandyDART Currently Outstrips Supply and is Anticipated to Grow: Up until late 2016, there had been no increase in HandyDART service since 2009 . . . we heard from many customers that it can be difficult to get a trip when needed and that many customers have stopped calling out of frustration. In addition, HandyDART is currently providing fewer trips per capita than our peer custom transit agencies, which indicates that there is likely latent demand for the service. Furthermore, recent BC Stats projections indicate the number of people in Metro Vancouver aged 70 or older will increase by 55% over the next ten years, which could translate into a greater need for HandyDART service, as the incidence of disabilities increases at this age.

The same report states that HandyDART service "expansion in the Mayors' Vision is expected to address the increased demand to some degree, but analysis shows that it is likely insufficient to catch up or keep pace with need."<sup>67</sup>

The next month, the Mayors' Council chimed in with this statement:

"The 10-Year Vision will increase this service by 30% [but] will still leave Metro Vancouver with about half of the accessible transit trips per capita that are provided in other similar Canadian cities, including the Capital Region. This service shortfall is in large part a reflection of the lack of provincial support for this service which is a backbone of the provincially funded healthcare system. This represents a download of provincial costs onto regional taxpayers.

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<sup>66</sup> Backgrounder - HandyDART Service Provision (Provided to HandyDART Riders' Alliance by TransLink on Jan 25, 2017)

<sup>67</sup> Custom Transit Service Delivery Review: Outcomes and Recommendations (March 22, 2017) [handydartriders.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/HandyDART-Service-Review-March-2017.pdf](http://handydartriders.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/HandyDART-Service-Review-March-2017.pdf)



The Mayors' Council is calling on all B.C. political parties to . . . commit to improving service above and beyond the 30% increase proposed in the 10-Year Vision, so our residents have access services at a level comparable to other major Canadian cities.<sup>68</sup>

### **NDP promises action – Human Rights complaint**

At the Metro Vancouver Alliance (MVA) provincial electoral assembly in April 2017, NDP leader John Horgan committed to providing funding through a special grant to increase HandyDART service hours by 5% per year (above previously planned increases) for four years starting in 2018 for both TransLink and BC Transit HandyDART services.<sup>69</sup>

In June of 2017 the HandyDART Riders' Alliance filed a class-action complaint with the B.C. Human Rights Tribunal alleging discrimination in the form of inadequate HandyDART service. The complaint alleges inferior transit service is provided to people with physical and mental disabilities compared to people who can use conventional public transit.

**NDP leader John Horgan committed to increase HandyDART service hours 20% above previously planned increases**

The complaint states that

“People are being denied access to transit because they are unable to use conventional transit without assistance. Dignity & self-esteem are damaged. Safety is put at risk. . . We are unable to access physiotherapy appointments, specialist’s appointments and other medical or recreational events. We are being disconnected from our communities and our families and friends. We are being isolated. This in turn causes depression, anxiety, fear and loneliness.”

Some of the incidents and patterns documented in the complaint include:

- An elderly and disabled client who was picked up at 8 am in Burnaby for an appointment in Surrey and did not get home until 6 pm.
- A client the HandyDART contractor took to dialysis treatment, but then abandoned to make his own way home on the bus at 9 pm in the snow.
- Riders forced to pay twice when the trip involves transferring from HandyDART bus to taxi.

The complaint quotes a number of individual riders, family members and health professionals. Quotes include:

<sup>68</sup> [mayorscouncil.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/Backgrounder-HandyDART-1.pdf](http://mayorscouncil.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/Backgrounder-HandyDART-1.pdf)

<sup>69</sup> Metro Vancouver Alliance. (no date) *Over 800 delegates heard commitments from provincial party leaders. Our Provincial Election Accountability Assembly was a success!* metvanalliance.org

- “During the summer, the taxi service could not be depended upon to pick up HandyDART clients as they would take passengers from the Cruise ships as priority as that is where the money is. This is a taxi driver’s priority. Our client had to wait until 6pm or later for a taxi to finally show up.”
- “This client is 15 years old with the mental capacity of a 4 year old. They attend dialysis at BC Children’s Hospital three times weekly. They live in Burnaby. Their problem is that HandyDART has been denying them return trips home from BC Children’s as their trip does not fall between the hours scheduled by MVT for Service between Vancouver and outlying communities.”
- “No bus showed up and when I called to ask ‘where’s my ride’, dispatch indicated that a taxi is on its way – for some reason a taxi never showed up till about 10:15 am and I had missed my physio appointment”

The HandyDART Riders’ Alliance complaint was accepted by the Human Rights Tribunal, and a negotiated settlement was announced in 2019.<sup>70</sup>

John Horgan became Premier of BC in July 2017 but did not fulfil his commitments to fund an fund an increase HandyDART service in Metro Vancouver.

### **Move to replace HandyDART service with taxis**

Safe and good quality HandyDART service that meets the needs of the most vulnerable riders should not be negotiable, it should be the baseline. However, once the elected TransLink board was removed in 2008, TransLink and/or provincial government officials seem to have decided that safety and quality of service was not important.

In 2012 Martin Crilly, then TransLink Commissioner, released the *TransLink Efficiency Review* by Shirocca Consulting of North Vancouver.<sup>71</sup> Shirocca Consulting concludes that:

“Increasing the use of non-dedicated vehicles, such as taxis, could be done relatively quickly and would offer cost savings. While it is acknowledged there maybe concerns over service quality, these can be managed.”<sup>72</sup>

As discussed below, safety and service quality problems with taxis in custom transit service are extremely difficult to overcome so this unsupported assurance that these problems “can be managed” should be viewed with scepticism. Unsupported claims of cost savings should be viewed with similar scepticism.

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<sup>70</sup> Media Release: TransLink and HandyDART Riders’ Alliance Announce Settlement Agreement (March 22, 2019) [handydartriders.ca/?p=484](http://handydartriders.ca/?p=484)

<sup>71</sup> Martin Crilly’s term as TransLink Commissioner ended April 30, 2013

<sup>72</sup> p 92



Following the Shirocca report, TransLink announced cuts of 10,000 hours in HandyDART service, about 2% of the service, with the stated intention of re-allocating the money to taxis. In a letter to the Vancouver Sun, TransLink’s Chief Operating Officer claimed to “expect an overall addition of 7,000 customer trips” with this funding re-allocation.<sup>73</sup> In response to a freedom of information request, TransLink explained that the claimed ‘expectation’ of 7,000 additional trips is based on comparing “low-productivity HandyDART runs” – with the fewest trips per hour – to “average taxi trip cost.”<sup>74</sup> Comparing the highest cost HandyDART trips to the average taxi trip cost as appears to have been done in this case seems to be poor methodology at best. Accurately estimating the taxi cost for these trips would be fairly complex since factors such as traffic congestion affect taxi fares; it should be expected that some of the low-productivity HandyDART runs operate in heavy traffic.

The assertion that taxis provide much less expensive service is not borne out by the available evidence. Instead, taxis seem to be providing a less demanding type of service to people with less severe disabilities at costs similar to dedicated services such as HandyDART. Anecdotal reports suggest that taxis contracted by HandyDART often provide only curb to curb service rather than the reliable door to door service required by many of the HandyDART users.

Even if taxis were substantially less expensive, unsafe and poor quality service is never a bargain.

### **Are Taxis Cheaper & Good Enough?**

There is a history of simplistic and misleading claims regarding the cost of HandyDART service compared to taxis in Metro Vancouver. For example, in 1995 a group calling itself Fair Access to Custom Transit (F.A.C.T.) proposed replacing HandyDART service completely with taxis as a cost saving measure. In response, BC Transit staff pointed out significant errors in F.A.C.T.’s analysis and noted that Maple Ridge Cabs had recently lost a HandyDART contract and that Yellow Cabs of Vancouver had recently submitted a proposal with the “highest cost (about 18 percent higher than the successful proposer) and lowest evaluation score of all four proposals”<sup>75</sup>

**BC Transit staff pointed out that the taxi proposal had the highest cost and lowest evaluation score**

and that Yellow Cabs of Vancouver had recently submitted a proposal with the “highest cost (about 18 percent higher than the successful proposer) and lowest evaluation score of all four proposals”<sup>75</sup>

The BC Coalition of People with Disabilities (BCCPD) rejected the F.A.C.T. taxi proposal and any privatization of HandyDART, stating that it would “leave the most vulnerable consumers isolated and disempowered [and] make it very difficult to monitor the system to ensure that standards of safety are being

<sup>73</sup> Doug Kelsey (June 6, 2013) “HandyDart pilot project an attempt to better meet demand” *Vancouver Sun*.

<sup>74</sup> Liina Marshall (Sept. 9, 2013) *FOI Request 2013/172*. TransLink – Access Transit. TransLink withheld all actual cost information on the basis that it could “harm the financial or economic interests of a public body.”

<sup>75</sup> Glen Leicester (May 2, 1995) *F.A.C.T. Report on Taxi Service*. BC Transit. P5

met and abuses are not occurring.”<sup>76</sup> <sup>77</sup> The BCCPD raised an important point about the most vulnerable HandyDART riders: lowering standards through increased contracting to taxis may create a system that is not suitable for the people who need it the most. The Amalgamated Transit Union noted in its analysis of the F.A.C.T. proposal that “Poor service from the taxi industry is not the fault of the taxi drivers, but how those drivers are rewarded for their service. They are rewarded for speed over safety.”<sup>78</sup>

Experience in the US also shows that substituting taxis for dedicated vehicles with specially trained drivers results in sub-standard service to passengers with disabilities. For example, a 2008 US Transportation Research Board report notes that using dedicated vehicles rather than taxis results in better trained drivers “providing a better quality of service to paratransit passengers” (p 22). The same report suggests that metered taxis are often available for custom transit only when other taxi business is slow.<sup>79</sup>

The HandyDART Riders’ Alliance claimed that taxis are often completely unavailable at peak demand times, and when anything is going on that increases the demand for taxis (such as a major sporting event or the arrival of a cruise ship). The union representing HandyDART drivers confirmed this information.

TransLink’s 2017 *Custom Transit Service Delivery Review: Outcomes and Recommendations* report discusses some of these persistent problems:

Persistent and significant concerns have been raised about the customer service provided by taxis. Training of taxi drivers that provide custom transit trips is currently inconsistent and not on par with the training for HandyDART drivers. As such, we have heard reports from customers that safety protocols and general good customer service practices are not always followed. Furthermore, customers are not informed that their trip will be provided by a taxi and the advance notification call is often not provided or is inaccurate. In addition, taxis often neglect to display appropriate HandyDART signage and it can be difficult for customers to discern, particularly in busy locations, if the arriving taxi is for their trip.

A US Transportation Research Board (TRB) report points out that the skills and personality traits that make for a successful taxi driver are very different from those that make for a good custom transit driver providing safe door-to-door service for people with severe disabilities. “Taxicab drivers tend to be independent contractors. Finding people who have

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<sup>76</sup> The BCCPD has since changed its name to Disability Alliance BC

<sup>77</sup> BCCPD (June 1995) *Response to the FACT Brief*. P 3.

<sup>78</sup> Craig Wright (1995) *Cheaper equals better??? A comparison of accessible, door to door transportation services for persons with disabilities in BC*. Canadian Council of the Amalgamated Transit Union. P13

<sup>79</sup> David Chia (2008) *Policies and Practices for Effectively and Efficiently Meeting ADA Paratransit Demand*. Transportation Research Board. P25

the entrepreneurial skills to be independent contractors and who meet all the requirements of a paratransit driver is an even more difficult task.”<sup>80</sup>

A coordinator for a day program for older adults in Metro Vancouver described in a June 2013 letter how substituting taxis for regular HandyDART service puts clients at risk and creates extra work for hospital staff.

“On three separate occasions a specific client was dropped off at the emergency entrance as opposed to the planned drop off area which is the Day Program for Older Adults entrance . . .It was fortunate that staff in emergency approached our client and took him down to the Day Program. This client has dementia . . . and several other complex medical conditions. This client would not have been able to navigate his way through the hospital to get to the Day Program. . . We are very concerned about the use of taxis with our clients who mostly have been diagnosed with some form of dementia or Alzheimer’s disease.”

A more detailed timeline and description of issues with taxis in paratransit service is included in the 2017 Ecopath Planning report *Metro Vancouver’s Aging Population and the need for Quality HandyDART Service*.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> Roy Lave & Rosemary Mathias (2000) *State of the Art of Paratransit*. Transportation Research Board. Pp 3-4.

<sup>81</sup> [ecoplanning.ca/wp-content/uploads/2011/01/Quality-HandyDART-Final-Oct-16-2017.pdf](http://ecoplanning.ca/wp-content/uploads/2011/01/Quality-HandyDART-Final-Oct-16-2017.pdf)

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# 2024 LOW MOW MEADOW PROGRAM

Presented April 2024  
Engineering, Parks & Environment

city  
of north  
vancouver

## PURPOSE AND OVERVIEW

- Environmental, economic, and social advantages of low mow meadows.
- Results of the 2023 pilot project & what we heard.
- Opportunities to advance implementation



city  
of north  
vancouver

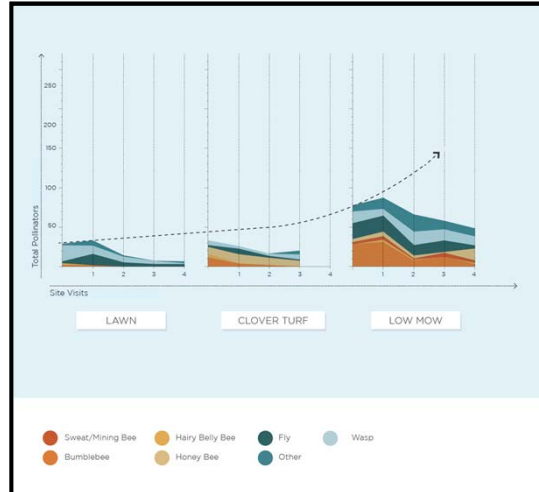
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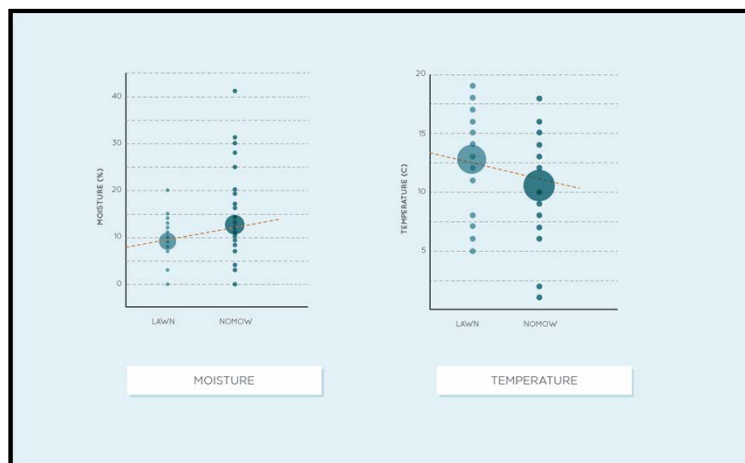
Falaise Park in East Vancouver is part of the park board pilot aimed at creating natural landscapes and attracting more bees and butterflies. (Ben Nelms/CBC)

## RESEARCH & TESTING



\*Some images and data in the presentation were provided by City of Vancouver Park Board

## RESEARCH & TESTING



\*Some images and data in the presentation were provided by City of Vancouver Park Board



### KEY CONSIDERATIONS

- Early communication with local community
- Mow once/twice year (spring and/or late summer)
- Mow a perimeter lawn edge (1-2m) around meadow
- Mow public trails & picnic areas through meadows
- Hazard response & mitigation plan

#### NO-MOW MEADOW PROJECT



**PROTECTING THE BEES**  
 The City is embarking on a no-mow meadow project in a select number of under-utilized grassy areas. Native bees and butterflies are important pollinators for both crops and wild plants, and they are in decline. By not mowing these areas, we are protecting these critical pollinators and increasing the number of pollinator plant species. That makes for a healthier city!



[cityofvancouver.org/Pollinators](https://cityofvancouver.org/Pollinators)





For more information contact:  
 Engineering, Parks & Environment  
 T.604.982.3961 | E. eng@cnv.org





7

### 2023 PILOTED MEADOW LOCATIONS

8



### 2023 PILOTED MEADOW LOCATION – East Keith

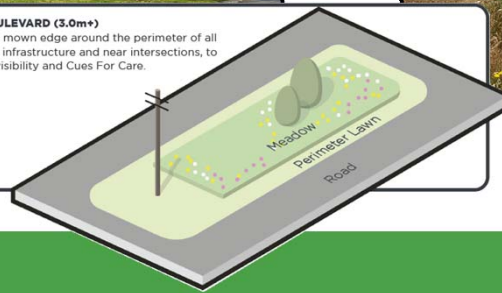
May 23'



July 23'



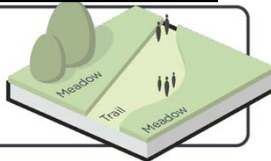
**WIDE BOULEVARD (3.0m+)**  
Maintain a mown edge around the perimeter of all meadows, infrastructure and near intersections, to maintain visibility and Cues For Care.



### 2023 PILOTED MEADOW LOCATIONS – Grand Boulevard 9<sup>th</sup> – 11<sup>th</sup>



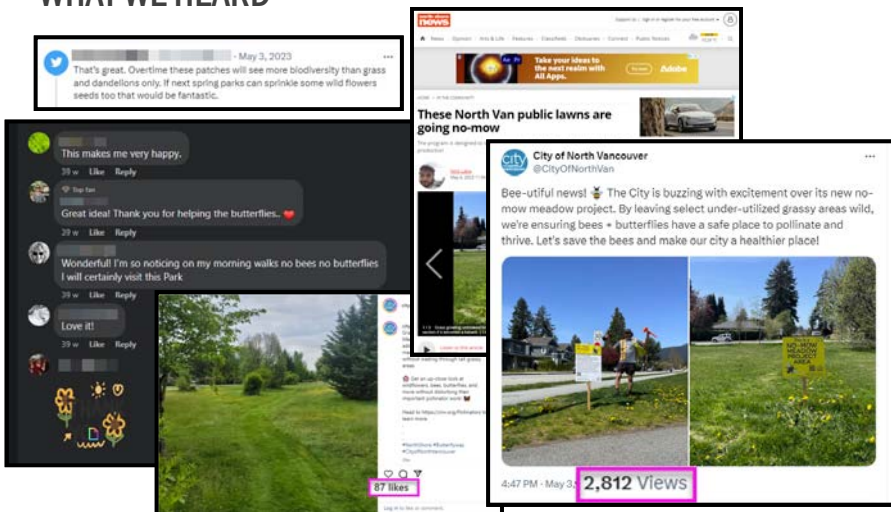
**PUBLIC INTEREST**  
Encourage the public to interact with the naturalized areas through mowing simple trails and seating areas through the meadows. These can be coordinated with firebreaks and desire lines. Paths should be minimum 1.5m wide.



### 2023 PILOTED MEADOW LOCATIONS - Grand Boulevard 9<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup>



### WHAT WE HEARD



### 2024 POTENTIAL EXPANSION SITES



### 2024 POTENTIAL EXPANSION SITES – Grand Boulevard. Multiple sites



South

North



## 2024 POTENTIAL EXPANSION SITES – Grand Boulevard. Multiple sites




Grand Boulevard East  
– E 19<sup>th</sup> St to E 17<sup>th</sup> St

Grand Boulevard East  
– E 17<sup>th</sup> St to E 15<sup>th</sup> St

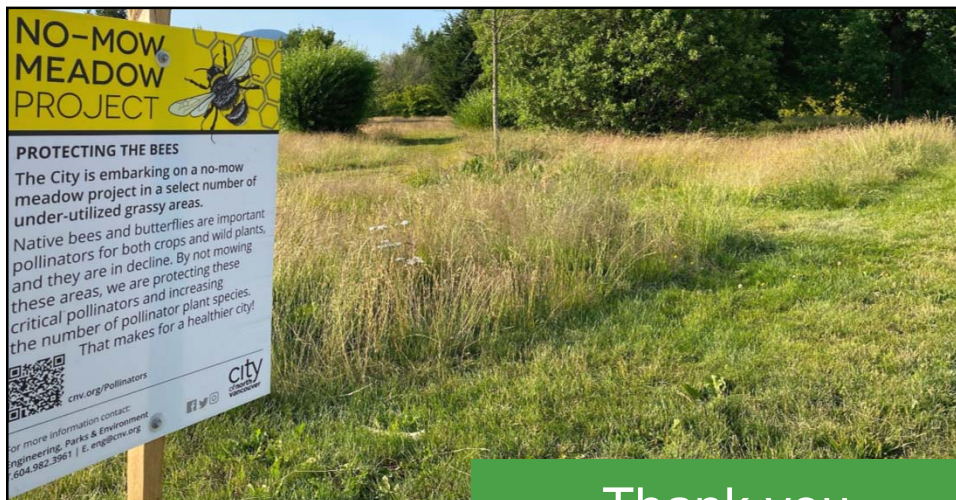
Grand Boulevard West  
– E 13<sup>th</sup> St to E 11<sup>th</sup> St

Grand Boulevard West  
– E 9<sup>th</sup> St to E Keith Rd

Proposed expansion site 






\*Courtesy of Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation



Thank you.





 Department Manager	 Director	 CAO
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The Corporation of **THE CITY OF NORTH VANCOUVER**  
**ENGINEERING, PARKS & ENVIRONMENT DEPARTMENT**

**COUNCIL REPORT**

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To: Mayor Linda Buchanan and Members of Council

From: Derek Priestley, Acting Manager, Parks and Natural Spaces

Subject: LOW MOW MEADOW PROGRAM

Date: April 10, 2024 File No: 12-6240-01-0001/2024

---

**RECOMMENDATION**

PURSUANT to the report of the Acting Manager, Parks and Natural Spaces, dated April 10, 2024, entitled "Low Mow Meadow Program":

THAT staff be directed to initiate a permanent low mow meadow program within Parks and Boulevards.

**ATTACHMENTS**

1. 2023 Piloted Low Mow Meadow Locations (CD [2502385](#))
2. 2024 Proposed Low Mow Meadow Locations (CD [2502368](#))
3. Low Mow Site Selection Criteria (CD [2502454](#))

**PURPOSE**

The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of the benefits and opportunities of implementing low mow meadows in the City's Parks and City maintained boulevards and seek Council's decision on implementing a permanent program. Low mow meadows, also known as rough turf, natural or wildflower meadows, are former mown turf areas that are managed in a way that supports biodiversity, moisture retention and environmental resiliency. This report will discuss the results of the pilot project conducted in 2023, highlighting the environmental, economic, and social advantages of low mow meadows as well as the potential opportunities to advance implementation of this sustainable practice that aligns with objectives of the City's Draft Climate and Environment Strategy.



## BACKGROUND

Low mow meadows are areas of lawn that are mowed less frequently throughout the year to allow grasses and flowering plants to grow. These areas grow to appear as a more natural grassland style environment providing a wide range of ecological benefits, including increased habitat for plant and animal species. Low mow meadows are sometimes mistaken for an initiative commonly called 'no mow May', which pauses mowing only during the month of May. While this initiative provides some ecological benefits, the benefits are limited due to the short time period.

The low mow meadows are mown twice per year, once in spring and fall. This meadow practice has been a part of many municipalities' maintenance programs and bio-diversity strategies for years. A review of examples across North America and Europe found that reducing the intensity of lawn mowing in urban spaces leads to increased biodiversity, economic savings and the reduced presence of allergy-triggering weeds<sup>1</sup>.

### Environmental Benefits

North Vancouver's park system consists of many different landscape types: mowed turf areas, naturalized areas, ornamental horticulture beds and forested ravines. Mowed turf grass plays a crucial role for field sports as well as passive uses such as picnicking, lawn games and informal play. However, intensively maintained lawn spaces have limited environmental benefits and contribute to CO<sub>2</sub> emissions through their frequent mowing requirements. In an era of increasing awareness of climate change, many cities are beginning to view traditionally mown turf areas in their parks and boulevards as a resource intensive landscape practice that must be carefully considered and justified given the inputs required and limited environmental outcomes.

In terms of biodiversity benefits, the City's existing lawn spaces often have many grass and flower species within their composition that do not grow to maturity with the typical maintenance practice of mowing spaces multiple times per year. Low mow meadows allow the existing array of grasses and native wildflowers to grow, create more environmentally productive spaces that support pollinators such as bees and butterflies that play a vital role in ecosystem health and crop pollination.

Study results from low mow test sites have shown that, compared to traditionally mown turf grass, an improvement in soil health with increased populations of beneficial fungi and soil microorganisms<sup>2</sup>.

While many lawn spaces in the City are not irrigated, low mow meadows reduce evaporation, keeping more moisture in the soil and reducing ground temperatures for the benefit of trees and other plants. According to Metro 2050, we should expect 16% drier summers and 62%

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<sup>1</sup> Watson et al. (2019) Ecological and economic benefits of low-intensity urban lawn management. *Journal of Applied Ecology*. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1365-2664.13542>

<sup>2</sup> Tessler et al. (2023) Rewilding in Miniature: Suburban Meadows Can Improve Soil Microbial Biodiversity and Soil Health. *Microbiology Ecology*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s00248-023-02171-4>



decreased snowpack by the year 2050, and so mitigation and adaptation measures like low mow meadows can help preserve the City's urban tree canopy.

## Aesthetics

The currently accepted aesthetics of a manicured and uniform urban lawn is at odds with the potential environmental services urban greenspaces can fully provide. These meadows can offer a visually appealing alternative to traditional manicured lawns, providing a more natural and diverse landscape.



*Figure 1: The City's Low Mow meadow pilot on Grand Boulevard showing mowed paths to create interesting informal pathways for park users. (June 2023)*

## Operational Outcomes

While less staff time is dedicated to the regular mowing of these areas, additional staff time is needed to ensure that meadows receive the unique attention they require. In order to steward thriving and ecologically diverse meadows beyond tasks such as grass trimming and mowing, staff spend time performing other maintenance tasks including seeding native wildflowers, planting, weeding, invasive plant management, monitoring, litter picking, and raking. Staff will continue to refine the approach to low mow meadow management to seek improved outcomes and continue to enhance biodiversity and aesthetics.



## Precedent Research

The City of Vancouver (CoV) was one of the first municipalities in the region to successfully initiate low mow meadow programs at scale and collect data on the results. Currently the CoV has 110 meadow sites covering 41 hectares of park and boulevard space. Consultation and site research with CoV staff helped to inform the identification of sites in the CNV's 2023 pilot that balance conservation and recreation. Site assessment criteria included:

- Passive and/or underutilized space – Traditionally/historically areas with low to moderate use by public which can accommodate the reduced maintenance aesthetic while avoiding conflicts with users.
- Adjacent to an open space – mown grass area nearby that could be utilized for leisure or more active casual use
- Challenging or difficult to maintain site – difficult to access, steep grades or areas that are traditionally very wet or dry.
- Adds interest and increases environmental value to under utilized areas – opportunity to increase localized biodiversity.

Year upon year research and data collected by CoV has shown positive effects on pollinator numbers along with improvements in moisture retention and a measurable drop in average soil temperatures. These latter points show a direct benefit to adjacent trees.



*Figure 2 & 3: In the City of London, UK, low mow landscapes are a common practice within urban greenspaces to promote biodiversity and improve tree health. Many of the largest urban greenspaces have targets reduce normal amenity grass cutting to create areas of meadow grasslands. Pictured: Clapham Commons.*



## 2023 City of North Vancouver Pilot

On July 24<sup>th</sup>, 2023, staff presented the Draft Climate and Environment Strategy highlighting actions to guide our response to the climate crisis. Within the draft Strategy, objectives from the Less Grey, More Green pathway prioritized restoring, protecting, and enhancing natural areas and biodiversity on public property. Taking direction from the draft Strategy's emphasis on timely action to address climate change, staff sought to identify a quick win that would benefit the environment and reduce our operational CO2 emissions.



Borrowing from the City of Vancouver's successful low mow program, CNV staff sought to create a Low Mow pilot project. Using the CoV's location selection criteria (*Attachment #3*), two locations were identified covering 0.7 hectares of the City's 144 hectares of park and natural spaces land. The sites selected considered two different contexts to inform considerations for a future program. The sites selected were:

### **Site 1 – Grand Boulevard West between 11<sup>th</sup> Street East and 9<sup>th</sup> Street East (*Attachment #1*)**

This site was selected because it has historically been an area within Grand Boulevard Park with low public use and nearby mown grass area that can be utilized for leisure or active casual use. A mowed pathway through the meadow was added and strip adjacent to all formal pathways in the park was maintained to ensure there were no obstructions to pathway users and the space continued to feel open and welcoming.

### **Site 2 – Grass boulevard at St. Andrews Avenue and East Keith Road (*Attachment #1*)**



This site is a roadway median with limited public use. This area is typically dry and a meadow's added soil moisture retention properties was seen as a benefit to trees located in the boulevard. The City has a number of large medians on Keith Road that require ongoing maintenance and the pilot was an opportunity to test a reduced maintenance strategy. A strip of lawn along the periphery of the median was maintained throughout the pilot to ensure plants did not grow to obstruct travel lanes or sightlines.



As part of this pilot program, a public education communications campaign was implemented which included sharing the stories of the initiative on social media and onsite signage. (Examples see *figure 4.1*)



Figure 4.1

## Outcomes

During the pilot, the low mow sites realized a reduction in CO2 emissions of approximately 75% compared to typical maintenance practices. This was achieved from a reduction in frequency and area maintained by combustion ride-on mower usage.

## Public Feedback

On-site signage that offered education and directed people to additional on-line resources played a vital role in helping individual's understand the advantages and purpose of the newly established low mow meadows.

Feedback received was generally positive. Social media posts about the initiative received higher than average likes and comments, and the overall sentiment was positive and curious. The North Shore News also ran an informative news story about the initiative.

Although the overwhelming majority of the feedback was positive, staff acknowledge that the shift in aesthetics can be a concern for some individuals. It was crucial to prioritize communication regarding the rationale behind the change in landscape management and ongoing monitoring of meadow sites to address any concerns. The positive sentiment from the community is seen as a successful outcome of the proactive information and educational materials the City shared about the program.

## DISCUSSION

Staff are proposing a balanced approach to expanding the low mow areas that ensures there is ample access to traditionally mown turf and all its recreational and passive benefits. Additionally intentional maintenance tactics ensure that low mow meadow areas are accessible and aesthetically pleasing is also important, and this can be achieved by keeping the perimeters tidy

with a mow strip and mowing a pathway through larger meadows so that people can interact with these diverse landscapes. This includes ensuring mown pathways connect to picnic areas, existing benches and picnic tables. These intentional maintenance practices, sometimes referred to as 'Cues for care', signal to residents and visitors that these meadows are intentional, regularly maintained and monitored. Of the City's 144 hectares of park and natural spaces land 0.7 hectares were used for the pilot in 2023, and staff are proposing to expand this to 4.4 hectares in 2024 (approximately 3% of the City's total park area) and continue this program in future years.

### Opportunities for 2024 and beyond

Opportunities for further implementation of low mow meadows have been identified within City maintained parks, boulevards and other public spaces (*Attachment #2*). Many of the proposed areas have limited recreational potential. One goal of the low mow meadow program is to make the most of underutilized lawn areas that are traditionally intensively maintained, but offer little in the way of recreation. Areas such as the Spirit trail, Green Necklace and other multiuse paths. Larger City maintained boulevards like Keith Boulevard West and East could be utilized, along with options for further expansion to additional sections of Grand Boulevard Park (figures 5.1, 5.2).

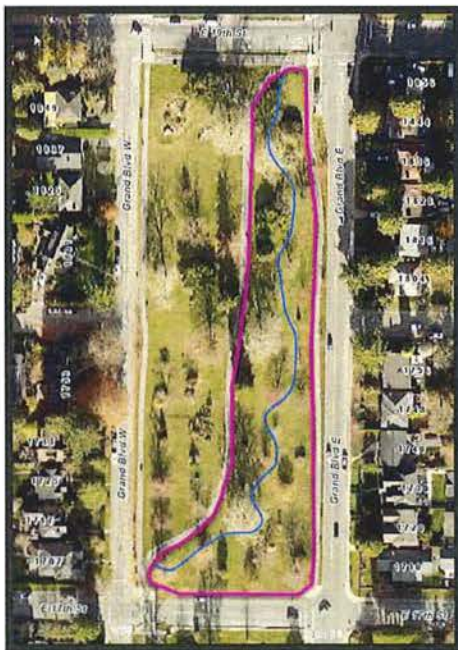


Figure 5.1 Grand Boulevard East, 17<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup>



Figure 5.2 Grand Boulevard West, 9<sup>th</sup> to E Keith

### FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

Financial analysis of the operational costs of low mow areas show that overall cost savings are neutral with the management change, as costs are incurred differently performing other maintenance tasks including seeding native wildflowers, planting, weeding, invasive plant management, monitoring, litter picking, and raking.



## INTERDEPARTMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS

Should the low mow meadow program be endorsed by Council, staff will work closely with the Communications team to re-initiate the public information plan.

During the 2023 pilot program, staff worked closely with the City's Fire Prevention team to understand and manage any fire risk with low mow meadows (e.g. mowing long grass as required in extreme fire ratings) this work would continue with any on-going program.

## STRATEGIC PLAN, OCP OR POLICY IMPLICATIONS

The low mow meadow program aligns with the following Council endorsed policy:

- Draft Climate & Environment Strategy objective: 'Protect and improve biodiversity, the health of flora and fauna, and improve soil health for a changing climate'.
- Council's 2022-2026 Strategic Plan priority, 'A Resilient City'.

## CONCLUSION

Staff are proposing a balanced approach to expanding the City's low mow program that considers recreational and passive uses of park lands. Staff are proposing to make the pilot program a permanent approach to managing resilient public landscapes that respond to a changing climate and enhance biodiversity.

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED:



---

Derek Priestley  
Derek Priestley, Manager, Parks and Natural  
Spaces (Acting)

**2023 Piloted Low Mow Meadow Locations:**

Grand Boulevard – East 11<sup>th</sup> St to East 9<sup>th</sup> St. West side of area.



Figure 1

East Keith Rd Boulevard at St Andrews Ave



Figure 2



**2024 Proposed Low Mow Meadow Locations:**

1. Central sections of the boulevard on West Keith Rd from Marine Drive to Mahon Avenue



Figure 1

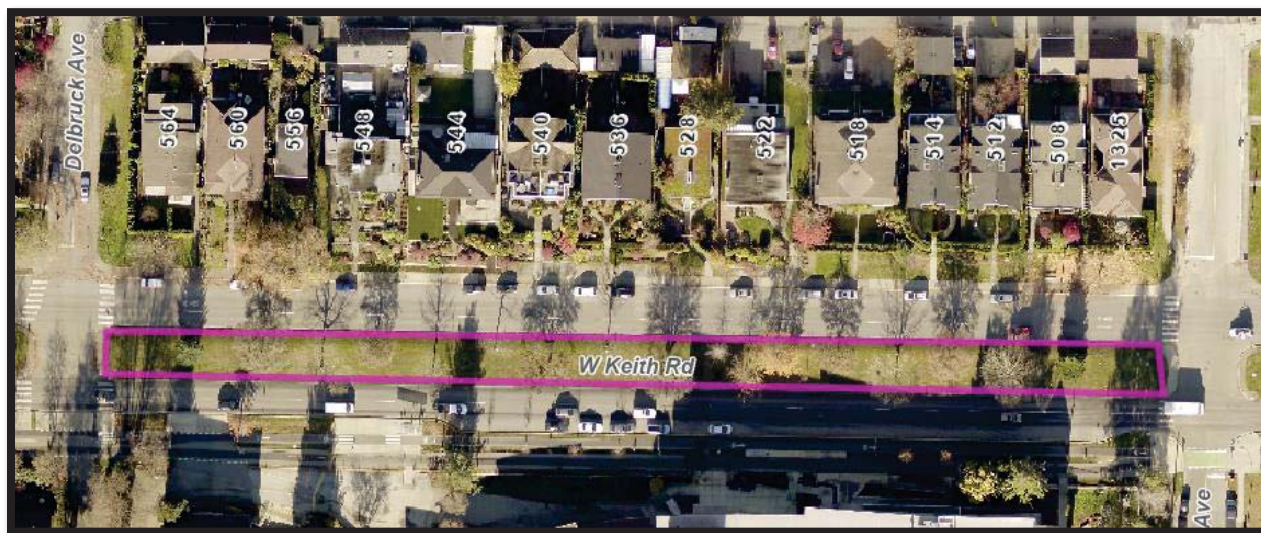


Figure 1.1



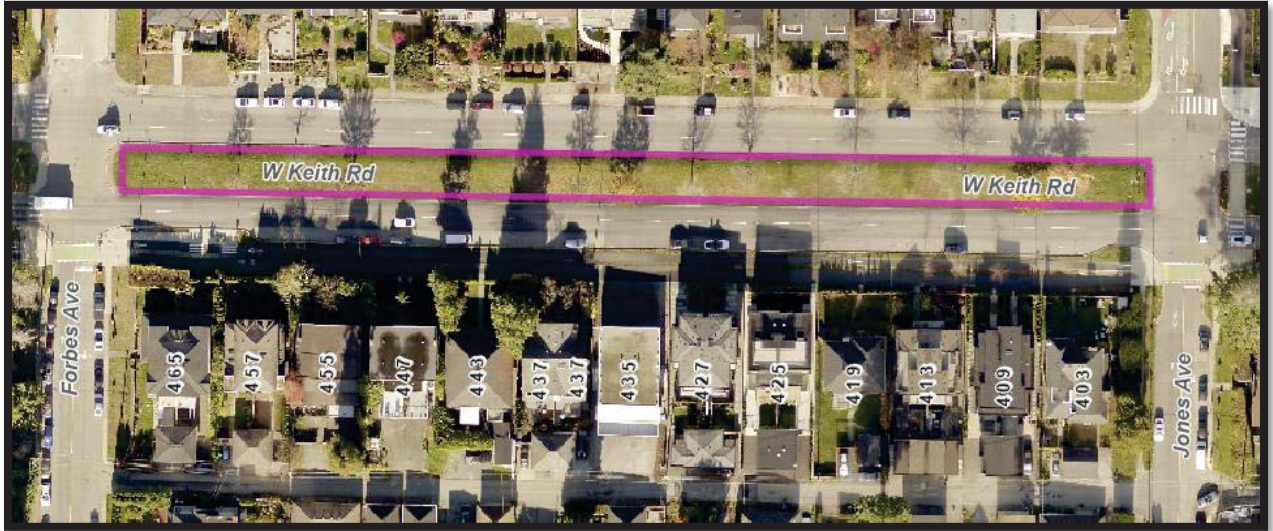


Figure 1.2



Figure 1.3



2. Spirit Trail – St Patricks Avenue to Alder Street



Figure 2

### 3. Aerial Overview of Grand Boulevard Proposed Sites for 2024



2024 - Proposed sites ●

2023 - Piloted Sites ●

Figure 3



### Grand Boulevard – Various Sites

East 19<sup>th</sup> St to East 17<sup>th</sup> Street – East side of area. A walking path shown in blue has been identified at each proposed site. This will lead pedestrians through the area and link points of interest or recreation. Path, once installed may not match completely that shown below.



Figure 3.1



East 17<sup>th</sup> St to East 15<sup>th</sup> St – East side of area (Walking path route proposed)



Figure 3.2



East 13<sup>th</sup> St to East 11<sup>th</sup> St – West side of area (Walking path route proposed)



Figure 3.3

East 9<sup>th</sup> St to East Keith Rd – West side of area (Walking path route proposed)



Figure 3.4



#### 4. Mahon Park

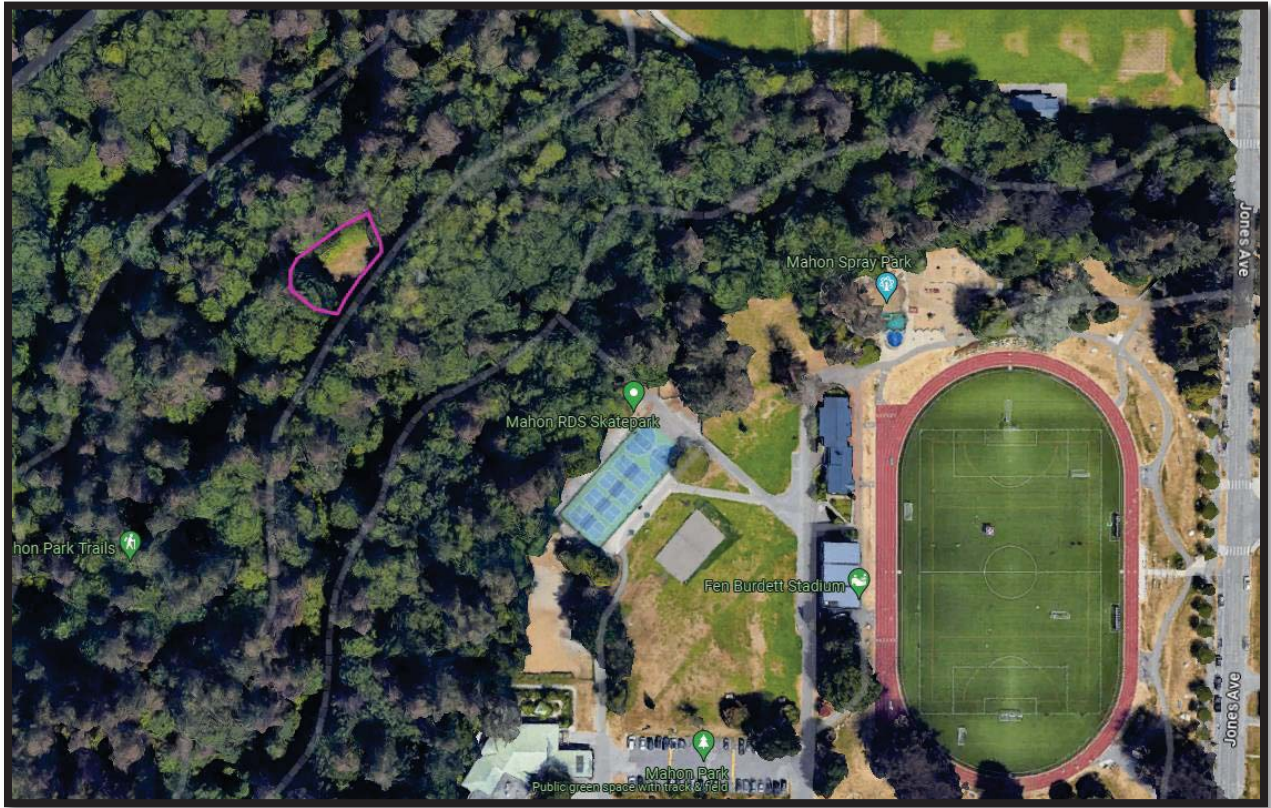


Figure 4

#### 5. Kingsmill Walk Park

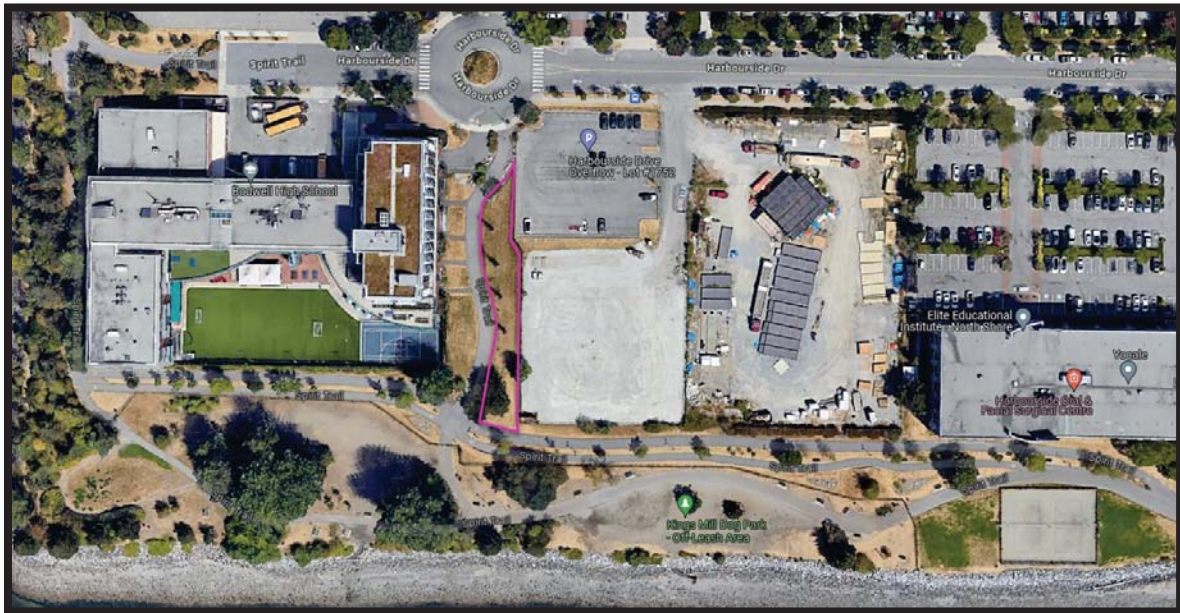


Figure 5

**ENGINEERING, PARKS & ENVIRONMENT DEPARTMENT**

CITY OF NORTH VANCOUVER T 604 983 7333  
141 WEST 14TH STREET F 604 985 8439  
NORTH VANCOUVER ENG@CNV.ORG  
BC / CANADA / V7M 1H9 CNV.ORG

**LOW MOW CRITERIA**

Passive and/or underutilized space – Traditionally/historically areas with low to moderate use by public and can accommodate the reduced maintenance aesthetic while avoiding conflicts with users.



Adjacent an open space – mown grass area nearby that could be utilized for leisure or more active casual use

Challenging or difficult to maintain site – difficult to access, steep grades or areas that are traditionally very wet or dry.

Adds interest and increases environmental value to under-utilized areas – opportunity to increase localized biodiversity.





		
Department Manager	Director	CAO

The Corporation of **THE CITY OF NORTH VANCOUVER**  
**FINANCE DEPARTMENT**

**REPORT**

To: Mayor Linda Buchanan and Members of Council  
From: Larry Sawrenko, Chief Financial Officer  
Subject: 2024 – 2028 FINANCIAL PLAN BYLAW  
Date: April 3, 2023 File No: 05-1700-03-0001/2024

*The following is a suggested recommendation only. Refer to Council Minutes for adopted resolution.*

**RECOMMENDATION**

PURSUANT to the report of the Chief Financial Officer, dated April 3, 2024, entitled “2024 – 2028 Financial Plan Bylaw”:

THAT “Financial Plan for the Years 2024 to 2028 Bylaw, 2024, No. 9016” be considered

**ATTACHMENTS**

1. Financial Plan for the Years 2024 to 2028 Bylaw, 2024, No. 9016 (CityDocs [#2487863](#))

**SUMMARY**

On March 11, 2024, Council endorsed CNV’s 2024 – 2028 Financial Plan, and directed staff to bring forward a Financial Plan Bylaw (2024 to 2028) that reflects an overall tax rate increase of 6.9%. The Community Charter requires Financial Plans to set out municipal objectives and policies in relation to the distribution of property taxes among the property classes that are subject to taxation. On April 8, 2024, Council endorsed an across the board property tax increase for each property class.

This report recommends adoption of a complete 2024 – 2028 Financial Plan Bylaw that incorporates Council’s March 11 and April 8 endorsements for further consideration.

## BACKGROUND

The Community Charter requires the preparation and adoption of a Financial Plan covering five years prior to May 15 each year. The proposed 2024 – 2024 Financial Plan Bylaw (**Attachment 1**) includes several expenditures, all of which were endorsed by Council on March 11, 2024. These expenditures are summarized in Schedule 1, Part 1 of the draft Financial Plan Bylaw. Expenditures for 2024 total \$393.8 million and are presented below:

	2023	2024	Increase/ (Decrease)
Operating Budget	\$95.6	\$102.3	\$6.7
Capital Plan	71.2	141.4	70.2
Shipyards Budget	2.2	2.5	0.3
Water Budget	16.4	19.0	2.6
Sewerage and Drainage Budget	17.9	25.5	7.6
Solid Waste Budget	4.1	4.2	0.1
Cemetery Budget	0.6	0.6	-
Collection for Other Organizations	57.4	59.9	2.5
Other Items	36.0	38.4	2.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$ 301.4M</b>	<b>\$ 393.8M</b>	<b>\$92.4M</b>

Council endorsed a 2024 tax rate increase of 6.9% to fund the 2024 – 2028 Financial Plan and, on April 8, 2024, endorsed an across the board property tax increase for each property class.

## DISCUSSION

The Community Charter requires Financial Plan Bylaws to include some additional disclosures, as described below:

### 1. Revenue Proportions by Funding Source

- Property Taxes are CNV's major source of revenue, accounting for 55% of total revenues, which is a reduction of 2% over 2023. The 2024 – 2028 Financial Plan projects the percentage of revenue coming from property taxes to decrease gradually, due to the assumptions in place surrounding growth of revenue from Fees and Services, particularly within Utilities where rate increases need to account for significant future Metro Vancouver costs. CNV will continue to look for ways to reduce the overall percentage of revenue that comes from property tax consistent with statements in the 2014 Official Community Plan but, for the purposes of this plan, no new material user fees are assumed.

### 2. Distribution of Property Taxes among the Property Classes

- It is the goal of CNV's Long Term Property Tax Strategy that CNV's business to residential tax rate ratio be at or below the median for the region. CNV's ratio has been near the regional median for the past few years and the Financial Plan assumes no material changes to the current tax distribution.

3. Use of Permissive Tax Exemptions ("PTE's")

- The Community Charter gives Council the authority to exempt certain lands and/or improvements in the City from municipal taxation. The Community Charter requires that a PTE policy statement be included in the Financial Plan. The summary statement included in the draft Bylaw reflects the current PTE Policy approved by Council.

**FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

Financial implications have been addressed in detail during the financial planning process and throughout this report.

**INTER-DEPARTMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

The 2024 – 2028 Financial Plan Bylaw is a reflection of CNV's policies and the work plans of all CNV departments. In developing this Bylaw, Finance staff rely on their close working relationship with staff in other departments and CNV's shared-cost agencies.

**STRATEGIC PLAN, OCP OR POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

The preparation and approval of a Financial Plan Bylaw is consistent with the requirements of the Community Charter, the 2024 – 2028 Financial Plan and tax distributions recently endorsed by Council, CNV's 2014 Official Community Plan, and CNV's PTE Policy.

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED:



---

Larry Sawrenko  
Chief Financial Officer

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**THE CORPORATION OF THE CITY OF NORTH VANCOUVER**

**BYLAW NO. 9016**

**Financial Plan for the Years 2024 to 2028**

The Council of The Corporation of the City of North Vancouver, in open meeting assembled, enacts as follows:

1. This Bylaw shall be known and cited for all purposes as “**Financial Plan for the Years 2024 to 2028 Bylaw, 2024, No. 9016**”.
2. Schedule “A” attached hereto is the Financial Plan of The Corporation of the City of North Vancouver for the period commencing January 1, 2024, and ending December 31, 2028.

READ a first time on the <> day of <>, 20<>.

READ a second time on the <> day of <>, 20<>.

READ a third time on the <> day of <>, 20<>.

ADOPTED on the <> day of <>, 20<>.

---

MAYOR

---

CORPORATE OFFICER

**SCHEDULE "A" TO BYLAW NO. 9016  
CITY OF NORTH VANCOUVER FINANCIAL PLAN  
FOR THE YEARS 2024 – 2028**

(1) 2024 – 2028 Financial Plan (\$000's)

For the year ended December 31	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028
<b>Revenue</b>					
Property Value Tax	80,951	83,576	86,276	89,053	91,910
Levies (Storm and Eco)	5,565	6,847	8,333	8,811	9,269
Revenue from Fees and Services	55,255	59,442	64,313	69,592	73,083
Revenue from Other Sources	4,187	4,058	4,099	4,140	4,181
	145,958	153,923	163,021	171,597	178,443
<b>Transfers</b>					
Collections for Other Governments	59,940	61,139	62,362	63,609	64,881
Transfer from Reserves	145,324	82,373	60,479	70,151	58,894
External Contributions	23,045	5,718	4,045	2,632	3,362
Transfer from Capital Assets	19,500	19,890	165,288	20,694	21,108
	247,809	169,120	292,174	157,086	148,245
<b>Total Revenues</b>	<b>393,767</b>	<b>323,043</b>	<b>455,196</b>	<b>328,683</b>	<b>326,688</b>
<b>Expenditures</b>					
<b>Operating Expenses</b>					
General Government	30,261	31,017	31,792	32,587	33,402
Transportation and Transit	10,753	11,022	11,298	11,580	11,870
Health, Social Services, Housing	8,133	8,336	8,544	8,758	8,977
Development Services	9,329	9,562	9,801	10,046	10,297
Protective Services	34,978	35,852	36,748	37,667	38,609
Parks, Recreation and Culture	29,836	30,582	31,347	32,131	32,934
Water	13,170	20,553	21,412	22,199	22,955
Sewer	14,643	26,306	30,539	34,174	36,593
Solid Waste	4,242	4,298	4,408	4,521	4,638
	155,345	177,528	185,889	193,663	200,275
Capital Expenditures	145,086	48,387	27,423	36,590	27,050
<b>Transfers</b>					
Collections for Other Governments	59,940	61,139	62,362	63,609	64,881
Equity	19,281	19,404	19,889	20,386	20,896
Reserves	12,117	11,179	43,060	10,840	9,991
Debt Servicing	1,998	5,406	116,573	3,595	3,595
	93,336	97,128	241,884	98,430	99,363
<b>Total Expenditures</b>	<b>393,767</b>	<b>323,043</b>	<b>455,196</b>	<b>328,683</b>	<b>326,688</b>



**SCHEDULE “A” TO BYLAW NO. 9016  
CITY OF NORTH VANCOUVER FINANCIAL PLAN  
FOR THE YEARS 2024 – 2028**

(2) Revenue Proportions by Funding Source  
(Excluding Transfers)

	(\$000's)									
	2024	%	2025	%	2026	%	2027	%	2028	%
Property Value Tax	80,951	55	83,576	54	86,276	53	89,053	52	91,910	52
Levies (Storm and Eco)	5,565	4	6,847	4	8,333	5	8,811	5	9,269	5
Revenue from Fees and Services	55,255	38	59,442	39	64,313	39	69,592	41	73,083	41
Revenue from Other Sources	4,187	3	4,058	3	4,099	3	4,140	2	4,181	2
<b>Total Revenues</b>	<b>145,958</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>153,923</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>163,021</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>171,597</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>178,443</b>	<b>100</b>

**Background:** Property Taxes are CNV’s major source of revenue. CNV’s reliance on property tax as a source of revenue has increased gradually over the past several years. This trend is partially due to the lack of access to other types of revenues. Where feasible, CNV charges user fees for services, however this is not possible for many services. The 2024 – 2028 Financial Plan projects the percentage of revenue coming from property taxes to decrease gradually, due to the assumptions in place surrounding growth of revenue from Fees and Services, particularly within Utilities where rate increases need to account for significant future costs from Metro Vancouver.

**Policy:** The City will continue to look for ways to reduce the overall percentage of revenue that comes from property tax, by pursuing alternate revenue sources, and remains committed to charging user fees for services where feasible.

(3) Distribution of Property Taxes among the Property Classes

Property Class and Description		Tax Allocation %	
		2023	2024
1	Residential	56.68%	57.29%
2	Utilities	0.45%	0.43%
4	Major Industry	11.32%	11.11%
5	Light Industry	0.94%	0.95%
6	Business And Other	30.57%	30.18%
8	Recreation/Non-Profit	0.04%	0.04%

**Background:** Council adopted a Long Term Property Tax Strategy to shift taxes from the Business and Other and Light Industry tax classes to the Residential tax class. The goal of this strategy was to move CNV’s tax rates and tax rate ratios to a competitive position within the Metro Vancouver Region, while maintaining principles of fairness and equity. As CNV’s tax rates and tax rate ratios are now competitive within the region, Council endorsed an across the board tax rate increase for 2024.

**Policy:** CNV will continue to distribute property taxes among the various property classes to keep tax rates and tax rate ratios competitive within the Metro Vancouver Region, while maintaining the principles of fairness and equity.



**SCHEDULE “A” TO BYLAW NO. 9016  
CITY OF NORTH VANCOUVER FINANCIAL PLAN  
FOR THE YEARS 2024 – 2028**

(4) Use of Permissive Tax Exemptions

**Background:** Council currently allows Permissive Tax Exemptions to organizations within the City, in accordance with authority provided under the Community Charter. The Community Charter shows various types of institutions as eligible, including religious institutions, providers of social housing, and not for profit societies and service organizations.

**Policy:** CNV has adopted a policy that includes a set of criteria for approving Permissive Tax Exemptions. This criteria links taxation exemptions to desired community needs and outcomes. Applications are also assessed on whether or not uses are available to a significant portion of community residents, if there is ongoing involvement of community volunteers, if benefiting organizations have competent management, and if funding comes from multiple sources. Council also carefully considers the total amount of Permissive Tax Exemptions granted each year when reviewing the annual Property Tax Exemption bylaw, giving consideration to the equity of shifting the exempted tax burden to other property owners in the City.

All existing Permissive Tax Exemptions are reviewed each year and staff continue to work with all organizations who receive a Permissive Tax Exemption to ensure that their services align with Council’s strategy plan.