

# Comment: Regional transport service can benefit us all

Transportation issues are top of mind across the capital region. If there is one thing we can all agree on, it is that something has to be done.

Yet, when it comes to establishing a service that will get on with the business of how to get people where they need to be, opinions are strong. It seems no one can agree.

## ***article continues below***

The latest controversy relates to the proposed creation of a Capital Regional District service to consider the overall transportation needs of the region and guide us in developing a roadmap, so to speak.

Some suggest such a service is unnecessary and that transportation shortcomings are well-known. Besides, the province is considering the transportation needs of Greater Victoria in its own studies.

All of which is true, but in advocating for the creation of this service, for which taxpayers will see zero net cost increase, I see a means to engage the people who use our corridors in solutions that will work for all.

Healthy economies and the well-being of communities are bound in the best use of land and an effective system of moving goods and people. Europe, where even the oldest cities have modern transportation infrastructure, has long recognized this. Our system, on the other hand, frustrates and I believe it is an obstacle to our potential. We need a plan to move forward.

The proposed transportation service would involve us all — residents, business owners, transit users, drivers — along with a team of transportation experts, all looking at better ways to get people moving. The

residents and business owners I talk to have innovative ideas on how to unblock transportation, ideas that go beyond laying blacktop.

The Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure is taking a hard look at transportation on the south Island, but let's be clear: When it comes to infrastructure that affects our community, we want a voice at the table. It's time to look beyond our municipal borders and work with all partners across the CRD. The province expects the voice from our region to be united, and the proposed transportation service is a first step toward that.

If, as a greater community, we can't agree to a forum at which to discuss the issues many of us deal with daily, we will ultimately hand our transportation system over to a higher level of government and take what we get. I prefer a model that would strengthen our hand in speaking to the province, and provide comprehensive information and the insight of system users, along with professional transportation planners.

I don't pretend to have all the answers. But to discard the idea of a transportation service as just another level of bureaucracy is to do a disservice to the people and businesses that count on our system. The service is a small step toward solutions. In the long run, those solutions might not involve the CRD at all, but for now, the CRD provides the necessary forum.

We need a starting point. The status quo is simply unacceptable.

I am convinced that a forum for the interests of the region is the right place to start to build a transportation blueprint that works for us all.

David Screech is the mayor of View Royal.

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