

Mayors call for regional body to look after transportation in co-ordinated way

[Lindsay Kines](#) / Times Colonist

OCTOBER 9, 2020 05:58 AM



In a letter to party leaders, 11 of the region's 13 mayors say transportation decisions on the south Island have been made in an ad hoc way for too long. DARREN STONE, TIMES COLONIST

Capital region mayors are calling on political parties in the B.C. election campaign to promise a new approach to transportation decision-making on southern Vancouver Island.

In a letter to party leaders, 11 of the region's 13 mayors say transportation decisions on the south Island have been made in an ad-hoc way for too long at the expense of a coherent strategy.

"Our population is soon going to be half a million people and we have no vision other than single-passenger auto for how we're going to move people around," View Royal Mayor David Screech said in an interview.

The mayors want the parties to commit to making major investments if elected and to setting up a new regional governance body for transportation issues.

"I think the big thing that I'd like to see from whomever forms government is just a real commitment to recognize that the Island is growing at a very fast rate, and that the status quo just isn't good enough," Screech said. "We have to find a better way and a different way of doing things."

He said the existing governance model is fractured and transportation decisions get made haphazardly, rather than in a methodical way based on what is best for the region.

"They're not really made from a priority list that's been agreed to," Screech said. "It's kind of whatever party might have power at the moment and they want to spend some money in one of their ridings."

Screech added that previous attempts to establish a governance body for transportation through the CRD had failed.

"We can just never get the unanimity that we need to get it set up," he said. "So I think the province needs to come to the table and help us and also specifically to help us with the funding."

Saanich Mayor Fred Haynes noted that the NDP and Liberals have been debating the replacement of the George Massey Tunnel in Metro Vancouver during the campaign.

"But what about here?" he said. "We are arguing for attention to our local regional issues of transportation."

Haynes said migration to Greater Victoria has accelerated amid the COVID-19 pandemic, as people take note of the low case numbers on Vancouver Island.

“This is the time now to put in that transportation-transit network” he said. “We can see the future coming at us and it’s a case of trying to get ahead of curve, and it needs to be taken seriously now.”

The region’s mayors also want the parties to commit to improving access to affordable child care and tackling the mental-health and addictions crises by increasing treatment and recovery options, while scaling up access to a safer drug supply.

lkines@timescolonist.com

© 2020 Copyright Times Colonist