



# Cities in a Sea of Uncertainty:

## Growing the Conversation on Regional Planning and Governance in Metro Vancouver

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# FORWARD

Have we lost our way?

By “we” I mean the people of Metro Vancouver.

By “our way” I mean the guiding vision we have used to shape this place, our urban region - built, natural and spiritual.

We do have an articulated vision, insofar as it is captured in our plans, policies and rhetoric. It is, fortunately, a vision that has remarkable resilience, mainly because of its resonance with public values and the consensus support it has enjoyed from all local councils which comprise the metro federation. It has sustained us for half a century, across the region, across the ideological spectrum and for the most part across levels of government.

That vision, captured in a simple, elegant phrase, is “Cities in a Sea of Green.”

Rather than divert into explanation, I’ll simply say this: If there is a reason for our success as an urban region in the world today, it is because we took that vision seriously and stuck to it.

Most often we take it for granted. Which could potentially lead to neglect. And out of neglect, we risk undermining our achievements without a consensus or even articulation of alternatives. The transportation referendum and simultaneous approval of a ten-lane Massey Bridge was not a good sign; the very imposition by the Province of a referendum on adequate funding for public transportation without any regional examination of the impacts of highway expansion is evidence of the disconnect between vision-making and decision-making.

But the most egregious form of neglect is, I believe, failing to tell our own story, and failing to pass it on to the next generation. There’s a void here where we have an opportunity to create understanding.

Why not, I thought, create an incentive to tell our story, and involve young people in doing so?

As someone involved in regional governance as an elected official, and then as director of the SFU City Program, I saw young people all around me, trying to understand this region and how to become effective leaders within it. Why not ask them for a study of this region? Why not commission a paper and promote the results? Let’s see how they would tell our story and identify the issues that must be addressed.

I funded a prize of \$5,000 and offered it to students in SFU’s Urban Studies and Public Policy units for a review of the impact and challenges of “Cities in a Sea of Green.” A small committee helped adjudicate and choose the finalists. Now you can read for yourself the impressive results: “Cities in a Sea of Uncertainty.”

My thanks, especially, to Meg Holden, who helped both steer the process and advise the students. And to Ken Cameron and Chris DeMarco, who helped choose the winners and contributed their comments on their paper in an “Afterword.”

Most of all, my congratulations and thanks to Katelyn McDougall, Linda Mussell and Sherry Yang - the next generation who will help make sure we don’t lose our way.

Gord Price

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ALC	Agricultural Land Commission
ALR	Agricultural Land Reserve
CMHC	Canadian Mortgage and Housing Commission
CSCD	Ministry of Community, Sports and Cultural Development
EAO	BC Environmental Assessment Office
FOI	Freedom of Information
GVRD	Greater Vancouver Regional District (Metro Vancouver)
GMTR	George Massey Tunnel Replacement Project
ILMB	Integrated Land Management Bureau
LMRPB	Lower Mainland Regional Planning Board
LRSP	Livable Region Strategic Plan
MOTI	Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure

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We would also like to acknowledge the ancestral, traditional and unceded Aboriginal territories of the Coast Salish Peoples. In Metro Vancouver, it is the Squamish, Musqueam, and Tsleil-Waututh First Nations on whose territory we work, live, play, and study. While the presence of people in Metro Vancouver dates back approximately 10,000 years ago, the developments and decisions discussed in this paper have been made by settlers and colonizers. The colonization of Metro Vancouver, and the encroachment on traditional territory, has affected lands and resources forever. The intergenerational effects of colonialism and Residential Schools continues to impact the lives of Aboriginal peoples living in Metro Vancouver. While the focus of this paper is not specifically on indigenous issues, we recognize that with every decision made at the local, regional, provincial and federal level there is a great need for processes of reconciliation, healing and decolonization. Until this is integral to every planning and decision making process, even the best of efforts will reproduce a system of colonization and oppression.





# SUMMARY

Metro Vancouver is growing rapidly. Urban development patterns may no longer align with the regional vision that has helped shape the area's land use over the last 50 years. This study explores some recent land use and transportation decisions in Metro Vancouver, as well as the political dynamics and decision-making processes that have influenced the region. A series of case studies are examined, including debates around the highly contentious George Massey Tunnel Replacement Project (GMTR).

Specifically, this report aims to summarize the current state of the region in the context of land use and transportation planning decisions and the intergovernmental collaboration and processes underpinning these decisions. The report examines the success and legacy of the "Cities in a Sea of Green Vision" (the Vision) (LMRPB, 1963) and pathways forward. That central Vision can be clarified as land use planning goals made to produce and maintain "a series of **cities in a sea of green** ... a valley of separate cities surrounded by productive countryside" (LMRPB, 1963, 6). While this concept guided the development of the region over the last few decades and is operationalized with the Livable Region Strategic Plan (LRSP) (1996) and Metro 2040: Shaping our Future (2011), it may be losing momentum in practice in light of growth challenges and intergovernmental tension. This report elaborates on some of these challenges, elucidates the deficiencies in the working relationship between the Government of BC and regional entities in our province, all of which threaten the preservation and implementation of the Vision. It is important to take stock of where we are as a region, the dynamics of how we got here and how we can better meet the Vision going forward and achieve compact development, agricultural land and green space preservation and transportation alternatives. The overarching themes highlighted by the report are the following:

1. Land use and transportation policy decisions implemented do not necessarily reflect the Vision,
2. Collaboration between local, regional and provincial actors is strained as there are political barriers to making decisions which support the Vision.
3. Political actors are guided by divergent interests and divided by power and status differentials, making finding common ground difficult; and
4. The BC government's prioritization of the Gateway vision, combined with its reluctance to engage in transparent, meaningful and consensus-based debate with regional counterparts, has ultimately put the Vision and its implementation at risk.

Section 1 (Background) describes the historical roots of the guiding policy underpinning this report. It discusses how the region has a long history of progressive planning, popular participation and activism in order to influence policy outcomes. This section summarizes the evolution of regional governance and planning, as well as the establishment of Metro Vancouver as a regional government. TransLink is introduced as the transportation arm of the regional entity, which also has had a contentious relationship with the province. Essentially, the history of the region is one of a struggle of interests, power, and resources – a dynamic evidenced in the present day.

Section 2 (How are We Doing) assesses Metro Vancouver's performance in implementation of land use planning goals as well as the provincial government's performance in land use planning. Metro Vancouver is found to perform well in many priorities of its regional plan, yet has not developed a

complete economic strategy and struggles to address housing affordability and automobile dependence. Concerning land use planning, a lack of emphasis on implementation continues to impair regional planning successes.

Section 3 (The Region: Uncertain Outlook) focuses on issues of local and provincial development interests countering regional aspirations as per the Vision and explores two case examples of amendments to the Regional Growth Strategy ('RGS') to accommodate development. Using examples of the Delta Southlands and Langley Township University District, the report summarizes how the regional government struggles to maintain the RGS principles despite overt challenges to the fundamental goals in the regional plans. Closely related to this issue is the current state of the Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR), an important force in the conservation of green spaces in the province that is challenged by emerging development interests. Also important is the continuous prioritization of auto-dependent projects that sap the region's commitment to public transit, best epitomized by the Gateway vision, and the provincial government's intervention in TransLink's governance and funding arrangements.

Section 4 (Case Study: George Massey Tunnel Replacement Project) provides the central case study of this report that captures many of the systematic challenges facing the region's land use objectives, governance and its working relationship with the BC government. This section summarizes the rationale of the project, support and opposition to the project, economic drivers, and the role of Port of Vancouver (formerly Port Metro Vancouver) ('the Port') and Metro Vancouver municipalities. Overall, this example evidences key themes of a persisting Vision with different outcomes on key players and

stakeholders (e.g., province, municipalities, advocacy groups), as well as political struggles resulting from lack of cooperative communication and decision-making.

Section 5 (Systemic Challenges in Regional Governance and Planning) discusses cooperative governance system characterizing the local-regional working relationship, as well as the local/regional-provincial land use disagreements. In particular, this report argues that the unilateral provincial directions, lack of meaningful engagement and the prevailing difference in planning belief systems do not contribute to productive intergovernmental collaboration and significantly weaken the regional players' ability to advance the Cities in a Sea of Green Vision.

Section 6 (Pragmatic Policy Options) breaks down high level alternatives for structural changes to the current state. These recommendations are made with the criteria of maintaining and restoring the integrity and objectives of the region's plans, maintaining the region's long-held values of sustainable development.

# INTRODUCTION

Metro Vancouver is experiencing many environmental, economic and social changes which include population growth, economic transformation, and influx of foreign capital. The current regional governance system is being put to the test. On many occasions, land use and transportation decisions in Metro Vancouver appear not to align with the regional vision that has helped shape growth and development over the last 50 years. Although these decisions have not posed an immediate threat to the overall quality of life and livability, there is a need for cautious stewardship of land and resources to ensure long-term environmental, social and economic sustainability. This report seeks to contribute to an ongoing region-wide discussion: Where does the region of Metro Vancouver stand now compared to its regional goals? How do we describe the dynamics of change in the region? And what are the key drivers of the recent conflicts over land use decisions?

To address these complex questions, this report revisits the Vision which has served as the central philosophy guiding regional growth since the early 1960s, known as “Cities in a Sea of Green” (LMRPB, 1963). Specifically, this report examines the success and follow-through of the Cities in a Sea of Green Vision (the Vision). The Vision can be clarified as land use planning to produce and maintain “a series of **cities in a sea of green** ... a valley of separate cities surrounded by productive countryside” (LMRPB, 1963, 6).

In particular, the report elucidates the working relationship between the Government of BC and regional entities. This relationship can be characterised as dynamic, with periods of collaboration and progressive policy and those of discord. Past examples of success include the discretionary planning processes in the 1990s, when participative, responsive, and design-led approaches were taken to urban regeneration and green space

protection. However, recent policy problems have been fraught with controversy. Specific examples include the George Massey Tunnel Replacement Project (GMTR) along with other instances of automobile-centric planning, the loss of Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR) parcels to urban development interests and the governance structure and funding of TransLink.

To support this research<sup>1</sup>, literature reviews, media scans, and semi-structured interviews were completed. Interviews were conducted with 10 experts in municipal, regional and provincial policy, planning and politics, and representatives of non-governmental groups. Research findings largely indicate some overarching trends. First, there is a strong indication that numerous recent land use and transportation policy decisions do not reflect the Vision. Second, collaboration between local, regional and provincial actors on regional land use planning is strained by conflicting political and planning ideologies and power differences. Related to this point is that the longstanding cooperative governance and decision-making structure of Metro Vancouver is undermined by not only growing pressures but also a reluctance to adhere to long-term sustainable land use policy. Finally, these problematic trends are further exacerbated by a general reluctance on the part of the provincial leaders to engage in a meaningful and consultative dialogue with the regional entities, let alone recognizing the core values with which Metro Vancouver has long identified. We hope this report will be used to inform discussion pertaining to improving planning processes and governance structures to promote outcomes in alignment with the Vision.

<sup>1</sup> Approved Ethics Application 2016s0315, Simon Fraser University

# 1. BACKGROUND

The period following the Second World War placed unprecedented demands on Canada’s urban regions as a result of rapid population growth, the widespread adoption of the automobile and strong economic development. The response in provinces such as Ontario and Manitoba was to create new systems of metropolitan government for major regions such as Greater Toronto and Winnipeg. British Columbia opted for an approach that built upon the existing municipal government structure by encouraging planning and collaboration among municipalities, first through agencies such as the Lower Mainland Regional Planning Board (1949) and later through the creation of regional districts (1965).

As once described by Municipal Affairs Minister Dan Campbell, regional districts were not to be “conceived as a fourth level of government, but as functional rather than a political amalgamation” (Smith, 2006, 156). As explored throughout this paper, for Metro Vancouver, the ongoing intergovernmental challenges have impacted the region’s ability to actualize various services, planning aspirations and land use plans. The region’s ability – or inability – to execute plans has historically been impacted by other levels of government, major regional stakeholders such as Port of Vancouver (formerly Port Metro Vancouver) and by public discourse and unanticipated events. It is also possible that the notion of a regional “functional authority” – as compared to a political amalgamation - has undermined the region’s ability to progress towards actualizing land use planning goals (Friesen, 2014, 42). Contextualizing some of these tensions and influences will help frame the research analysis.

Firstly, underlying tensions have always existed between the local and regional levels of government. In Metro Vancouver, the regional governing board is made up of elected municipal officials who have been appointed to the board by

their municipal councils, and policy is determined at the committee and board level on a monthly basis (Bish et al., 2009). The number of local representatives elected to the regional board is based on the size of a member municipality’s population, with a base voting unit for representation of 20,000 residents (Bish et al. 2009). At the regional scale, tensions often exist between neighboring municipalities with different local priorities. It can be challenging for board members to put aside their own local priorities in pursuit of regional goals, as will be explored further in Section 5.

Secondly, tension also exists between local, regional, and provincial governments. In BC, local government and regional districts are essentially an extension of the provincial government. This system of governance was established under the *British North America Act of 1867* and the *Constitution Act of 1982*. In terms of governance and decision-making, the provincial government is the governing body that creates, approves and amends legislation that details the structure, roles and responsibilities of local governments. It exercises considerable freedom, and it may use this freedom to affect local governments and regional districts (Bish et al., 2009). In this regard, regional districts and municipalities owe their existence to provincial government (Howlett et al., 2009). Most of the rules that enable local self-governance are set forth in the *Local Government Act*, or other acts administered by the Ministry of Community, Sports and Cultural Development (CSCD). As will be further explored in Sections 4 and 5, unilateral decisions by the province further have exacerbated ongoing intergovernmental friction and continuous lack of coordination of policies.

Reforms to Metro Vancouver’s governing capacity and functional responsibilities have evolved during the past decades, often in response

to local and provincial government requests. While there is a long history of providing utility services such as water, sewerage and solid waste on a regional basis, the provision of regional land use planning has been more tentative and subject to interruption by the winds of political change. Many of the provincial decisions discussed in this paper have dismissed the region’s crucial role in making or implementing land use policy. A brief outline of some functional and governance changes is detailed in Table 1 below.

**Table 1: Evolution of Metro Vancouver’s Regional Governance Structure and Capacity<sup>1 2 3</sup>**

Date	Description of Major Changes
1911	Burrard Peninsula Joint Sewerage Committee established to manage pollution and sewage disposal.
1914	Greater Vancouver Sewerage and Drainage District (GVSD) established.
1926	Greater Vancouver Water District (GVWD) established.
1938	The Lower Mainland Regional Planning Association is established to discuss land use and other matters, which are recognized as metropolitan and regional in nature.
1942	The <i>Post-War Rehabilitation Act</i> is passed and makes provision for advancing planning of rehabilitation measures, industrial reorganization and employment projects.
1945	Bureau of Post-War Rehabilitation and Reconstruction produces a report on the “Proposed Lower Mainland Regional Plan”.
1946	The Provincial planning office (Planning Branch of the Department of Municipal Affairs) is established.
1948	Amendment to the Town Planning Act enables incorporating provisions for “regional areas” and “regional planning boards”.
1949	Lower Mainland Regional Planning Board established. The board is tasked with preparing a land use plan, focused on future physical development and improvement.
1954	Minister of Municipal Affairs proposes introducing a two-tiered form of metropolitan government at the annual convention of the Union of British Columbia Municipalities.
1957	Metropolitan Joint Commission (MJC) established by the Minister of Municipal Affairs, and conducts research on metropolitan governing arrangements for water supply, sewerage treatment facilities, public health and public hospitals, land use planning and regional parks.
1960	The MJC issues report recommending the formation of a single metropolitan government, but no action is taken on the recommendations.
1965	Regional District legislation adopted by the Province, allowing for incorporation of regional districts. Functions such as regional land use planning and regional hospital planning become mandatory functions and additional functions are to be assigned by Cabinet (if requested by local municipalities).
1966	Enactment of <i>Regional Parks Act</i> , and Greater Vancouver Parks District is created.
1966	Lower Mainland Regional Plan approved by the GVRD and by the Province as an official regional growth strategy.
1967	With the Regional Hospital District Act, the Greater Vancouver Regional Hospital District is created.
1968	The Regional District of Fraser-Burrard was renamed the Greater Vancouver Regional District (GVRD).
1968	GVRD acquires the regional planning function of the Lower Mainland Regional Planning Board (LMRPB). Implementation and administration of the Lower Mainland Regional Plan is assigned to each of the regional districts.
1969	LMRPB dissolved by the province.

1971	GVRD recommends (in a report) that the region should seek responsibility for operating the public transit system. Region applies to the Province to assume the urban transit responsibility. Request is denied.
1971	A Housing function is granted to the GVRD which empowered the Regional District to provide social housing pursuant to the provisions of the <i>B.C. Housing Act</i> and the <i>National Housing Act</i> .
1972	Administration of GVSD, GVWD, and GVPD amalgamated within GVRD, but separate policy bodies are maintained.
1972	The air pollution control function is acquired by the GVRD.
1972	The Vancouver-Fraser Parks District is dissolved and replaced by adding the parks function to the GVRD’s responsibilities.
1973	The Agricultural Land Commission is established under provisions of the <i>Land Commission Act</i> and the GVRD is assigned a role in the “Agricultural Land Reserve” program.
1975	Livable Region Plan produced by GVRD.
1978	The Ministry of Municipal Affairs appoints the Regional District Review Committee to review function of regional districts and to make recommendations on jurisdictional roles, functional responsibilities, political and administrative structures, finances and boundaries.
1980	Authority for urban transit transferred to the GVRD.
1983	The GVRD function of urban transit is rescinded by the provincial government.
1983	With Bill 9, the <i>Municipal Amendment Act</i> , the province eliminates regional districts’ mandatory responsibility for regional planning that required compliance by local municipalities.
1985	Provincial legislation centralizes the transit function at the provincial level.
1988	The City of Langley and the Township of Langley are transferred from the Central Fraser Valley Regional District to the GVRD.
1989	Bill 19, the <i>Municipal Amendment Act</i> , is adopted, enabling Regional Districts to provide regional development services (not regional planning services).
1995	The <i>Growth Strategies Statutes Amendment Act (Growth Strategies Act)</i> restores regional planning functions, but only on a voluntary basis.
1995	The GVRD Boundaries are expanded by the province to include both Pitt Meadows and the District of Maple Ridge.
1996	Adoption of the Livable Region Strategic Plan by Metro Vancouver and local governments
1998	Province approves <i>Greater Vancouver Transportation Authority Act</i> . This gave the region new powers in transit, major roads, air care and transportation demand management, as well as new revenue sources.
2000	Bill 14, the <i>Local Government Statutes Amendment Act</i> is passed by the province, providing more flexible service arrangements for regional districts.
2007	Province changes governance structure of TransLink, board now consists of non-elected representatives.
2011	A special provincial-regional committee created during the development of the RGS.
2011	Adoption of the Metro 2040: Regional Growth Strategy.

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# 1.1 EVOLUTION OF THE REGIONAL VISION

Regional collaboration in Metro Vancouver first emerged when the City of Vancouver and surrounding municipalities amalgamated efforts to provide basic services during the mid-20th century. Factors including the post-World War II population growth and the need for extensive regional infrastructure led to inter-municipal initiatives such as the Greater Vancouver Water District, the Greater Vancouver Sewerage and Drainage District and the regional health board (Artibise & Meligrana, 2005).

Ultimately, the Fraser Valley Flood of 1948 and rapid sprawl at the urban fringes compelled planners to push for more collaborative efforts in managing growth and natural hazards (Abbot & DeMarco, 2016; Peck et al., 2014). As part of this initiative, the BC government created the Lower Mainland Regional Planning Board (LMRPB) to lead land use planning in the large region extending from Hope to the Strait of Georgia.

One of the key accomplishments of the LMRPB (1949-1967) was the first vision plan for the future of the region and also one of Canada's

first regional planning documents, titled *Chance and Challenge* (1963) (Harcourt, et al., 2007). The document articulated the need to intervene in unregulated sprawl and urban development, and advocated for region-wide infill and redevelopment of existing urban areas (Taylor & Burchfield, 2010, 64). In particular, it introduced and envisioned the region "as a series of **cities in a sea of green** ... a valley of separate cities surrounded by productive countryside" (LMRPB, 1963, 6). As Harcourt and colleagues (2007) describe,

*The words conjured a region that, while destined for rapid growth, would always be set within a working landscape of farms, forests and protected wildlife sanctuaries (28).*

This Vision inspired many significant regional initiatives. One example is LMRPB's *A Regional Parks Plan for the Lower Mainland* which led to the establishment of twenty-one regional parks in Metro Vancouver. Another is the *Livable Region Strategic Plan* of 1996 (Harcourt et al., 2007, 28).

As Senft (2009) reflects, the region has cultivated a history of progressive governance and civic involvement in land use planning (97). A pivotal moment was the defeat of the proposed freeway project into downtown Vancouver in 1967 following widespread public resistance and advocacy for preserving the livable characteristic of Vancouver (Gutstein, 1975; McAllister, 2011). The great "highway debate" is emblematic of the role the public plays in moving policy toward preserving the livability and sustainability of the region, and demonstrates the role of **different stakeholders with conflicting interests in negotiating policy outcomes** as key to the staying power of the Cities in a Sea of Green vision. The following sections highlight some regional and provincial milestones that helped put the Vision into practice.

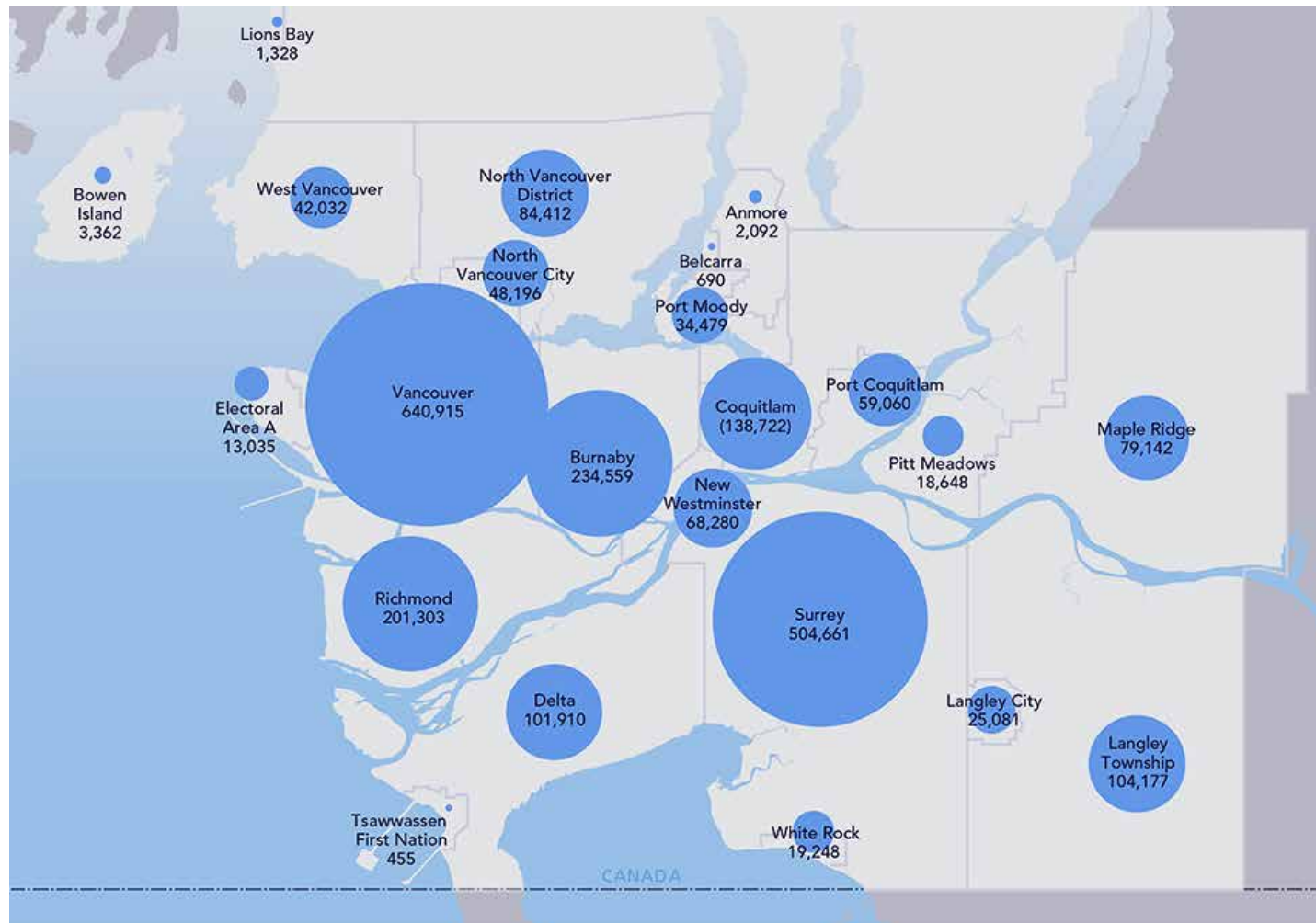


Figure 1 Study Area: Metro Vancouver (Metro Vancouver, n.d)

# 1.2 REGIONAL GOVERNANCE AND LAND USE STRATEGIES

## 1.2.1 Early Years (1966 – 1983)

The first few decades of regional planning were characterized by a series of institutional and political changes as detailed in Table 1. These shifts impeded implementation of a consistent planning approach. LMRPB's first official statutory plan was adopted in 1966, titled *Official Regional Plan for the Lower Mainland Planning*, which sought to create a "poly-centric" region with "compact regional towns" (Abbot & DeMarco, 2016, 3). However, before the plan could be fully implemented, a difference of opinion between the province and the region regarding intended policy directions eventually led to the abolition of the LMRPB in 1968 by the former. In turn, the regional planning functions were inherited by the newly established Greater Vancouver Regional District (GVRD) in 1965, which released the *Livable Region Plan* in 1975.

Similar to its predecessor, the GVRD's planning goals and initiatives were short-lived when the BC government removed regional planning powers from regional districts in 1983 and attributed its decision to the deep economic recession (CSCD, 2006, 7). In contrast, regional observers argue that the provincial government sought to abolish GVRD's planning functions, having engaged in some high-profile land use disagreements involving GVRD's land use agenda (Abbot & DeMarco, 2016; Harcourt et al., 2007). Under this organizational constraint, GVRD continued to provide voluntary advisory support for municipalities in areas of land use policy (Abbot & DeMarco, 2016; Harcourt et al., 2007). Eventually, the challenges of metropolitan planning drove regional leaders and municipalities to reconceptualise other possibilities. One such

deliverable was the *Choosing Our Future* and the *Creating Our Future* program initiated by Gordon Campbell, then Mayor of City of Vancouver and Chair of the GVRD planning committee (Abbot and DeMarco, 2016). The program was a region-wide engagement process on the core values that would guide regional planning and cooperation moving forward. *Creating Our Future* was "validated as the agenda for the region" and formed the basis of the 1996 *Livable Region Strategic Plan* (Harcourt et al., 2007, 126).

## 1.2.2 Metro Vancouver and the Growth Strategy Act (1995 – Present)

As a regional district, Metro Vancouver is governed by a 38-member board of directors, which consists of mayors and councillors from each of the 23 member municipalities and local authorities (Metro Vancouver, nd b). Under the current model, the BC government mandates three roles for regional districts. First, they serve as the local government for rural areas when local residents vote to have services provided this way and to pay for them this way (CSCD, 2006, 4). Second, they provide regional governance and services through "a political forum for representation of regional residents and communities and a vehicle for advancing the interests of the region as a whole" (CSCD, 2006, 5), as well as the delivery of practical services such as economic development, water supply, sewerage and waste management (CSCD, 2006, 5). Finally, regional districts provide a governance framework for inter-municipal and local partnerships and cooperation where municipalities vote for this route (CSCD, 2006, 5).

Part of regional districts' second mandate is the delivery of regional growth strategies. In 1995, the provincial New Democratic Party (NDP) government resurrected regional planning functions for the GVRD (now known as Metro Vancouver)

within the *Growth Strategies Act*. This Act established a regional planning system that was non-hierarchical and emphasized voluntary cooperation between regions and municipalities, with the provincial government taking on responsibility for ensuring "closure" when disputes arose. The Act enables a regional district to adopt a regional growth strategy with the purpose to "promote human settlement that is socially, economically and environmentally healthy and that makes efficient use of public facilities and services, land and other resources (LGA, Section 428(1)). As a point of clarification, the province does not approve regional growth strategies and in fact has little involvement in their preparation – this is a process undertaken by municipalities.

The Act lays out key objectives to which an RGS should aspire, including (LGA, Section 428(2)):

- (a) avoiding urban sprawl and ensuring that development takes place where adequate facilities exist or can be provided in a timely, economic and efficient manner;*
- (b) settlement patterns that minimize the use of automobiles and encourage walking, bicycling and the efficient use of public transit;*
- (c) the efficient movement of goods and people while making effective use of transportation and utility corridors;*
- (d) protecting environmentally sensitive areas;*
- (e) maintaining the integrity of a secure and productive resource base, including the agricultural land reserve;*
- (f) economic development that supports the unique character of communities;*
- (g) reducing and preventing air, land and water pollution;*
- (h) adequate, affordable and appropriate housing;*
- (i) adequate inventories of suitable land and resources for future settlement;*

- (j) protecting the quality and quantity of ground water and surface water;*
- (k) settlement patterns that minimize the risks associated with natural hazards;*
- (l) preserving, creating and linking urban and rural open space, including parks and recreation areas;*
- (m) planning for energy supply and promoting efficient use, conservation and alternative forms of energy;*
- (n) good stewardship of land, sites and structures with cultural heritage value.*

In adopting the strategy, the regional district is expected to come to an agreement on its content through consensus. In particular, the Regional Growth Strategy guideline (CSCD, 2006, 5) emphasized the principles of consultation, voluntary participation and a non-hierarchical regional-municipal relationship. With the passage of the new act, GVRD and its member municipalities endorsed the *Livable Region Strategic Plan* (LRSP) in 1996 after "extensive negotiations and compromises with municipalities" (Abbot and DeMarco, 2016).

The LRSP set out strategies that would help the region accommodate the projected population and economic growth, with livability as a central priority. The LRSP echoed many goals of the previous plans, particularly the *Livable Region Plan* of 1975 (Abbot and DeMarco, 2016). The LRSP distilled four interrelated priorities and continue to serve as the fundamental long-term regional goals:

- Protect the Green Zone
- Build complete communities
- Achieve a compact metropolitan region; and
- Increase transportation choice



By adopting the LRSP and in the spirit of the *Regional Growth Strategy Act*, municipalities are expected to align local land use decisions and in particular, the local statutory Official Community Plans (OCPs), with the LRSP.

Most recently in 2011, Metro Vancouver (formally GVRD) updated the LRSP to strengthen the planning instruments and provide for specific implementation strategies to the 1996 vision plan. The revamped Regional Growth Strategy (RGS), titled *Metro Vancouver 2040*, was developed using a sustainability framework. In addition, the RGS also overlaid the region with parcel-based land use designations, allowing for a finer and more specific outlook on land use. The plan includes five key priorities which are reflective of the region's collective aspirations and vision for the future, as follows:

1. Create a compact urban area by concentrating growth within existing urban areas. This contains urban development from sprawling, and supports a more efficient transportation network, which reduces greenhouse gas emissions,
2. Support a sustainable regional economy by protecting industrial and agricultural lands and help urban centre commercial activities flourish,
3. Protect the environment and respond to climate change impacts by protecting natural areas in order to support important ecosystems, recreational opportunities, and reduce greenhouse gas emissions,
4. Develop complete communities by providing diverse housing options and supporting mixed-use urban functions within neighbourhoods and

5. Support sustainable transportation choices through the design of compact urban form, expanding opportunities for transit, cycling and walking and providing linkages between communities for the movement of people and goods.

A RGS guides both municipal and regional decisions about growth, change and development, and so once an RGS is adopted, all municipalities effected have two years to add a “regional context statement” (RCS) to the Official Community Plan [LGA s. 866] (UBCM, nd). With the adoption of the 2011 RGS, each municipality aligned the Official Community Plan (OCP) with the RGS. The Regional Context Statement serves as a linkage between local and regional land use planning and seeks to enhance implementation and consistency between local and regional land use plans. Since its inception, the RGS has been adopted by all 23 municipalities and local authorities in Metro Vancouver. To ensure consistency with the region's transportation strategies, the LRSP was also developed in conjunction with the transportation plan, *Transport 2021* (see Section 1.3).

## 1.3 REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION PLANNING

Since the late 1980s and leading up to the creation of TransLink, there were growing concerns about the effects of rapid growth and congestion in the region. As such, the aspirational goals set out in the GVRD's LRSP and *Transport 2021* plan were perhaps a direct response to the severity of the urban development and transportation concerns the region was facing that was informed by extensive research and public consultation. For example, *Transport 2021* set the target of doubling transit service by 2006 (*Transport 2021*, 1993). The Plan was based on the values of the region's residents and communities and intended to serve and shape land use patterns proposed in the LRSP. This included protecting the regional Green Zone, reversing urban sprawl, and concentrating growth in city centres.

Prior to the creation of TransLink in 1999, transportation governance was divided between multiple agencies. Roads were either the responsibility of the provincial or local government, and transit service was controlled by BC Transit and the Vancouver Regional Transit Commission. However, with the creation of the *Greater Vancouver Transportation Authority Act* (GVTA) in 1998, major roads and transit service would be governed simultaneously under one agency – known presently as TransLink. The agency was also given responsibility for regional transportation planning and transportation demand management.

*The prime impetus for creating TransLink came from the Greater Vancouver Regional District in the mid-1990s when the region approached the Province to restructure transportation. This*

*was because even though the Province and the Region had jointly prepared the Transport 2021 Medium and Long-Range Transportation Plans in 1993, over time it became clear that there was considerable 'drift' from the Plans' direction. Moreover, the Transport 2021 Plans were seen as essential to implementation of the Livable Region Strategic Plan (TransLink Governance Review, 2013).*

Without direct authority or new financial capacity, it would have been challenging for the region to meet the aspirational goals set out within its plans. Therefore, the establishment of TransLink not only represented a change in governance structure, but also a change in the approach to regional planning. TransLink presented new opportunities for financing transit and transportation in order to shape land use. However, intergovernmental challenges and the complex arrangement of policy decision-making hinders TransLink and the region from advancing its own agenda.

The provincial government has taken leadership on various large-scale, capital intensive, projects. For example, the Expo Line, Millennium Line, Canada Line, the twinning of the Port Mann Bridge, the Evergreen Line and most recently the Massey Bridge. However, from a regional perspective these acts of leadership should be critically evaluated before categorically assuming these projects benefit the region and anchor the Vision. It is important to consider and evaluate the provincial government's motivations for these decisions to determine if these acts of leadership were aligned with regional plans and strategies, or if they served other - perhaps political - motivations. It was concluded in a TransLink Governance review that the Province has a “dominant influence, sometimes resulting in decision-making that is at variance with regional and local objectives” (TransLink Governance Review, 2013).

## 1.4 PROVINCIAL MANDATES AND THE AGRICULTURAL LAND RESERVE

Besides its participation through creating and administering the *Growth Strategies Act*, the provincial government's approach to land use planning largely stems from its mandates for Crown land and resource management, which are in turn guided by legislation including the *Land Act*, *Forest and Range Practices Act*, *Wildlife Act*, and *Oil and Gas Activities Act* (Government of BC, 2016). Over 85% of Crown land is covered by 26 regional land use plans and regional Land and Resource Management Plans, and 195 Sustainable Resource Management Plans (landscapes and watersheds) (Integrated Land Management Bureau, 2006). The land use plan pertaining to Crown Land in Metro Vancouver is the Sea-to-Sky Land and Resource Management Plan (Government of BC, 2016b).

The Integrated Land Management Bureau (ILMB, 2006) released a strategic direction document on land use planning in BC that "reflects current and emerging government goals and priorities" (2). ILMP (2006) identifies the drive for this new approach consisting of new relationship commitments to First Nations, major environmental change, exploration and development activities, federal government initiatives, and new legislation. The first substantive change stemming from this document removed the need to engage in comprehensive land use planning, which was replaced by the requirement to demonstrate a business case (ILMP, 2006; 2007). Second, the role of public stakeholders was reduced from participating in consensus building to a consultation role via planning staff (ILMP, 2006). As

a result of this new direction, the province will not undertake strategic land use planning in areas where it has not taken place already, nor revise and update existing plans on a recurring basis (ILMP, 2006).

In the context of the Vision of Cities in a Sea of Green, one of the most significant milestones delivered by the BC government is undeniably the Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR), created 42 years earlier through the *Agricultural Land Commission Act* (Harcourt et al., 2007). The legislation was proposed as a response to the rapid encroachment of urban development onto farmland in Southern BC, as well as the many years of lobbying by the LMRPB (Harcourt et al, 2007, 61). Under this policy, agricultural lands zoned as ALR were protected from being subdivided or used for non-farming purposes unless otherwise exempt. This instrument is considered by Metro Vancouver as effective in not only preserving productive agricultural lands, but also in containing urban sprawl and promoting compact development. In order to develop an ALR land parcel, the landowner must apply for exclusion with the Agricultural Land Commission (ALC), the provincial independent tribunal which administers the ALC Act.

Constituting around 5% of BC's land base and 20% of Metro Vancouver's land base (Eagle et al., 2014; Metro Vancouver, 2016, 74), the ALR has been instrumental in preserving green spaces in the province and the region, and importantly, is integral to ensuring regional food sufficiency. For one reason, of the 5% of land that is arable in BC, only 1.1% is class one or two alluvial soil, suitable for growing green produce such as vegetables, and is almost entirely found in the Fraser Delta located in the southern region of the province (Androkovich, 2013; Parry, 2015).

## 2. HOW ARE WE DOING?

Overall, Metro Vancouver as a region performs well in many of its longstanding priorities. Recent literature reflects positively on the progress made in the past few decades on the region's ability to encourage mixed dwelling types, promote vibrant urban centres, and preserve green spaces through the regional parks system and ALR (Hutton, 2011; Tomalty, 2002; CSCD staff, August 25, 2016, personal communication). Interview participants also described the success stories of the region such as waste management, which were hard won and required collaboration. That said, they note in some cases that the ability for the region to finance and move forward on regional goals was constrained by lack of direct funding, lack of control of transit, and competing interests.

Other researchers and government publications help quantify the region's progress. Burchfield and Kramer (2013) and Metro Vancouver (2014, 35) found that the region has contained most of its population and dwelling growth within the designated Urban Containment Boundary (UCB) and towards the Frequent Transit Development Areas. Between 2001 and 2011, nearly 70% of new residents in Vancouver settled in existing urban areas through intensification rather than greenfield developments, much more so than Greater Toronto's mere 14% (Burchfield and Kramer, 2013, 11). These analyses are consistent with Metro Vancouver's 2014 progress report. Furthermore, more than 47% of the regional land base is protected under the region's Conservation and Recreation designation (Metro Vancouver, 2014, 6). The fact that the majority of these lands are under public ownership allows for effective preservation of valuable green spaces (DeMarco, cited in Yang, 2016). The region was also successful in diversifying housing stocks, achieving a greater balance between single detached homes and mid and high-rise apartments (Burchfield and Kramer, 2013; Metro Vancouver, 2014).

Despite these accomplishments, the region has fallen short on other goals. As prevalently reported, even with a growing supply, the region is struggling with housing affordability and high vacancy rates (Metro Vancouver, 2014). The ALR has been portrayed in media, academic literature and expert interviews as being under threat (Stobbe et al., 2011). In particular, a few participants expressed disappointment at the loss of ALR and other non-urban lands to sprawl and urban development (CSCD staff, August 25, 2016; Steves, September 21, 2016; Harcourt, August 9, 2016, personal communication). They note the troubling correlation between new urban developments and land rezoning. One example is the completion of the Oak Street Bridge in 1958 and subsequent rezoning of 12,500 acres of farmland as residential. As will be expanded upon below, residential development pressures have also led to ALR exclusions.

With regard to transportation, the region is still seeing ongoing automobile dependence and increases in traffic congestion. Metro Vancouver has made significant progress in reducing car use. According to Metro Vancouver's calculation, in 2011, 73% of all trips were taken by automobile, while transit, cycling and walking had shares of 14%, 11% and 2% respectively (Metro Vancouver, 2014, 7). A recent survey titled My Health, My Community (2016) reports that automobiles make up 55% of commute trips to work and school, with transit, then walking and cycling, at 28% and 14%, respectively. Traffic congestion continues to be a top-of-mind issue in the region (Sinoski, 2016 September 8). Before the opening of the Evergreen Line in December 2016, transit service had dropped from 2.71 service hours per capita to just over 2.4 since 2010 (Sinoski, 2016 September 8). Overall, the 2.1% increase in ridership across the system (TransLink, 2015) points to a need to provide additional services and infrastructure



options for transit users in order to maintain a high quality transit system. TransLink further explains the severity of measures needed to reduce automobile dependency:

*Achieving a 50% non-auto mode share target requires that about the same number of auto trips would be made in 2045 than are made today, in spite of expected population growth. This would require major land-use changes enabling all municipalities to reduce at least 25% of trip distances to something practical and convenient by walking and cycling. It would likely require the entire region to exceed the City of Vancouver's current walking and cycling share of 22.5%. (TransLink, nd).*

As various participants would attest, the Vision is still influential and central to the region's plans. At the same time, experts also caution that despite previous successes, it is being put to test by a variety of causes ranging from growing pressures to implementation challenges:

*It is the right vision, and although it's still holding we need to be vigilant (CSCD staff, August 25, personal communication).*

*There hasn't been a movement away from the Vision ... [but] the Vision isn't always adhered to by municipalities. (Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure staff, July 23, 2016, personal communication).*

*I think [the Vision] is [still influential]. I think that the significance of that statement is that first of all it appreciates cities, which it doesn't see itself as being one monolithic city but a group of cities who come together in a federation to do what's necessary for the regional good. I think that's been one of the concepts that has been the underpinning of the regional success over the years. Certainly the idea of our ecology - our environment - greenness is something that has been part of our philosophy since 1963. We were well aware that we were living in a special place and it was extremely important for us to protect the assets we have. There has been a high priority put on our green space by the region from the very beginning and then it evolved by the early 1970s into the protection of*

*our agricultural lands. Similarly, between green space and agricultural lands we have put a very significant value on ensuring the development of our communities doesn't interfere with our ability to grow food or our ecology (Corrigan, August 24, 2016, personal communication).*

*[The Vision] shines through all of these documents, beginning with the concept of the LRP, the LRSP, even Metro Vancouver 2040 - you still have that sense that you are building cities as complete communities and you are building them in a region that is always going to have green spaces (working landscapes, farmland, forest, watersheds and parts of the region that will never be urbanized because they have a better use as something else). That vision is woven through all of the planning documents (Cameron, August 10, 2016, personal communication).*

*That Vision has not changed, the pressures on that Vision will continue to mount. We can't have the number of people arriving to live here and work here without pressure, because we have a limited land base, and that land base is limited in part because of that "sea of green" vision. What has possibly changed is the public profile about that discussion, therefore there may be lots of people that aren't aware that there has been the historic Vision and that we still aspire to in a really significant way (Metro Vancouver staff, September 22, 2016, personal communication).*

Their feedback suggests that there is a strong desire to uphold the longstanding Vision, at least for regional stakeholders and provincial bureaucrats. Experts agree that the Vision is still relevant, has underpinned regional success over the years and is a goal to which the region should aspire. The core values of the Vision have not changed, and are still woven into planning documents. However, the tensions surrounding the utilisation of regional land, resources, means of implementation of the Vision and diminishing public profile of the Vision remain challenges to its physical manifestation on the ground. The following section explores some of these pressing concerns in detail.

## 3. THE VISION: AN UNCERTAIN OUTLOOK

As a collection of case studies, this study provides evidence of planning challenges currently facing the region, driven by economic, political and governance factors. This section will specifically explore the case for mounting pressures upon the region's collaborative approach to maintaining our Vision in light of the increasing "counter-vision" trends, including development pressure on green spaces, generating a loss of ALR land base and auto-dependent transportation projects. Importantly, as evidenced by a number of recent planning and policy disputes in the region, there is a weakening support for regional priorities in the face of other market interests such as application to exempt parcels from ALR for residential projects and large-scale expansion of port activities. The lack of political appetite for the regional Vision from the BC government and some municipalities has further compromised the ability of regional players to implement its growth strategy.

### 3.1 Development Pressure

To accommodate population growth, Metro Vancouver's RGS has overlain the region with parcel-based land use designations that allocate spaces for anticipated growth. The land parcels are designated as either urban land or non-urban land. Lands with the former designation are contained within a defined Urban Containment Boundary (UCB), and are intended for compact, urban developments (Metro Vancouver, 2011). Non-urban lands are green spaces of significant social and ecological value, including those that are designated for Agricultural, Rural and Conservation and Recreation uses (Metro Vancouver, 2011).

Metro Vancouver, in agreement with member municipalities, aims to maintain the UCB in the long term by containing at least 98% of all urban growth within the boundary until 2040 (Metro Vancouver, 2014, 33). In doing so, the region recognizes the need to pursue compact design, reduce urban sprawl and implement protective measures for

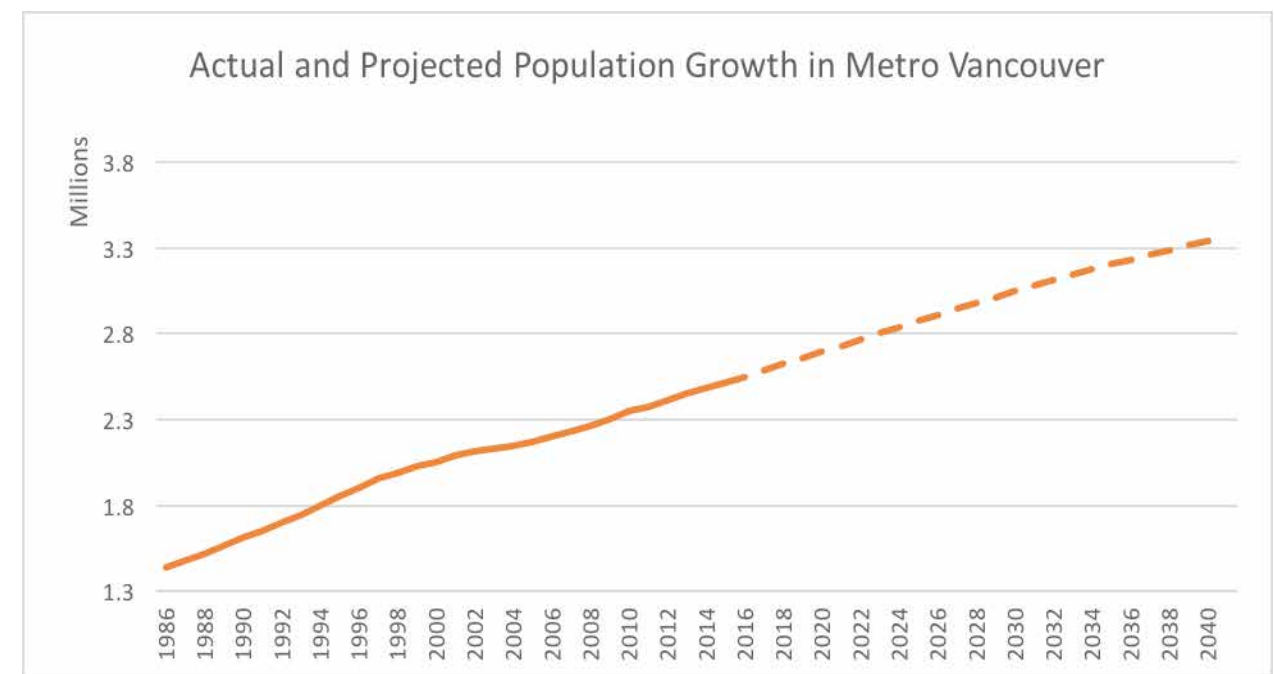


Figure 2 Actual and Projected Population Growth in Metro Vancouver (BC Stats, multiple years).

non-urban lands. However, within three years of adopting the RGS, the region has recently seen two prominent cases of amendments to the RGS to re-designate non-urban lands to urban for the purpose of accommodating new residential developments. These two cases are discussed next.

### 3.1.1 Delta Southlands

In January 2014, the Corporation of Delta (Delta) requested to re-designate 217.5 ha of land, known as the Southlands, from its original Agriculture designation to Urban (59.7 ha) and Conservation and Recreation (42.2 ha) (Metro Vancouver, 2014b). The lands were not in the ALR, but were designated Agricultural in both the RGS and in Delta's Official Community Plan (Metro Vancouver, 2014b). The re-designation would accommodate a new project of 950 residential units, as well as new

commercial space. Also, the landowner offered to transfer an additional 172 ha of agricultural land to Delta and create a \$9 million drainage and irrigation improvement fund (Metro Vancouver, 2014b).

In response to this request, Metro Vancouver staff recommended that the Metro Vancouver Board of Directors reject the proposal (Metro Vancouver, 2014b). This recommendation was driven by one reason: the development would induce dispersion of growth in Delta by introducing 2,500 residents to the "edge of the region with limited transportation options beyond private vehicles" (Metro Vancouver, 2014b, 275, as cited in Yang, 2016). In this regard, the development violates a fundamental goal of the regional plan. In addition, planners were also concerned that this amendment could set a precedent for private agricultural landowners to pursue future development speculation (Metro

Vancouver, 2014b, as cited in Yang, 2016). Despite the recommended action from Metro Vancouver staff, the Metro Board of Directors ultimately approved the amendment with an overwhelming vote of 93-31. A former Metro Vancouver manager of planning reasoned that this was a case in which regional board directors accepted a trade off in regional planning: proponents demonstrated the project's net sustainable development values despite violating the RGS goals (Yang, 2016).

### 3.1.2 Langley University District

In 2013, the Township of Langley ('Langley') adopted a bylaw to amend its Official Community Plan to allow a 23.4 ha University District within a parcel designated as Green Zone in the LRSP (now Agriculture in the new RGS) (Ferguson, 2014). The proposal included a 67-lot, single-family residential neighbourhood (Sinovski, 2014). Previously, Langley had applied for ALR exemption from the Agricultural Land Commission, which was granted based on the land's lack of agricultural viability (GVRD v. Langley, 2014, BCSC 414).

Metro Vancouver interpreted Langley's bylaw as in conflict with the region's effort to protect non-urban lands and contain urban sprawl (GVRD v. Langley, 2014, BCSC 414, as cited in Yang, 2016). This disagreement evolved into court action between Metro Vancouver and Langley. The BC Supreme Court upheld the validity of Langley's bylaws, citing the limited legal jurisdiction of the RGS (GVRD v. Langley, 2014, BCSC 414, as cited in Yang, 2016). Unlike Langley's bylaw that has statutory power, Metro Vancouver's guideline document "does not have superiority over land use management within the boundaries of a municipality" (GVRD v. Langley, 2014, BCSC 414, as cited in Yang, 2016). For this reason, the court ruled that Metro Vancouver had no authority to prevent the re-designation of the non-

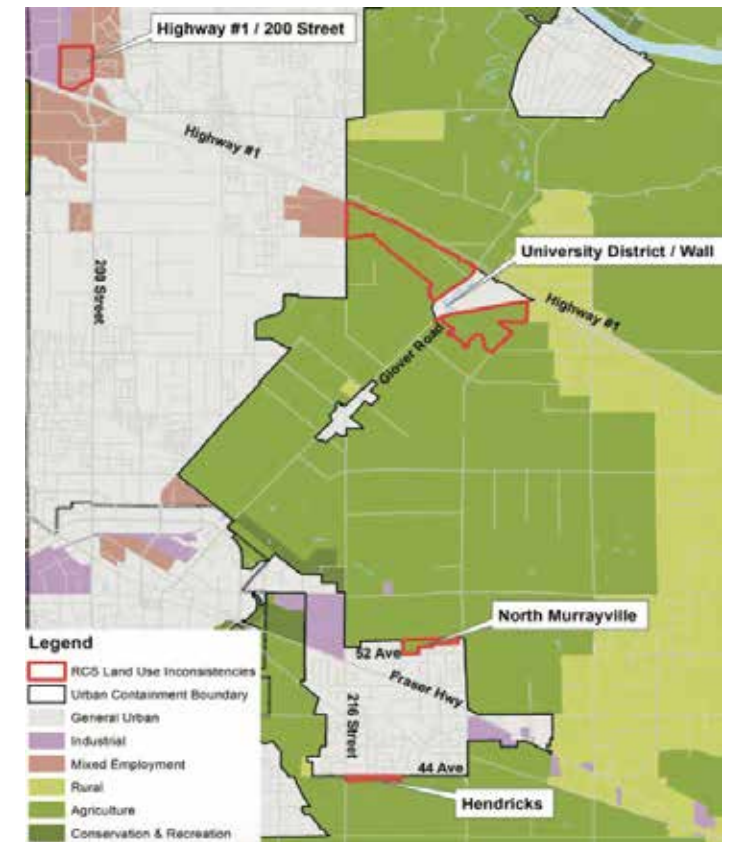


Figure 4 University District Land Re-designation (Metro Vancouver, 2013, 158)

urban lands at University District.

These two case studies exemplify the challenge of settling the conflicting land use interests of local municipalities and the regional authority at the level of specific development proposals, where the participants find themselves at the intersection of market development interest, local growth pressures, municipal objectives, and the regional overarching aspiration. The thinking behind the *Growth Strategies Act* and the regional plans is that harmony between regional and local interests should be pursued at the level of the regional and local general plans through the regional context statements, where it is easier to find areas of agreement and

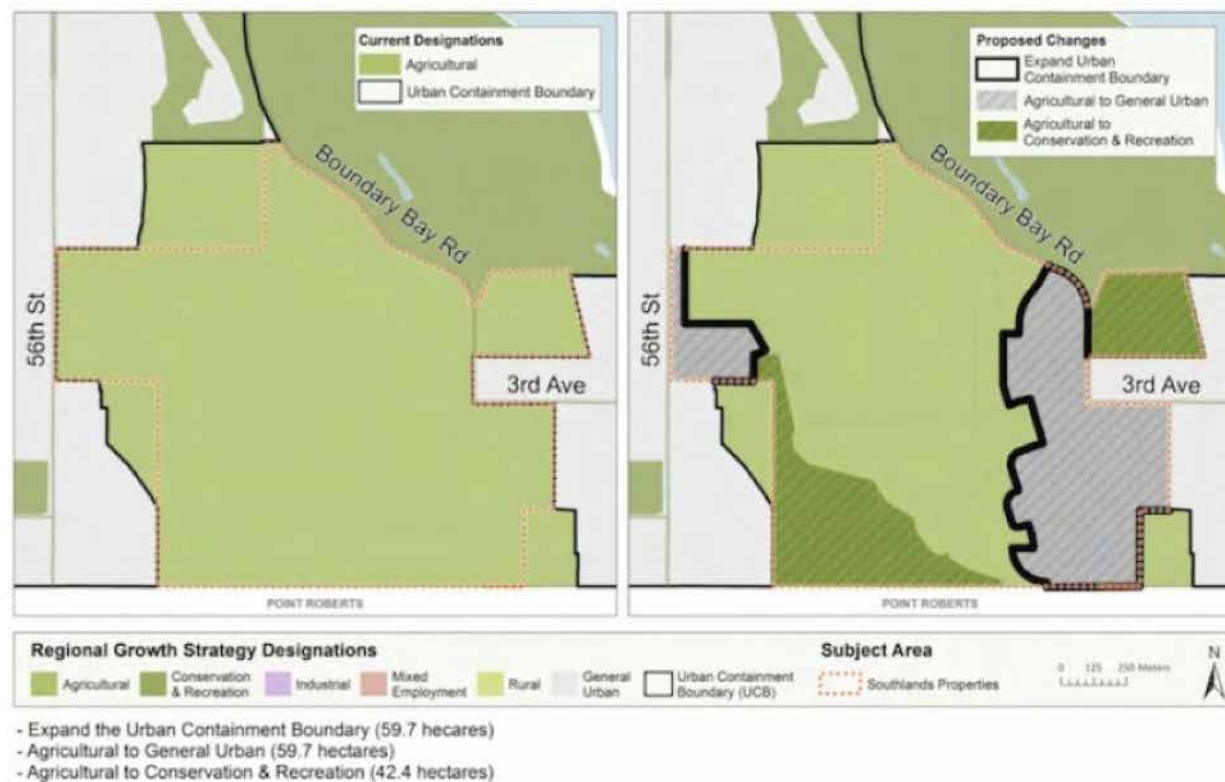


Figure 3. Map of proposed changes to Metro Vancouver's Regional Growth Strategy for the proposed Southlands development in Delta (Delta Optimist, 2016).



resolution. When disputes are played out at the level of an individual development proposal, hierarchy is used in settling cases, rather than meaningful collaboration. “Local” interests tend to carry more weight than “regional” interests in these conflicts. Given future growth prospects, one can see how this type of municipal-regional disagreement and urbanization of green spaces may occur more frequently unless concerted effort is made to re-establish and maintain broad commitment to the Cities in a Sea of Green Vision. For instance, large swaths of prime farmland in South Delta are also earmarked to be converted for industrial uses in maps held by Delta’s planning department (Gyarmati, 2016). The next section further investigates the provincial government’s role in accommodating development on certain lands - particularly those held in the ALR.

### 3.2 Loss of ALR Land Base

The debate over some ALR exclusions has been described as a “battle” (Sinoski & Shore, 2013) and as “war” (Spencer, 2016) involving environmentalists, developers, land speculators, residents, and municipal and provincial government. Provincial political and economic interests, population growth, urban sprawl, competing land use, and land speculation are cited as the driving interests behind ALR erosion (Newman et al., 2015; Sinoski & Shore, 2013). The effects of lobbying efforts by the development industry and landowners are also being felt within the BC government. As evidence, the Ministry of Agriculture has on numerous occasions taken the position that there are better uses of marginal lands “locked” in the ALR. In addition, a federally mandated agency, the Port of Vancouver, is seeking to remove land from the ALR for port expansion (Duggan, 2015; Sinoski & Shore, 2013; Spencer, 2016).

ALR boundary changes have occurred over the last 42 years. More than 34,000 ha of land in Southern BC (including Metro Vancouver) have been removed from the ALR. The addition of more than 68,000 ha of land in northern BC has kept the net provincial extent of the ALR steady (Stobbe et al., 2011; Francis et al., 2012). Through the passage of Bill 24, ALR parcels in BC are designated as either zone 1 in the South Coast, Vancouver Island, and Okanagan, or zone 2 elsewhere in the province (ALC, nd). Bill 24 has allowed a broader variety of land uses on ALR parcels, including those with economic, cultural and social objectives, regional planning objectives and “other prescribed considerations” (Bill 24, 2014). Further north, the highest quality agricultural land in the Peace River District is also under threat of farmland loss due to flooding to accommodate the newly approved Site C Hydro Dam (BC Hydro, 2015). While these decisions do not directly affect the Metro Vancouver region, they represent incremental provincial reforms which weaken the protective measures for land capable of growing food in BC.

*Only 1% of BC will grow real food, produce like vegetables... that land is concentrated in the Fraser Valley, Southern Vancouver Island, and Peace River (Steves, September 21, 2016, personal communication).*

There is a general consensus within the academic literature that decision-making at the ALC has been pro-development. With the passing of Bill 24 in 2014 to amend the ALC Act, political action has shifted the focus away from preservation of agricultural land to the permitting of non-agricultural uses without the need for presenting a submission to the ALC. Regional panels were created and given the power to assess ALR applications (Government of BC, 2014). Furthermore, the new law allows new regional panels the ability to include economic

criteria in assessments of land use change proposals (MacLeod, 2014; Parry, 2015). The literature states that this policy change was undertaken to weaken the regulatory power of the ALC in order to accommodate private and municipal development and economic interests (CBC News, 2015; Hume, 2015; Hunter & Hume, 2014; Jackson & Holden, 2013).

Despite calls from the ALC (2010) and the BC Auditor General (2010) to focus on preservation of agricultural land, engage in long-term planning with local governments and provide more enforcement powers to ALC, policy coordination with regional districts has also been problematic. In their case study on the exclusion of Jackson Farm from the ALR, Jackson and Holden (2013) found that while a protocol is in place advising the ALC to consult Metro Vancouver on its decisions, this best practice procedure is not always followed. Tomalty (2002) comes to a comparable conclusion:

*The ALC has pointed out that the Act does not provide real provincial policy leadership and leaves considerable uncertainty about the practical outcomes of the regional planning process. As well, it lacks strong measures to ensure that provincial agencies support the regional plans (19).*

Similarly, the Port of Vancouver has also sought to remove land from the ALR for industrial expansion. Its relationship with the ALC and local municipalities is cast in an adversarial light by media accounts. These cases point to the Port’s tendency to undermine municipal government agendas, including Richmond city council’s attempts to preserve farmland and push for divergent infrastructural priorities (Duggan, 2015; Nagel, 2012; Sinoski & Shore, 2013; Spencer, 2016).

A high-profile example dates back to 2009 when the Port frustrated Metro leaders after

purchasing 97 ha of Richmond ALR farmland near the Fraser River next to an existing port terminal that handles automobiles and containers (Sinoski, 2015). In all, the Port purchased 138 ha, with a goal of owning 486 ha (Bula, 2012). Concerns are heightened as the Port recently warned that container traffic through Canada’s Pacific gateway is expected to nearly double over the next 15 years (Gyarmati, 2016). The Port Authority has suggested swapping farmland near ports for potential farmland elsewhere (Bula, 2012). It further stated that the ALR has emotional, but not economic importance to the region. (Gyarmati, 2016; Nagel, 2012). During a 2012 presentation to the Metro Vancouver board, Port of Vancouver CEO Robin Silvester employs a trade-off narrative by comparing farmland reserves as a conflict between economic development and land protection:

*We need to be thinking more than just about the ALR but in addition maybe a job-creation land reserve ... Something built into the planning process that makes sure we will always have land for the economy to grow in the future... In the long-term, we can see a challenge that just protecting one type of land isn’t going to resolve (in Nagel, 2012).*

In addition, the Port asserts a constitutional pre-eminence as a federal body to overrule municipal zoning bylaws, the Regional Growth Strategy, and the ALC. In the past, some municipal councillors have also flagged concerns for the Port’s legitimacy for its immense power as a non-elected entity (Gyarmati, 2016). Metro Vancouver political leaders have called on the Port to consult with municipalities before expanding into their jurisdictions, to settle disputes formally through the Port of Vancouver Board, and to recognise municipal bylaws and community plans (Sinoski, 2015). Mayor Corrigan of Burnaby describes this process as a constant battle:

*We need to start making big city decisions. If you are going to do logistics and move goods out of the port you have to do it at night. You can't move them during the day or at rush hour, you have to change the way you do business to accommodate this. The port says "no, we're not doing that we just want you to build new capacity". They want new road and rail capacity through the city. So we are fighting these battles constantly to protect the public interest (Corrigan, August 10, 2016, personal communication).*

### 3.3 Auto-Dependency

A central element of the region's plans has been providing more sustainable transportation choices as a means to reduce private automobile use, its associated pollution effects and urban sprawl (My Health, My Community, 2016). TransLink's 2040 plan sets the goal of having most trips (50%) being made by walking, cycling and transit by 2045, and having the majority of jobs and housing in the region located along the Frequent Transit Network, where transit service is accessible throughout the day at least every 15 minutes (TransLink, n.d.).

In terms of land use and transit access in Metro Vancouver, the region has been successful at meeting its targets. As of 2012, 54% of regional dwellings and 66% of regional jobs were located within walking distance of the Frequent Transit Network. However, individual behavior has not been curbed as successfully as has land use. As of 2011 walking, cycling and transit modes make up 27% of all travel in the region, which is just over halfway to the 2045 goal. Meanwhile, automobile drivers and passengers account for 73% of all trips as of 2011, a decline from the 80% auto mode share in 1985 (TransLink, n.d).

In many parts of the region, automobile use has decreased since 1999 or remained stable. However, other parts of the region, such as Pitt Meadows and Maple Ridge, have seen an increase in automobile use (TransLink, n.d). The overall presence of vehicle congestion and personal vehicle use has likely been exacerbated by population growth. Major investment in transit infrastructure, outpacing new automobile infrastructure, is needed for the region to meet its 2045 targets of decreased automobile usage.

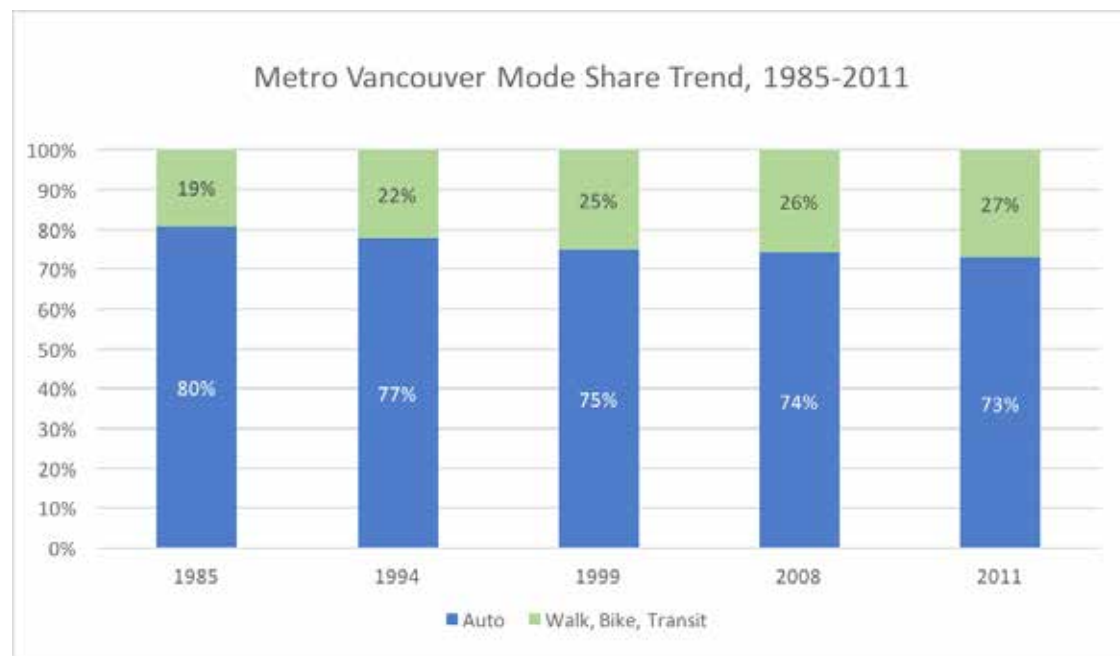


Figure 5 Metro Vancouver mode share trend, 1985-2011 (TransLink, n.d.)

As infrastructure fall short of these targets, the region's transit capacity will continue to be stretched, limiting public transit's health, environmental and economic benefits.

However, the region's ability to expand sustainable transportation networks has been primarily dependent upon various actions at the municipal and provincial level. Moreover, comments from interview participants suggest that the provincial government's actions often lean toward auto-oriented projects. The role and influence of provincial government decision making is explored further below.

*We [the region] really don't need the province to have its own ideas about what should be the higher priority, really we'd prefer the province to not have ideas about whether roads versus transit should be built at any given point in time. We don't have that kind of ideal condition obviously. So you have a situation where there are competing views between the province and local government as for the priority for transit and for the priority for the mix of roads and transit investment that is appropriate [in] the development of the region. That's how you get the Gateway program and the Massey bridge (Cameron, Aug 10 2016, personal communication).*

#### 3.3.1 TransLink's Barriers to Success: Governance and Financing

Since TransLink's inception, the organization has faced various governance and financing hurdles. Shortly after TransLink began operating in 1999, both TransLink and the GVRD went through the process of seeking approval to implement a vehicle levy in Metro Vancouver to finance new transit infrastructure across the region. This represented a 'user-pay' model highlighted in the region's strategic plan Transport 2021, which would ensure that automobile users were paying into the system in a manner similar to transit users.

Late in 2000, the TransLink board of directors voted 7-5 in favor of approving the vehicle levy, and the GVRD board voted 56-50 to ratify the levy. However, the provincial government needed to make necessary legal changes that would allow the enforcement and collection of the levy, which the political leadership ultimately chose not to do. The loss of these potential funds meant TransLink would not be able to finance the expansion of the transportation system quickly enough to meet Transport 2021 targets.

More recent decisions made by the BC government had the effect of further disabling TransLink's financial strength and autonomy over transit and transportation. In 2007, legislative amendments were made to change the board structure of TransLink. The legislative changes shifted the board composition from a group of locally elected representatives (appointed by Metro Vancouver) to an independent board made up of candidates from a screened and required list, appointed by the Mayors' Council (TransLink, 2013). This system is unaccountable, and not conducive to local policy alignment in decision-making. TransLink's governance model has been described as "unique in the world, and not in a good way" as the Province has often "exercised a dominant interest, feeling free to impose its priorities on the region and reluctant to provide a role in transit for local government institutions it did not directly control" (TransLink Governance Review, 2013). Mayor Gregor Robertson, a member of the Mayors' Council, recently stated that "immediate governance changes to TransLink are critical" (Johnson & Baluja, 2015).

In the 2013 election campaign, Premier Christy Clark stated that any new taxes to fund regional transportation would have to be approved in a regional plebiscite. This proposal went against the wishes of the Mayors' Council (Burgmann,



2015). The 2015 plebiscite on a \$7.5-billion regional transportation plan was depicted as a struggle between TransLink, the Mayors' Council and the provincial government. Voters were asked whether they were for or against a new 0.5 per cent sales tax to help fund major transportation infrastructure projects. The proposition failed to win majority support (Johnson & Baluja, 2015; Lupick, 2015). TransLink's CEO Doug Allen characterized the loss as a vote against higher taxes, and not against TransLink or improved transit service itself (Johnson & Baluja, 2015). However, critics and government have repeatedly painted TransLink the organisation as wasteful and lacking accountability (Bateman, 2015; Klasson, 2015; Travis, 2015). This is despite TransLink's international reputation as one of North America's most cost-effective transit agencies (Ward, 2015). In fact, the Mayors' Council proposed a Public Accountability Committee headed by businessman Jim Pattison during the referendum in an attempt to reassure the public that the \$7.5-billion would be properly spent (CBC, 2015b).

The plebiscite was unsuccessful. Public trust in TransLink was diminished, TransLink's top leadership was fired, and funding for transit lags behind needs (Lee, 2015; Ward, 2015). Key supporters of the "Yes" side (in favour of the tax) did not want the tax-financing strategy to be a referendum question because tax-increases are a difficult policy to sell. Moreover, by downloading the decision to the public, the provincial government insulated itself from political fallout (Ward, 2015). The pitfalls of referenda are well recognised: referenda and plebiscites are often not seen as the right way to set policy, since policy making requires trade-offs which are oversimplified in referenda (Ward, 2015). Confusingly to many, other major transportation projects that require provincial investment are not subject to a public vote of

approval. For example, a referendum was not called for the planned \$3.5-billion bridge across the Fraser River (discussed below in Section 4) (Smith, 2016). The provincial government's inconsistent approach to financing transit and transportation projects will likely further frustrate land use planning problems, since certain transportation projects (e.g., expanding road capacity) tend to encourage urban sprawl.

Over a year later, the key players in this issue are still not cooperating. The province and the Mayors' Council released separate funding proposals in May 2016, and it was reported that "it remains unclear if and when they will find common ground" (Laanela, 2016). In addition to proposing an increased financial capacity, the mayors are also calling for local elected leadership of TransLink instead of the provincially-appointed board (Laanela, 2016). The province's inconsistent approach to transit and transportation embodies a decision making process that does not appear to be well aligned with the interests of the region, or its Vision:

*The whole conversation around public transit has been uniquely destabilizing for Metro Vancouver's long term vision as reflected in our Regional Growth Strategy. That is a vision in which land use and transportation are completely and totally integrated. The whole refusal to come up with any kind of productive results around the funding of public transit has been conflict ridden and remains unresolved (Metro Vancouver staff, September 22, 2016, personal communication).*

### 3.3.2 Gateway Program

The Gateway Program is evidence of the province's tendency to support automobile-dependent projects that sap the viability of more sustainable projects such as public transit (Hutton, 2011). In 2006, BC Premier Gordon Campbell unveiled a comprehensive \$3 billion plan to open up the province's transportation network in Vancouver. This plan included the expansion of the Port Mann Bridge and South Fraser Perimeter Road. Furthermore, the plan states that "congestion is having an increasingly negative effect on BC's economy, communities and families" and "is a wide-ranging plan to meet the needs of our growing economy, increasing Asia-Pacific trade and a growing population." Existing bridges and highways in the Lower Mainland are perceived as operating well beyond designed capacities. Gateway projects include the completed South Fraser Perimeter Road, Port Mann Bridge expansion and widening of Highway 1, as well as \$50 million in cycling infrastructure.

The Gateway project met a mixed reception in the region. In response to the twinning of the Port Mann Bridge, the Metro Vancouver board voted in favour of a motion against the province's preoccupation with expanding "general purpose traffic capacity" through the Gateway projects (Metro Vancouver, 2006, 11). Despite the region's unified response against the provincial strategy, it is important to note that initial board votes also reflected a few municipalities' desire for expansion of road capacity. This was particularly the case for those municipalities whose population relies heavily on single occupancy vehicles to get to work, such as Surrey, Langley and Maple Ridge (Metro Vancouver, 2006, 10). Various interest groups including the David Suzuki Foundation, Smart Growth BC, Livable

Region Coalition and Better Environmentally Sound Transportation have also expressed opposition through Metro Vancouver's Land Use and Transportation Committee (Metro Vancouver, 2006b, 2):

*Gateway program proposals to expand general purpose traffic capacity through the twinning of the Port Mann Bridge and widening of Highway 1 west of the bridge are inconsistent with the Livable Region Strategic Plan, and therefore the GVRD Board strongly opposes the freeway expansion project and twinning of the Port Mann Bridge. (Metro Vancouver, 2006, 10).*

Even with a hard stance against massive road expansion projects among local municipalities, the BC government is still moving forward with its Gateway vision, most recently, through the George Massey Tunnel Replacement project (GMTR), which is introduced in the section below.

## 4. CASE STUDY: GEORGE MASSEY TUNNEL REPLACEMENT PROJECT

This case study is featured as the most pertinent and timely in this report, given public interest and dialogue, divided municipal support, and the ongoing nature of the replacement project. Various elements of the preceding case studies are echoed, and in some cases intersect with this case study.

### 4.1 The Proposal - Ten Lane Toll Bridge

In December 2015, the BC government unveiled its plan for the George Massey Tunnel Replacement project (GMTR), which would replace the Massey Tunnel with a 10-lane toll bridge valued at \$3.5 billion, with construction to begin in 2017 and complete by 2022 (Government of BC, 2015). The decision to replace the tunnel with a bridge emerged from a 2012 study of options commissioned by the provincial government, which cited safety concerns about the ageing tunnel, as well as chronic congestion in and near the tunnel (Government

of BC, 2015). Specifically, in its project definition report (2015), the provincial government laid out the following rationales and objectives for a new bridge:

1. *Improving safety:* The BC government states that the tunnel built in the 1950s does not meet modern safety and seismic standards. The design of the corridor also makes it prone to high rates of traffic collisions.
2. *Relieving congestion:* The corridor, along with its connectors Highway 99 and Alex Fraser Bridge, has been experiencing increasing queues and congestion. In anticipation of future population growth, the BC government is of the view that transit alone will be unable to accommodate the resulting traffic.
3. *Supporting goods movement:* The tunnel serves as a significant transportation corridor that connects the regional economy and is integral to economic development south of the Fraser River. The government argues that additional capacity is required to prevent further delays in the transport of goods. The report also proposes a clearance space alongside the new bridge, which would accommodate more intensive use of Port of Vancouver sites on the South Arm of the Fraser River.
4. *Increase transit:* The proposal intends to include a dedicated transit and HOV lane to accommodate transit service expansion.

The replacement project has received polarized support and opposition in the region. While representatives of Delta and various industry groups are enthusiastic about the expanded capacity, strong opposition has been voiced by the Richmond City Council and the Metro Vancouver Board, as well as citizen and environmental groups (Little, 2016; Quinn, 2016). The following subsections provide an overview of the responses of different stakeholders and regional entities.

### 4.2 Support for the Project

Stakeholder support for GMTR is concentrated among the Corporation of Delta, the Tsawwassen First Nation, the Vancouver Fraser Port Authority, the local Chambers of Commerce, and businesses (Gyarmati, 2016; Li, 2016). In its consultation summary report, the BC government says it found “general support for the Project overall” (2016, 5) from its consultation participants. Project staff at open houses in Richmond and Delta have noted overall public support for the new bridge. The Corporation of Delta has also endorsed the project, noting the importance of “bottleneck relief” for commuters travelling between South of the Fraser and Richmond (Yeung, 2016).

In particular, industry advocacy groups such as the Vancouver Board of Trade, Richmond Chamber of Commerce and the BC Trucking Association also showed the greatest level of support (Black et al., 2016). Given their mandates on trade and business development, these stakeholders are concerned about current traffic in and around the tunnel and the resulting economic inefficiency. To them, an infrastructural response is essential to sustain future business operations and capture opportunities in the emerging Asia Pacific market.

### 4.3 Opposition to the Project

One of the main arguments in opposition to the proposed bridge is that this infrastructure investment will privilege and reinforce automobile usage with the allocation of public resources to roads away from transit. Most importantly, it represents a prevailing countermovement to the Vision that is held strongly by Metro Vancouver and its local municipalities.



Figure 6 George Massey Tunnel Replacement Project (BC Environmental Assessment Office, 2017)



*The Gateway program was supposedly to open up the arteries of the region so trade and goods could flow ... Really it was a mask for a suburban commuter oriented set of road improvements (Cameron, August 10, 2016, personal communication).*

## Metro Vancouver

In a report released in June 2016, Metro Vancouver identified the potential regional impacts of the GMTR project and asserted its opposition. The report offers a very different interpretation of the benefits and costs of the project from the BC Government's Project Definition Report and highlights the following concerns (Metro Vancouver, 2016, 1):

1. Insufficient consideration of alternatives to the project.
2. Lack of integration into the RGS and transportation network.
3. Ecological disruption to the Fraser River estuary.
4. Impacts on Metro Vancouver infrastructure, including water mains and sewer lines.
5. Recreational and ecological disruption on Deas Island Regional Park.
6. Downloading of major expenditures onto local governments for road improvements.
7. Negative effects on transit ridership and affordability.
8. Insufficient consideration to climate change and air quality.
9. Lack of transparency and consultation with respect to project design and business case.
10. Optimistic scenarios for BC government's impact analysis.

Specifically, Metro Vancouver raised the importance of "aligning projects designed to increase highway capacity" with the Metro Vancouver 2040 RGS, which emphasizes compact communities and an efficient transit network (Metro Vancouver, 2016, 4). The proposed bridge and the resulting expansion of vehicle capacity would potentially alter the distribution of growth, traffic and locational choices of businesses and households. This will increase pressures for land use conversion and shift existing regional and municipal plans (Metro Vancouver, 2016, 3-5). An interview participant from Metro Vancouver remarked on the absurdity of the project:

*They jumped straight to a bridge - a really large bridge, a bridge that doesn't really do anything to support public transit, and a bridge that will likely have fairly significant impacts on agricultural land loss and some kind of redistribution of population settlement - seems to come to from a place that can only point to some kind of ulterior motive (Metro Vancouver staff, September 22, 2016, personal communication).*

Given these concerns, Metro Vancouver requested that the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure (MOTI) take the necessary steps to mitigate the impacts (Metro Vancouver, 2016, 1). Metro Vancouver Board Chair and Port Coquitlam Mayor Greg Moore reiterated the regional district's argument against the GMTR:

*The project represents an expansion of the car-oriented infrastructure and diverts crucial funds from transportation projects that support the Regional Growth Strategy (Metro Vancouver, June 29, 2016, 1).*

Contrary to the BC government's view, Moore and many municipal counterparts are of the opinion that the region cannot build itself out of congestion. The expanded capacity would attract more single-occupancy vehicles in the long term, which would eventually result in congestion (Moore, Interview with Global News, June 29, 2016).

In fact, the Metro Vancouver board, along with the City of Richmond, had requested the federal Minister of Environment and Climate Change to order a federal environmental assessment in addition to the provincial process to allow for a more rigorous and impartial review (Metro Vancouver, 2016c). This request was rejected by the federal minister, on the grounds that GMTR is not within the federal mandate, that the provincial process provides sufficient due diligence (Wood, February 14, 2017) and that federal departments have already given their input during the consultation stage (Gyarmati, 2017).

## Metro Vancouver Municipalities

With the exception of Delta, the majority of municipalities in the region have openly expressed opposition to the plan to construct a new bridge. In chorus with Greg Moore, Richmond Mayor Malcolm Brodie argues that the bridge will increase demand for private vehicles and facilitate urban sprawl south of the Fraser River. These anticipated impacts would contradict key goals within the RGS. Burnaby Mayor Derek Corrigan (Sinoski, 2016) and North Vancouver Mayor Darrell Mussatto (CBC, 2016) have articulated similar views. Langley City councillor Nathan Pachal argues against the bridge from an alternative angle. He notes that plans to toll the Massey Bridge will likely push drivers to alternatives with no toll – as with the reaction to the new Port Mann Bridge toll (Woodward, 2016). In this regard, tolling would create a spillover of drivers to the Alex Fraser Bridge, exacerbating current congestion and delays.

In a written public comment to the provincial government, Richmond Councillor Harold Steves (2016b) maintains that the scope of the province's environmental review is too narrow, since it concerns only the transportation corridor, but does not consider the consequential industrialization impact

on the Fraser River and its delta. Steves (2016b) cited the potential loss of major habitat for fisheries and over 1200 ha of farmland which would be ceded by Port of Vancouver for the project.

## 4.4 Role of Economic Drivers

In addition to enhancing safety and relieving traffic congestion, observers agree that a significant motivator for the BC government to proceed with a new bridge is the desire to accommodate the Port of Vancouver's plan for expansion as well as the desire to provide for industry and large infrastructure projects. As part of the Gateway program, which in itself prioritizes roadway projects over public transit, the GMTR is seen by some as an attempt by the province to enhance BC's road transportation capacity and its strategic economic role as the Gateway to Asia Pacific. Findings from Richmond City Councillor Harold Steves' *Freedom of Information Act* request for correspondence regarding the bridge proposal from MOTI include the following (2016b):

*FOI information shows a concerted effort was made in 2012 by Fraser Surrey Docks and Port of Vancouver and others to have the tunnel removed to accommodate deep draft Panamax supertankers. The BC Government met with them to discuss tunnel removal on Feb 2, 2012, future terminals at VAFFC [Vancouver Airport Fuel Facilities Corporation], Lehigh and a new one in Richmond, including liquid bulk tankers (e.g. LNG); and the need to dredge the river to 15.5 metres on Dec. 4, 2012.*

*On Nov 5, 2015, Minister Todd Stone admitted that they did not yet have a business case for a bridge. Now the reason is clear. It appears that the Province changed their plans to permit the industrialization of the Fraser River by Port of Vancouver. They did not have a business plan for a bridge because the business case was for twinning the tunnel and providing Rapid Bus.*

In support of this theory, Steves referenced

a series of documents which show the evolution of how the “Massey plan” shifted from a twinning of the tunnel to a new bridge (Steves, 2016b). In 2006, Richmond Council was consulted on the original plan to expand the Massey Tunnel through twinning (Steves, 2016). Prior to that, the BC government had already invested \$22.2 million on seismic upgrade of the tunnel and announced plans to introduce rapid bus lines along the corridor to reduce traffic. Former Transportation Minister Kevin Falcon also assured Richmond City that the tunnel was “good for 50 years” (Steves, 2016b). Given this development, it seemed clear that the intention was to enhance the tunnel, until Port of Vancouver expressed its preference for a new bridge to allow for marine traffic and considerations for future terminals in the south arm of Fraser River (Steves, 2016b). For Steves, these FOI documents further reinforce the BC government’s stance towards industry (Steves, 2016b).

Many other regional leaders share similar views. Mayor Corrigan believes that the bridge is motivated by business, and notes the “high status” and “significant power” possessed by the Gateway lobby group (August 24, 2016, personal communication). Interviewees including former Premier Harcourt (August 9, 2016; Metro Vancouver staff, September 22, 2016, personal communication) also reason that fulfilling the Gateway Program is a strong reason for the BC government to proceed with a bridge. After all, the Port of Vancouver is a significant driver of the BC economy and plays an integral part in Canada’s international trade network (Harcourt, August 9, 2016, personal communication).

*[The Gateway lobby group] represents a large amount of business interests that are involved with the Port, in the railways, in the operation of logistics, in all of those elements...The government has no hesitation in spending public money to give them what they want.*

*(Corrigan, August 24, 2016, personal communication).*

*It’s linked to LNG, or future economic opportunities. It does seem to be a decision being made not with the needs of the lower mainland as a region as the point of departure in the decision making process but one that’s possibly linked to provincial or national interests (Metro Vancouver staff, September 22, 2016, personal communication).*

The BC EAO has attempted to address this speculation in its Summary Assessment Report (2017) by responding to the “concern that the purpose of removing the Tunnel is to deepen the channel [and] accommodate further industrialization of the Fraser River” (19):

*MOTI clarified during the EA that the rationale for removing the Tunnel is to eliminate the future risk of damage to the new bridge and impact to shipping associated with significant future seismic activity; to meet MOTI’s best practice regarding management of obsolete infrastructure; and to provide opportunities to restore Fraser River habitat ... During the EA, the Vancouver Fraser Port Authority [Port of Vancouver] confirmed that the port authority has no plans to dredge the Fraser River to create a wider or deeper navigation channel.*

Nonetheless, the EAO fails to acknowledge the full context of the port authority’s response (November 15, 2017, 2) which allows for a much more open interpretation of their future plans:

*The port authority currently has no plans to dredge the Fraser River to create a wider or deeper navigation channel. However, sometimes projects may be proposed on port authority managed lands or waters that call for new dredging to accommodate vessels that are larger than what an existing navigation channel or berth was designed to accommodate.*

#### 4.5 Question of Consultation and Transparency

In addition to the problematic nature of the project itself, the BC government’s consultation approach has been regarded as lacking transparency, completeness and neutrality. In response to these speculations of ulterior motive, lack of transparency and Port of Vancouver’s role, BC Transportation Minister Todd Stone maintained the sufficiency of provincial-regional communication, and that the province is “moving ahead with it because it addresses one of the most congested points in British Columbia” (Sinovski, March 16, 2016). Stone further adds that the province has had more than “70 meetings with officials in Delta, Richmond and Port Metro Vancouver” (Sinovski, March 16, 2016). As well, in March 2016, the BC Government published the Consultation Summary Report on the project, which referenced “general support for the Project overall” (BC Government, 2016, ii). Upon closer inspection of the report, however, the process contains significant gaps.

For instance, there was a disproportionate representation of industry among the stakeholder groups. Of the nine groups surveyed, five have strong links to the business community including Vancouver Board of Trade Transportation Committee, Richmond Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors, BC Trucking Association, Rotary Club of Steveston and Richmond Farmers Institute. The latter stated a conditional “general support, given no net loss of farmland” (9). Cycling groups and the City of Richmond Active Transportation Committee also offered views on the proposed bike path along the new bridge (BC Government, 2016, 4). These groups offered mostly favourable feedback on the project, which is not unexpected considering that the project aligns with their mandates. What is

problematic, however, is that the views of other significant players such as Metro Vancouver, municipalities and environmental groups were not captured in this dialogue, but instead through written submissions. In particular, Steves (September 21, 2016, personal communication) remarks: “In one meeting we were invited to, everyone there was from Chambers of Commerce, we were the only Council representatives. They [other participants] were delighted to hear about the bridge proposal”.

In addition, regional observers reflected on the lack of “real” and respectful consultation. Instead, most engagement sessions were superficial meetings. Substantive expressions of positions occurred through official written statements rather than interactive dialogues. Reflecting on the engagement experience, a Metro Vancouver staff recalled ongoing delays in providing substantive information:

*The project definition was finally released just before Christmas last year, we were given four weeks to respond and two of those weeks were right in the middle of the Christmas period when Councils and boards are not in session. There has been politicking going on and no sign of a proactive duty to consult.*

As reflected by the excerpts below, multiple regional politicians share their frustration over a lack of information, changes in the consultation process, and lack of alternative options being provided and discussed:

*The consultation on the decision around the bridge with Metro Vancouver was never there. It was never there with the rest of the Province. They [the Province] originally said we will come up with 5 options, we are going to research and analyze those 5 options, then we will select a preferred alternative. Then they skipped that whole step of looking at the options and selecting a preferred alternative. They just went straight to it and said “by the way it’s a bridge”. Even though we*



*(Metro Vancouver) have serious concerns with some of the aspects of that decision (Metro Vancouver staff, September 22, 2016, personal communication).*

*The Province considers meetings to be consultation, so they constantly trip out the number of meetings they have. The reality is that consultation needs to be done on the front end of considering a project, when considering the implications of a project before you commit to it... Meaningful consultation doesn't occur... Consulting after you've already made a decision means there was no consultation (Corrigan, August 24, 2016, personal communication).*

*Yes, they would meet with us but every time we met, it was "we have been delayed, let's just talk around the edges about the kind of things we might want to consider." There is meeting, and there is meeting and actually talking about something. In my mind, consultation would require the latter to be in place (Metro Vancouver staff, September 22, 2016, personal communication).*

*Consultation means that you are consulting with people who leave all of the cards on the table. That wasn't the case. Cards were still left in the pack (Steves, September 21, 2016, personal communication).*



#### 4.6 Approval and Ongoing Debate

Following a 6-month review of the project application led by the BC Environmental Assessment Office (EAO), the Environment Minister and Community, Sport and Cultural Development Minister issued an Environmental Assessment Certificate to GMTR in February 2017, subject to 33 legally binding conditions (BC Government, 2017). These conditions include requirements on reporting and document submissions (compliance, plan development, document review, etc.), mitigation actions on managing impacts on wildlife, vegetation, fish, hydrology and cultural sites, continued engagement and consultation with Aboriginal peoples and other government agencies (Government of BC, 2017b).

The Ministers' Reasons for Decision report (EAO, 2017, 1) concurred with the EAO's findings that:

*The proposed EA Certificate conditions and Project design would prevent or reduce potential adverse environmental, social, economic, heritage or health impacts of the Project, such that no significant adverse effects are expected.*

Further to its conclusion, in its Summary Assessment Report (2017b), the EAO identified the reasons for which the GMTR application has met its expectations, including:

- The environmental assessment process has "adequately identified and assessed the potential adverse environmental, economic, social, heritage and health effects of GMTR" (24);
- Adequate consultation with Aboriginal groups, federal, provincial and local government agencies;
- Issues identified by the above stakeholders were "adequately and reasonably addressed during the review of the Application" (24); and
- Practical means were identified to prevent and reduce potential adverse impacts of GMTR.

There is no question that some regional stakeholders would beg to differ on several of these bold statements and would maintain that the proposed GMTR requires further examination and meaningful consultation between the BC government and regional entities. Others, such as Mike Harcourt (2017) and Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Todd Stone (2017), have embarked on a direct exchange – through opinion editorials – of the science and economics behind their polarizing views on GMTR. As will be elaborated in the next section, regardless of what each side possesses in sound evidence and scientific data, the case of GMTR has only revealed a troubling and longstanding ideological and communication stalemate between stakeholders.

# 5. SYSTEMIC CHALLENGES IN REGIONAL GOVERNANCE AND PLANNING

The discussion of the George Massey Tunnel Replacement project and other case examples show the tenets of the Vision holding their position in regional and many local minds and policy, while policy decisions, rationales and actions diverge at the provincial scale. Experts interviewed noted that while the core values of compact urban form, complete communities and preserving green spaces have persisted, different values have been used to justify actions on the ground (e.g., development of a commuter bridge to accommodate anticipated traffic growth, and trading ALR land for more economically productive port-related uses). Likewise, the guiding principle of collaboration remains the official position of the affected levels of government, even though the dynamics between actors are contested. This dissonance puts strain on intergovernmental collaboration and working relationships between those making key decisions that affect our regional Vision and path. In examining these dynamics, this study interpolates some of the overarching systemic issues that challenge sound cooperation and implementation of the longstanding Vision, and causes conflict that confounds our regional progress.

## 5.1 Negotiating a Collaborative Regional Governance System through Differences

While there is strong consensus that BC's regional district system is successful in facilitating service delivery, the same system is less effective for decision-making in the face of controversial regional challenges (Walisser et al., 2013; Artibise

& Meligrana, 2013). For Walisser and colleagues (2013), regional districts can sometimes become "arenas of contention" (156) as local politicians struggle to make headway at this level of governance when the "incentive of mutual benefit cannot overcome differences of interest". As the Metro Vancouver region is poised to experience significant population and economic growth, the debate on issues such as urbanizing greenfield areas and increasing road and bridge capacity carry high stakes. Some interview participants commented that in some cases, the regional Vision has not been translated to the local level, as it is "not always adhered to by the municipalities" (MOTI Staff, July 23, 2016, personal communication). Others offer that it is the translation of the Vision up the hierarchy of government, to the Province, which is sorely lacking.

The two case studies in which municipalities challenged regional land use designations represent this tension and failure of translation. In the case of the University District development in Langley, the different levels of government were unable to reconcile their land use priorities, which ultimately led to a legal dispute. The fact that Langley's Official Community Plan takes precedence over the RGS signals an enormous uncertainty of regional planning, a policy gap which may become even more pronounced in the future as growth persists. As such, the two cases have triggered region-wide debates over the balance between local autonomy and regional interests in long-term, coordinated planning. There appear to be divided opinions between municipalities with greater physical growth potential in greenfield areas and those already urbanized. On one hand, some municipalities located south of the Fraser River including Surrey and Langley place high value on local autonomy in parcel-based land use decisions (Sinoski, October 11, 2013). On the other hand, cities such as Burnaby and North

Vancouver see a greater need to respect the regional plan. As Mayor Corrigan cautioned, the Langley Township v. GVRD decision may have set a precedent whereby other municipalities will seek to exercise pressure on the ALC for land exclusion (Sinoski, October 11, 2013).

*Edge planning is the prerogative of the local government, not the regional government. We have significant edge farming policies in our city and where we develop. - Former Surrey City Councillor Linda Hepner on the Langley land use re-designation case (Sinoski, October 11, 2013).*

*[Municipalities are] defending their own turfs – and it's not always consistent. It is a region that is interrelated, yet when you talk to municipalities you would think they have quite differing philosophies (MOTI staff, July 23, 2016, personal communication).*

In fact, intergovernmental disagreements are what Hodge and Robinson (2001) predict as the "true test" for regional planning in Metro Vancouver. The collaborative regional governance system is designed to ensure that all local governments - municipal and regional alike – negotiate toward agreement on regional decisions (Kellas, 2010). The downside of this decision-making system is that members are drawn into debates on controversial policy problems where benefits and costs are not evenly distributed (Walisser et al., 2013; Kellas, 2010, MOTI staff, July 23, 2016, personal communication). This is endemic to the specific formation of the Metro Vancouver board, which is made up of politicians who are appointed by their local councils to the regional body. In turn, these representatives are more accountable to their own municipality, and often prioritize their own local interests ahead of regional ones (Kellas, 2010; Artibise & Meligrana, 2003). The board structure and voting system may incentivize board directors to exchange favours by supporting

each other's local interests in the decision-making process as a means to ensure that their local interest will be protected in return (Yang, 2016, 30). This practice of "logrolling" is seen as a contributor to the outcome in the Delta Southlands case (Yang, 2016, 30). Expectedly, this places outcomes that benefit the region as a whole at a disadvantage to outcomes that offer an uneven distribution of benefits to specific municipalities.

Moreover, in BC, the *Local Government Act* emphasizes local autonomy in land use decision-making (Smith, 2009; Artibise & Meligrana, 2005). Regional districts serve as forums for deliberation, and to fill in planning gaps between municipalities, and do not have authority to enforce policies on member municipalities in the absence of a municipal vote to seek specific regional contributions. In this regard, the Vision of the RGS can be interpreted as only just that – an elusive image of a desirable goal, that carries no legal weight when it comes down to specific land use decisions made by municipalities (Hodge and Robins, 2001). Metro Vancouver has traditionally relied on moral persuasion to impact municipalities' willingness to implement such voluntary agreements (Tomalty, 2002). This may no longer be sufficient. The GVRD v. Langley ruling has shown that municipalities reserve the statutory authority to conduct land use changes that could be contradictory to the regional plan (GVRD v. Langley, 2014, BCSC 414). Besides respecting local autonomy, numerous urban governance researchers suggest that the BC government has reduced its involvement in local and regional affairs to allow for diffusion of power. At most, the provincial government may serve as a mediator and facilitator in a dispute resolution process between local governments (Yang, 2016). This arrangement, as opposed to a concentration of strong political voices, diffuses the public's ability to question provincial interests (Abbot & DeMarco,



2016; Smith, 2009; New Public Consortia for Metropolitan Governance, 2011).

## 5.2 The Gateway versus Cities in a Sea of Green

Many recent conflicts over transportation priorities and projects are rooted in differences in core planning beliefs between the regional, local and provincial governments. This disagreement is most pronounced at the political level. Staff interview participants from Metro Vancouver and the BC government reflect positively on working towards a common vision and collaborative relationships among staff. Provincial staff see themselves as working in the service of the regional Vision in a supportive and advisory role. These participants are of the view that the Vision and its intentions are still central to their respective ministries' policymaking (MOTI staff, July 23, 2016; CSCD staff, August 19, 2016, personal communication). Feedback from Metro Vancouver staff corroborates this view. However, despite synergies between provincial and Metro Vancouver staff, the region struggles to communicate its interests to the provincial decision-makers, who appear to be fully invested in the Gateway vision. The following reflection of a Metro Vancouver staff person describes this relationship poignantly:

*In terms of the bureaucracies working together, the relationships are always good. Staff are professional on both ends and we do work in a fairly collaborative way with provincial staff, in particular on how best to implement the RGS, and on discussing the growth strategy legislation. That being said, because the legislation and approach to regional growth strategies is handled by politicians within the province, even the provincial staff often find themselves getting frustrated - even if they might not*

*speak about that openly. Their hands are often tied when they are doing their best to promote the provincial legislation, and then the province makes decisions that run completely counter. If you look at some of the decisions around where investment is going to go from a transportation perspective, they are not supportive of Metro Vancouver's regional growth strategy or of the intent of regional growth strategies in general. (Metro Vancouver staff, September 22, 2016, personal communication).*

There are various drivers of the different approaches to planning by Metro Vancouver and the BC Government. Whereas the Cities in a Sea of Green vision relies on public transit, specifically high speed rapid transit such as the Expo Line or the Canada Line, to connect compact cities across the region, the Massey Bridge proposal aligns with the overall narrative in the BC government's Gateway Program, which seeks to resolve congestion and expand road capacity through heavy road infrastructure.

Senft (2009) identifies two schools of thought in land use and transportation planning in Metro Vancouver. On one hand, some planners see congestion as a driving force and justification for more road capacity, which is "consistent with the traditional transportation planning paradigm" that is framed in the narrative of "utility". This approach views congestion as a supply problem that is limiting personal mobility and necessitates a technical solution, namely road expansion (Senft, 2009). While Senft sees this approach supported by the suburban municipalities dominated by auto-oriented landscapes, the BC government has been an even stronger advocate for this planning regime.

On the other hand, regional entities such as Metro Vancouver, urban municipalities and the

Mayors' Council have resisted this reasoning. Senft (2009) suggests that local players are concerned with the limits to unrestrained growth in automobile use. In other words, this school of thought sees capacity expansion as a driver of low-density development, which limits the effectiveness of transit and the attractiveness of other transportation alternatives (Senft, 2009). These advocates favour transportation demand management solutions such as public transit expansion. This argument is framed by the context of sustainability and livability, factors which have been deeply rooted in Vancouver's long standing Vision and embedded in the regional planning agenda.

The presence of these two polarized core belief systems in transportation planning working with other political dynamics gives rise to heated debates between the provincially elected officials and regional players. Participants with experience in regional planning and community advocacy are skeptical on whether the benefits of GMTR will outweigh its costs, especially in terms of social and environmental losses. They reiterate that the region cannot build its way out of congestion. In contrast, the BC government maintains the argument that this is a project that will legitimately serve the public and alleviate supply problems, including the need to address traffic bottlenecks. The impetus for the project is perceived as facilitating and enabling trade, focusing on the economic benefits following an increase in vehicle and shipping flows, while downplaying possible negative outcomes in the long run.

Finally, there is also a strong consensus among interview participants that the provincial government's decisions are motivated by economic considerations, including trade and the priorities of the business community. Participants highlighted that stakeholders such as the construction industry

are strong lobbyists for road transportation infrastructure. Their added benefit, from this industry perspective, is the instant creation of temporary jobs, which generates "instant gratification" for a large portion of industry and the public. To many of those interviewed, this fits well with the current provincial government's preoccupation with gaining political support for each election cycle through centralized power, fast decision-making, and the general approval of projects that are populist, "create jobs" and do not challenge the provincial status quo. The challenge of moving beyond this polarization was reinforced by some political veterans:

*Part of the barrier is that the province believes by being involved in [discussions on the regional plan], they'll become committed to the plan. That won't give them the kind of political flexibility to be able to react to see what is the next populist move. They don't want to be committed to a long term strategy or plan because that means they'll be committed to a political choice in the future (Corrigan, August 24, 2016, personal communication).*

*The success in maintaining this Vision has rested on the provincial politics of the day (Harcourt, August 9, 2016, personal communication).*

It should be clarified that the struggle between the regional and provincial narratives does not necessarily equate to a dichotomous conflict between livability and economic development. Rather, through the key principles which underpin the regional Vision, plans such as the RGS aim to promote long-term economic development through many aspects of sustainability without compromising the region's value for the natural environment, transit-oriented planning and livability, among others. Most importantly, the current stalemate is not solely driven by differences in planning

philosophies between regional, local and provincial governments, but also by the latter's unwillingness to reconcile, consult and negotiate. As will be discussed in the following sections, the BC government's refusal to engage in a dialogue and the hierarchal imposition of authority represent one of the greatest challenges to preserving Cities in a Sea of Green.

### 5.3 Regional Planning: A Provincial Inconvenience?

*[The province] sees cities and the region as a hindrance to what they want to do (Steves, September 21, 2016, personal communication).*

*It's nothing new for the province to change its mind, and millions or billions of dollars going to waste (Steves, September 21, 2016, personal communication).*

*You watch a government that says to you that if you want more money for transit you have to hold a referendum, but if we want to build more roads - spend billions of dollars on more roads - we are going to do that on the back of a napkin. You can see how a region that prides itself on being well planned, how frustrating it is to have an organization like the provincial government that considers planning to be an inconvenience (Corrigan, August 24, 2016, personal communication).*

Participants express strong frustration towards the provincial government's lack of willingness to recognize and consider regional aspirations in decision-making. Although Metro Vancouver and local municipalities are mandated to agree on regional planning issues, there is no legislative prescription to govern the working relationship between local and provincial governments. While Metro Vancouver has entered into collaborative agreements with senior

organizations such as the Port of Vancouver and Agricultural Land Commission on information sharing and opportunities to provide input on land use decisions, these arrangements are non-binding and "constitute overly general frameworks for communication" (Kellas, 2010).

Although the BC Government has generally practiced a non-interventionist approach to regional land use planning, exceptions are made for priority projects such as the GMTR that inadvertently impact regional land use and transportation planning – and in fact, violate regional growth management objectives. In part, this may be attributed to a lack of coordination and consultation between the region and the BC government. Using the example of provincial highway projects, Kellas (2010) points out that there are currently no legislative mechanisms to ensure that local governments are meaningfully consulted and given the opportunity to provide input. This is a loophole that appears to have been used by the provincial government in the George Massey Replacement Project (GMTR).

A larger and more significant reason for lack of cooperation and coordination is the hierarchal relationship between local and provincial governments, as expressed by Mayor Corrigan and many other regional participants. They opined that the provincial government has chronically dismissed the region's planning aspirations in favour of provincial status quo growth interests.

In their view, the case of the GMTR is not a one-off aberration but yet another instance of the continued dismissal of the region by the province. The accumulation of unilateral decisions by the province further exacerbates ongoing intergovernmental friction and continuous lack of coordination of policies. Previous cases include:

1. In 1968, the government dissolved the LMRPB after the planning board openly criticized provincial decisions which were perceived to be at odds with regional objectives (Hodge & Robinson, 2001).
2. In 1983, the re-elected Social Credit government disabled GVRD planning authority. The regional district had opposed the government's decision to exclude a parcel from the ALR to allow for housing development (which ultimately became the Southlands project whose approval is described in Section 3) (Hodge & Robinson, 2001).
3. Since the 1960s, the provincial government has subsidized automobile infrastructure and developments, contravening regional goals (Hodge & Robinson, 2001). For example, most recently the replacement of the Port Mann Bridge, the North Fraser Perimeter Road, and the South Fraser Perimeter Road upgrades made under the Gateway Program managed by the BC MOTI.
4. In 1998, the BC government announced the construction of the Millennium SkyTrain extension line without consulting GVRD and member municipalities (Howard & Gibbon, 1998, as cited in Hodge & Robinson, 2001, 336).
5. Between 1997 and 2007, various legislative changes to the provincial tax system have gradually reduced provincial contributions to transit services. A 2009 Mayors' Council report finds that "Prior to the formation of TransLink, funding for transit services in the lower mainland was 47% from provincial sources and 53% from local sources. Currently, the revenues generated by

TransLink are 35% from provincial sources and 65% from local sources" (3).

6. In 2007, the BC government established the *Greater Vancouver Transportation Authority Amendment Act* which replaced the elected TransLink board with a provincially-appointed board and significantly reduced regional control over transportation planning (Kellas, 2010). Various expert participants credit this loss of regional power to the grievance caused when TransLink and Metro Vancouver resisted the Canada Line route that was championed by the BC government in preparation for the 2010 Olympics.
7. TransLink has little influence over its own financing, and is required to go to the provincial government to enable revenue sources (Mayors' Council, 2009). This is occurring in a context of the provincial government reducing taxes in a variety of areas and expecting local governments to make up lost revenues to assist in paying for regional transportation and transit.

Given this record, one could argue that the BC government's prioritization of the Gateway vision, reluctance to recognize the regional Vision, lack of willingness to engage with regional entities and continuous resorting to hierarchal means to impose its own power all constitute an antithesis to the vision that Metro Vancouver has worked to uphold.

### 5.4 Lack of Meaningful Intergovernmental Engagement

*Simply having bodies in a room, getting frustrated, is not good consultation... There has been politicking going on, and no sign of a productive effort in terms of duty to consult (Metro Vancouver staff, September 22, 2016, personal communication).*



Many interview participants lament the BC government's lack of willingness to engage with the region. Whereas collaboration and communication procedures between member municipalities and Metro Vancouver are enabled by provincial legislation and provided by Metro Vancouver, no equivalent platform or legislative mechanism exists to formalize engagement between local, provincial and even federal politicians on regional issues. Specifically, committee sessions and meetings for municipalities to provide input and debate prior to regional planning decision making have no federal or provincial counterpart to drive intergovernmental collaboration (Kellas, 2010). More poignantly, Kellas (2010) finds that the BC government has only recently developed staff capacity to support engagement activities.

Communications between governments therefore "tend to be on an issue by issue basis, which doesn't provide a level of understanding that can be an effective base for policy coordination" (Kellas, 2010, 207). Examples include special purpose agencies dealing with key planning items that overlap interests of multiple governments, such as the Gateway Council (Kellas, 2010). Occasionally, Metro Vancouver seeks to bring provincial attention to regional issues by inviting BC government politicians to board meetings (Kellas, 2010). For instance, the special provincial-regional committee was created during the development of the 2011 RGS, was disbanded following adoption of the RGS (Yang, 2016). Under this system, the province and the region do not establish a structured, long-term relationship of collaboration, which as Kellas (2010) observed, results in provincial decisions that do not reflect a regional consensus.

Although on a staff level, the working relationships between regional and provincial bureaucrats have been sound, this collaborative relationship does not extend to the political platform and amongst decision-makers. Cases such as the Port Mann Bridge and Massey Bridge proposal illustrate the lack of discussion with the region prior to implementing projects that have significant regional land use implications. The BC Government noted that its provincial staff have met 20 times with Metro Vancouver counterparts since 2012, and 20 times each with Richmond and Delta (Bailey, March 15, 2016), maintaining that the consultation process has been sufficient. In the Project Definition Report (BC Government, 2015), the Ministry also states that it consulted widely with municipalities, First Nations, Metro Vancouver, TransLink, the agricultural community, environmental groups, first responders, recreational groups, local businesses, local residents, marine users, cyclists, other stakeholders and the general public. However, Richmond Councillor Harold Steves expressed frustration with the provincial consultation process on the Massey Bridge (Larsen, March 30, 2016):

*They have a funny idea of what consultation is. Their idea of consultation is they tell us what to do; we tell them if we like it. Then they go do it.*

Similarly, Metro Vancouver staff have indicated wanting more time to review Massey Bridge plans ahead of approval, in order to assess the impact of the bridge (Azpiri, 2016). Moore (Azpiri, February 17, 2016) admits that "ultimately, it's [the province's] road, it's their decision, but if they want meaningful public input, then we think we need some more time to do that" (Azpiri, 2016).

*We control air quality in this region. We also control parks that are underneath [the new bridge]. We control land-use planning throughout the region. Those are really big discussions. It isn't just about replacing one asset right here. It has ramifications throughout a whole part of this region (Moore, in Azpiri, February 17, 2016).*

Participants highlighted that the political philosophies, and the working relationship between province and region, have varied over time. There have been periods of cooperation and more common ground, with provincial government supporting the region's policy pursuits and interests. However most recently over the last 10 years the relationship has been one of discord and distrust (Brunet-Jailly et al., 2016).

*We had a Social Credit government that really didn't understand cities, and they were defeated by the NDP in 1991... Mike Harcourt had been the Chair of the GVRD Planning Committee and he was very much a supporter of enabling communities and local planning. For political reasons his administration was distracted from those priorities in the [early part of the] first term. We [the region] were working away on Creating our Future and the LRSP and Transport 2021... it was in the second year of their term when the Harcourt government started to take things more seriously. You had a government that was very much aware of regional planning, transportation alternatives, and sustainability, and determined to bring back regional planning that had been abolished by the Social Credits. Then Harcourt left in 1996 and was replaced by the Glen Clark government. They didn't like doing deals with anyone although they did make a deal with the region to set up TransLink. They were very a one-off government, politically driven, and the political priority for them was building the Broadway-Lougheed rapid transit line leading through the heart of NDP territory from*

*Broadway in Vancouver to the Lougheed Mall along the Lougheed Highway... The NDP were defeated in 2001 and replaced by the Gordon Campbell (Liberal) Government. There again you had the provincial government with its own capital priorities for transit, pursuing its own agenda, but trying to do so through the collaborative local government system that had been set up. That led to a great deal of political conflict (Cameron, August 10, 2016, personal communication).*

While the province's Gateway rationale of expansive new road and bridge infrastructure to accommodate growth challenges the Vision of a liveable region, the same may be said about approaches in implementing the Gateway to engaging the region on key decisions such as the Massey Bridge. The minimal effort taken to consult and negotiate contrasts with the spirit of consensus-based governance expected of the municipalities and Metro Vancouver under the *Growth Strategies Act*.

## 6. SENSIBLE POLICY OPTIONS

The analysis presented here points to a fairly stark and systemic divide between the Provincial vision of the region as a Gateway, and the regional vision of Cities in a Sea of Green. More pragmatically, however, this section lays out some structural and institutional improvements that may help promote the type of region the Vision foresees. These are as follows:

### 1. Joined-up governance

A lack of coordination vertically between different levels of government, and horizontally among local governments prevents regions from reaching the full extent of their visions (Walisser, 2013). The region may benefit from ‘joined-up governance’. Without intergovernmental and cross-sector involvement, regions are severely limited in their ability to develop and implement viable plans. As an example, Quebec brings provincial, regional and local elected officials together to achieve joined up decision-making in regions. Such meetings also include delegates from economic, culture, education and science sectors.

### 2. Incentivising regional decision making

With the current structure of regional governance, local representatives on the board who are tasked with making regional decisions can find the process of prioritizing regional aspirations over local ones to be politically unrewarding, and potentially punishing. The region may benefit from examining types of mechanisms that incentivise regional thinking over local protectionism. One example is challenge grants that are issued on a competitive basis to local governments who are able to collaborate and demonstrate that they possess common vision and objectives.

### 3. Dispute resolution

Central governments often resort to “hard-power” solutions, such as imposing spending mandates or forcing reform of structures and allocation of functions, often with disappointing results. BC uses alternative dispute resolution to resolve differences in developing, implementing and updating regional growth strategies and in operating regional services. Both provincial and local levels of government should attempt to build these alternative dispute resolution processes surrounding divergent solutions for conflicts at both the provincial and regional arenas.

### 4. Enhance meaningful public engagement efforts at the regional level

Even though the overall Vision for Metro Vancouver has remained centred around key values of sustainability and complete communities, the public profile about that Vision has likely changed significantly since the inception of “Cities in a Sea of Green.” As the region grows, better means of gauging and engaging public values are needed. The regional transportation plebiscite as an engagement tool, for example, failed to reveal the reason why 62% of the region voted against the sales tax increase to finance improved transit service (McDougall, 2015).

Enhancing public engagement efforts at the regional level has been Metro Vancouver’s key priority in helping the broader public understand and value the region’s planning aspirations:

*We have to be quite creative in thinking of ways that we will get out there and have a broad public conversation and build the profile and understanding... It’s partly education, it’s partly collaboration. It’s partly dialogue and engagement... It’s about building relationships with the many other organizations that are champions, and are promoting the same kind of value set, and finding ways to all be at the table in a mutually supportive way... We don’t want to have to preach to people that agricultural land is valuable, we want people to know that*

*and believe that themselves. That requires communication, education and celebration. In so far as the public does not have all of that knowledge and memory, the same thing happens with municipal politicians. (Metro Vancouver Staff, September 22, 2016, personal communication).*

The impact of enhanced public engagement efforts could be both increased awareness within the general public, and increased engagement of the public in political processes. It is through public engagement efforts that the broader public can become more equipped to move elected officials forward on pressing public policies.

### 5. Legislative Changes

Various participants have raised the issue of a lack of accountability within the decision-making structure of Metro Vancouver. In response, some put forth the possibility of a double-direct election system in which board directors are directly elected by the public. In this regard, decision-makers may be more motivated to promote the regional interest, rather than those of their home municipalities. Another alternative is to pursue legislative amendments that would empower regions to enforce their policies. Allowing greater local and regional determination is not necessarily a detriment to province-wide or nation-wide interests.

*Metro Vancouver... [needs] to have stronger muscle as far as land use, transportation and financing goes. There’s a discontinuity. One of the struggles is because there isn’t one strong body in the region to speak for transportation (Metro Vancouver Staff, September 22, 2016, personal communication).*

### 6. Transportation Funding

*TransLink must be properly funded or the future of the Region is in peril (Mayor’s Council, 2009., 1).*

With TransLink’s current governance model, and without increased collaboration and co-governance, transportation funding will continue to

be burdened by conflicts that arise from different organizational and political objectives. With an increase in transportation-related funds now flowing from the federal government (a commitment to provide 50 per cent of the funds for transit infrastructure projects), it might be possible to replace the traditional one-third funding model, that requires each level of government to contribute one-third of the funding to capital projects. The Mayors’ Council suggested a new funding model whereby “municipalities would provide 10 per cent of funds and the provincial government would provide one third of the remaining investment while also using its legislative authority to create new revenue sources to close the remaining seven per cent gap” (David Suzuki Foundation, 2016). Regardless of the model, the Province needs to act as the region’s ally by showing collaborative support for future transportation funding proposals.

New sources of revenue should be diversified to reduce the dependency of the agency on instruments that are sensitive to economic cycles (Mayors’ Council, 2009). Possible options include transferring a portion of the provincial carbon tax to fund public transit, which is currently revenue neutral and used as a climate action credit for individuals and businesses (Mayors’ Council, 2009). Some additional funding options include a tax on containers moving by truck through or within Metro Vancouver, a vehicle levy, a vehicle sales tax, road pricing, a land value capture tax, a hotel tax, a regional sales tax, or an employer payroll tax.

Finally, as TransLink embarks upon a fare review process to consider new options such as distance based transit fares, TransLink should also develop strategies to couple and mirror transit fares and road pricing schemes. Coupling these two strategies and ensuring both mechanisms are implemented could help reduce sprawl, while providing new options to finance the transportation network.



## CONCLUSION

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The principles surrounding “Cities in a Sea of Green” have guided the region for decades. The aim of this Vision for livability and sustainability has survived the test of time and has remained in focus in growth strategies, transportation plans and to a great extent, local land use decisions. But the region is at a crossroads. Metro Vancouver is losing its momentum to maintain the Vision, as stakeholders struggle to align core principles with market and political priorities. This report has attempted to provide an overview of where the region sits in the context of urban and transportation planning by considering the success and evolution of the Vision, its progress and looming challenges.

This report analyzed two overarching storylines to regional governance – a struggle between municipal and regional governance entities of Metro Vancouver, and a struggle of regional interests, including Metro Vancouver, TransLink and municipalities, and the Province. It first examined the collaborative structure of municipal-regional governance. Specifically, it questioned whether the reliance on a regional collaborative approach, moral persuasion and local autonomy is conducive to guiding 23 local authorities in implementing the ambitious RGS when each jurisdiction holds unique political priorities and land use interests. Second, using the case study of the Massey Bridge proposal, the paper offered a critique of intergovernmental relationships surrounding land use and transportation decisions. It argued that while the intergovernmental disagreement is rooted in provincial and regional differences in core planning beliefs and political priorities, the BC government has been reluctant to recognize, let alone support, the regional Vision. There has also been a persistence on the part of the provincial government to resort to executive power when challenged by regional stakeholders. This practice, combined with the implementation of the Gateway program, form the antithesis to that Cities in a Sea of Green principle the region has sought to uphold.

The overall aim of this report is to help inform pressing regional matters relating to urban development, transportation, and most importantly, how governments and stakeholders work together. This paper concludes with some potential policy options as food for thought. It is hoped that this report will increase awareness and thoughtful debate amongst the public, policy leaders and professionals.

## AFTERWORD: ARE WE NEARLY THERE YET?

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*Ken Cameron and Christina DeMarco*

We must first commend Gordon Price for literally putting his money where his mouth is in sponsoring this student prize on the fate of the “Cities in a Sea of Green” vision. After many years of work as a politician, writer and educator on key regional planning issues in what is now known as Metro Vancouver, Gordon developed a serious sense of concern that we as a region have “lost the plot” of a visionary concept that had guided the region for six decades. Having devoted decades of our own professional lives to the fulfillment of that concept, we jumped at the opportunity to comment on “Cities in a Sea of Uncertainty” as an assessment of the fate of, and prospects for, that concept.

It is important to recognize at the outset that the Lower Mainland as a region is significantly different from what it could have been without the vision and policies it inspired. It is also increasingly different from nearly every other metropolitan area in North America. While it is one urban region, it contains a number of “cities” – relatively compact, complete communities served (or planned to be served) by a transportation system that gives priority to transit, walking and cycling rather than the private automobile. These include the central “city” – downtown Vancouver, which has achieved international recognition as a place to live, study and play in comparison with the “executive downtowns” commonly found elsewhere in North America. Also notable is the “sea of green,” a working landscape that includes productive farmland, forest, watersheds and other green areas connected by non-urbanized corridors for the use of pedestrians, cyclists and wildlife. The creation of the provincial Agricultural Land Reserve and the Green Zone broke the pattern,

so common in other regions, in which every farm is seen by the landowner and others as a future subdivision.

“Cities in a Sea of Green” enabled us to see the interconnectedness of the environment, the economy and community well-being and to see our regional land base as a scarce resource that must be used efficiently for the protection of natural and economic assets as well as for the construction of cities and towns.

While the record is not perfect, it is remarkable that this vision has prevailed to the extent that it has, in the face of dramatic population and economic growth and the slings and arrows that characterize politics in British Columbia.

“Cities in a Sea of Uncertainty” rightly give significant attention to the role of the provincial government in the failures as much as the successes in the achievement of the vision. In general, provincial governments in Canada don’t do spatial planning very much and rarely do they do it well. Doing it well involves three steps: thinking about the future in a comprehensive way, evaluating possible alternatives and selecting strategies and actions for a desirable future, with full public engagement at each step of the way. Dominated by the over-representation of rural areas in the legislature and hamstrung by a siloed approach to policy and administration, the provincial government in British Columbia has demonstrated that it really doesn’t understand modern urban regions, even though three of the 10 premiers since 1950 have been former mayors of cities in the Vancouver region.

Since World War II, the provincial government has followed two modalities, often at the same time: facilitation of local government planning and cooperation on the one hand, and direct

intervention in the name of supposed province-wide economic imperatives on the other. In the category of facilitation of local planning and cooperation would be the support provided by the province for the creation of the Lower Mainland Regional Planning Board, the regional district system and the Growth Strategies Act. All of these initiatives had in common the philosophy that local government should be empowered to plan and act cooperatively and that the province has no substantive interest in planning policies. In the second category, direct intervention, would be provincial decisions on highway development (Gateway program; Massey Tunnel replacement), transit (selection of SkyTrain technology and the Canada Line) and agricultural land protection (the Agricultural Land Reserve). The most egregious intervention by the province - forcing a plebiscite on transportation funding on the region in 2015 - stands in a class by itself. The best summary of the thinking involved in many of these direct intervention decisions is contained in Premier Christy Clark's comments upon announcing her government's intention to replace the Massey Tunnel in September 2013:

*"If you are a commuter coming to work from Tsawwassen, it's a headache, but for our economy though it's a real bottleneck and it makes it tough for goods from all across the country to be able to move through our ports. We need to fix that."*

These words tell us that economic imperatives are the priority, with social, economic and regional planning factors taking a back seat. Provincial policy seems to give priority to economic throughput as the Lower Mainland's primary function and to encourage people to settle where they please and commute by automobile to work someplace else, ignoring the implications for greenhouse gas reduction, agricultural land protection, healthy commutes and complete communities. This is, perhaps, not

surprising when one considers that the leadership of the governing BC Liberal party is increasingly influenced not by urban constituencies but by suburban populations who, as in the Greater Toronto Area's 905 region, see the role of the provincial government as ensuring that road transportation is available between bedrooms and jobs.

As destructive to "Cities in a Sea of Green" as the province's highway investments have been over the years, they alone are not enough to give rise to the anxiety reflected in the students' essay. The ability of local government in Metro Vancouver to provide strong direction as a municipal federation has also taken a hit. Admittedly, Metro Vancouver condemned the Massey bridge project; Chair Greg Moore stated "This project represents an expansion of car-oriented infrastructure and diverts crucial funds from transportation projects that support the regional growth strategy." But the massive retail complex on Tsawwassen First Nation lands, far removed from the regional transit network, and having one of the largest surface parking areas in the province, prompted barely a squeak out of Metro Vancouver and TransLink when it was proposed. Given that the development was on land ceded to the First Nation as part of a treaty settlement (a provincial priority enjoying strong public support) it is unlikely that Metro could have exerted much influence on the shopping centre. The proposal could, however, have offered an opportunity for a public debate that would have helped to highlight the relationship between this development and the region's established land use and transportation objectives.

Metro did have the ability to say 'no' to the Century Holdings development of more than 900 homes in Southlands located outside of region's urban containment boundary, but in the end it was

approved by a resounding majority. The resolution – one way or the other – of a 35-year old regional planning dispute over the former Spetifore farm may have been the dominant factor in the minds of many on the Metro board.

Obviously both of these developments in Delta add significantly to the demand for vehicle movement in the Massey Tunnel corridor. They illustrate how individual decisions, many of which may have compelling logic, have added up to a significant departure from the "Cities in a Sea of Green" vision.

The essay mentions a very important recent episode in the history of regional planning in Metro Vancouver. Metro Vancouver felt compelled to take legal action against the Township of Langley to challenge the Township's right to develop in an area designated for agriculture. This was a difficult and courageous move for a governance system operating on a federation model; in fact the initiation of legal action by Metro against one of its members seemed to many to be a sign that the whole system of cooperative planning between municipalities and the region had broken down. Nevertheless, a key point of principle was considered to be at stake when the municipality wanted to depart from the new Regional Growth Strategy so soon after it had been enacted. In an illustration of the dangers involved in attempting to resolve planning disputes through legal action, Metro lost the court case and did not pursue further legal action on this issue.

The implications are devastating for regional planning. The court ruled that Metro Vancouver's Regional Growth Strategy "does not have superiority over land use management within the boundaries of a municipality". Intentionally or otherwise, this ruling goes against the central principle of the regional growth strategy legislation, which is that member

municipalities have a set of shared interests and the growth strategy is the set of rules that they agree to collectively in order to protect these interests. There are countless ways in which the Regional Growth Strategy can be undermined by actions taken wholly within a municipality, so this ruling is a major setback for the effectiveness of regional planning. This example raises questions about the continued viability of the underlying philosophy of the Regional Growth Strategy legislation, which is that planning is a collaborative, non-hierarchical process in which disputes, when they arise, are resolved by negotiation or (as a last resort) arbitration rather than through the courts.

Perhaps the most troubling aspect of these examples of the failure of the current arrangements to advance the principles of "Cities in a Sea of Green" is the apparent absence of concern on the part of many of the key players about the implications of these distressing outcomes. If for some reason we have lost the willingness and energy to make the current arrangements continue working toward our vision, we need to find another way to pursue it or select an alternative view of the future that is more in keeping with today's apparent priorities.

TransLink is another key player. Again using the Massey Tunnel example, TransLink has been mysteriously silent in the whole Massey Tunnel replacement debate. The tunnel is a provincial facility but TransLink is responsible for regional transportation planning, so why would it not have a view on this key component of the regional transportation network? The South Coast British Columbia Transportation Authority Act states among TransLink's responsibilities:



4 (1) Subject to this Act, the authority must do the following to carry out its purpose:

...4(f) review, and advise the Greater Vancouver Regional District, the municipalities and the government regarding the implications to the regional transportation system of,

...(iii) major development proposals and provincial highway infrastructure plans in the transportation service region.

The Act states *must*, not *should*, but the only mention of the Massey Tunnel replacement in TransLink's official documents is the following contained in the Regional Transportation Strategy (2013) "The Province has identified the Massey Tunnel as a priority, and substantial investments will be required to complete local networks in developing areas to improve road safety".

The formulation of the Regional Transportation Strategy should have been the time to send a clear message to the province on what sort of facility would support a transit-oriented region. It should have been discussed and debated with provincial staff and the public.

The students' analysis of the fate of "Cities in a Sea of Green" illustrates the complexity of metropolitan governance. The examples of departures from the vision may raise the question of whether the regional approach is worth pursuing at all. One needs only to consider the ways in which "Cities in a Sea of Green" produced a region that is different from others in North America and from what it would otherwise have been, to conclude that the region is the right scale to provide enduring solutions to metropolitan issues. But it takes energy and leadership as well as vision to pursue a long term, sustainable view and to put the short term thinking in a proper context.

The region needs an engaged citizenry, an engaged business sector, and engaged students and academics to help keep the regional vision alive and relevant. Gordon Price's sponsorship of this project is an example of the actions that will amplify the voice for a regional planning approach. We are heartened to see that there is a growing movement among academics to use their scholarship to bridge the research/practice gap and to offer new ways of thinking. They are helping all of us to ask the right questions. This approach will not only yield dividends in informed decision-making but will help students to learn about the role they can play in shaping their own future.

Ken Cameron is an Adjunct Professor of Urban Studies at Simon Fraser University and of Community and Regional Planning at the University of British Columbia. He has held senior positions in planning and urban governance in the Toronto and Vancouver regions, most recently as Manager of Policy and Planning for the Greater Vancouver Regional District (now Metro Vancouver), where he played a key role in the adoption of the Livable Region Strategic Plan and the creation of the Greater Vancouver Transportation Authority (TransLink). Between 2004 and 2009, Ken was CEO of the provincial Homeowner Protection Office. He is now a consultant who has been involved in a number of projects related to regional planning, transportation planning and urban governance. With Mike Harcourt and the late Sean Rossiter, Ken is the author of *City Making in Paradise: Nine Decisions that Saved Vancouver*, Douglas & McIntyre, 2007.

Christina DeMarco is a former Division Manager of Regional Development at Metro Vancouver and was the lead planner responsible for the current Regional Growth Strategy titled Metro Vancouver 2040: Shaping Our Future, enacted by the Metro Vancouver Board in 2011. Prior to working for Metro Vancouver, she was a long range strategic planner at the City of Vancouver where she was on the Transportation Plan team, CityPlan team and author of the Industrial Lands Strategy. She spent 10 years working in metropolitan planning for Sydney, Canberra and Perth in Australia. She is currently a consultant and also does pro bono work for non-profit groups. Her latest publication is a chapter co-authored with John Abbott titled "Regional Strategic Planning and managing uncertainty in Greater Vancouver" appearing in *Situated Practices of Strategic Planning: An International Perspective*, Routledge, 2017.

## APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW PARTICIPANTS

- Ken Cameron, former Manager, Policy and Planning, Metro Vancouver, August 10, 2016.
- Derek Corrigan, Mayor, City of Burnaby, August 24, 2016.
- Michael Harcourt, former Premier of BC and former Mayor of Vancouver, August 9, 2016.
- Jeff Leigh, Chair, HUB Cycling Vancouver, August 1, 2016.
- Harold Steves, Councillor, City of Richmond, September 21, 2016.
- Undisclosed Participant, BC Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure (MOTI), July 23, 2016.
- Undisclosed Participant, BC Ministry of Community, Sports and Cultural Development (CSCD), August 24, 2016.
- Undisclosed Participant, Metro Vancouver, September 22, 2016.

# APPENDIX B: SUMMARY OF RECENT RESEARCH ON THE CONSEQUENCES OF INADEQUATE SUPPORT FOR COMPACT AND TRANSIT-FRIENDLY PLANNING

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## 1. Sprawl

The urban ideal of walkable neighbourhoods containing socially mixed, high density housing in close proximity to transit and daily amenities is undermined by urban sprawl, which is characterised by low density housing and poor accessibility to services (Garfinkel-Castro et al., 2016). Urban compactness is denoted by density of development, mix of development types (homes, shops, workplaces), centredness (activity centres and town centres), and street connectivity (Garfinkel-Castro et al., 2016). Examining developments in the Metro Vancouver region, urban compactness exists, but not uniformly or region-wide.

## 2. Loss of green spaces

Green space is typically open, undeveloped land with vegetation, and includes parks, forests, and playing fields (McMorris et al., 2015). Research finds that urban green spaces have important benefits to human health. McMorris et al. (2015) examined data from a national survey of Canadians and found that urban residents who live in the highest quartile of greenness were more likely to participate in outdoor

leisure-time physical activity compared to those in the lowest quartile. This positive relationship was evidenced among all income groups and especially among younger adults and young women (McMorris et al., 2015). Green spaces and outdoor leisure foster social connections between neighbours and communities, with related positive effects on mental wellbeing (Kaczynski et al., 2009). Other researchers have found that proximity to green space improves people's sleep quality, in particular by lowering the incidence of short sleep duration of less than 6 hours per night (Astell-Burt et al., 2013). Furthermore, living close to green spaces has been found to lower stroke mortality rates and respiratory related mortality, and is associated with a lower mortality rate for other causes as well (Villeneuve et al., 2012).

## 3. Health

Ewing, Hamidi and Grace (2016) found that urban sprawl is a risk factor in motor vehicle crashes. The authors found that sprawl is associated with significantly higher direct and indirect effects on fatal crash rates due to higher traffic speeds and greater vehicle miles driven in sprawling areas (Ewing et al., 2016). Garfinkel-Castro et al. (2016) discuss the association between low walkability, sprawling urban environments and obesity (BMI > 30). Some environments are more obseogenic than others, and adults in sprawling built environments are statistically more likely to be obese. In particular, Griffin et al (2013) used longitudinal data on American post-menopausal women and found that women in more compact communities have a baseline lower probability of experiencing coronary heart disease (CHD) and death. The authors found that high residential density has a particularly high impact on lowering incidence of CHD (Griffin et al., 2013).

## 4. Environment

Increased vehicle emissions and pollutant runoff, which is a direct result of urban sprawl, contributes to air, earth, and water pollution (Brauer et al., 2013; Thompson, 2013). Owrangi, Lannigan and Simonovic (2014) have argued that unsound land use changes and certain types of residential development patterns have led to a significant decrease in vegetation cover between 1984 and 2012, potentially eliminating natural habitats and river flows. Developing farmland has been shown to damage wildlife habitats, including species of special concern such as the Short-Eared Owl in BC (COSEWIC, 2008). Wintering habitats, especially the Fraser River Delta, are being altered through urbanization and agricultural practices. Developers are converting coastal marshes and uncultivated fields into housing, industry, or intensive agriculture (COSEWIC, 2008). Causing damage to migratory animals in one region of the province has impacts on the population as a whole, and knock-on effects for other levels in the ecosystem. Furthermore, urban sprawl can have significant effects on ecological connectivity and function (Dupras et al., 2016). Ecosystems are intrinsically of value, and also important for human well-being. Erosion or elimination of ecosystem services such as water filtration, storage and runoff, clean air, pollination, and erosion control, as well as damage to recreation and enjoyment are some of the consequences (Thompson, 2013).

## 5. Economic consequences

The demand for sprawl is induced by inadequate accounting for the fiscal costs of this development pattern, which are borne by the whole of society. For example, decades of government spending on road and highway infrastructure for personal vehicle commuting enables, subsidizes, and perpetuates sprawl by externalizing the cost

of personal transportation. This goes hand in hand with hidden costs of road use and sprawl including illness, injuries and climate change. Taxpayers absorb many of the costs of development directly in the development process, and in the long term as infrastructure liability. For example, new developments require new capital spending, maintenance costs, and replacement costs. Thompson (2013) also notes that governments in Canada spend nearly \$29 billion on roads annually, which all Canadians pay through taxes, although households outside of the city-centre generally drive three times as much as their urban counterparts.



# APPENDIX C:

## BIOGRAPHIES

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### **Katelyn McDougall**

Katelyn McDougall is a Master of Urban Studies student at Simon Fraser University (SFU) and holds a Bachelor of Arts in Sociology and Geography from Vancouver Island University (VIU). Her Master's research focuses on public policy decision making, specifically using TransLink's vehicle levy proposal (2000) as a case study on the complexity of transportation finance decision making in an intergovernmental setting. She is constantly curious about systems change, as well as innovation in policy, governance and politics - and how these things together can help create socially, environmentally, culturally and economically balanced cities and spaces.

Katelyn is also Principal and Managing Director at OfCity Consulting. In this role she has worked on a long list of policy research and public engagement projects for a variety of clients including the City of Nanaimo, PIBC, the City of Parksville, Island Timberlands, Buy Social Canada, the Burnaby Heights Merchants' Association, the Office of the Mayor for the City of Vancouver, and Convergence Communications.

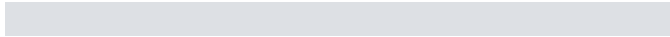
### **Linda Mussell**

Linda Mussell is a PhD Student in the Department of Political Studies at Queen's University with field specialisations in Canadian Politics and Gender Politics. Her Master's degree is in Public Policy (2016) from Simon Fraser University (SFU) where she focused on social policy and justice system involvement. For her Master's thesis she examined the heterogeneous experiences of youth with incarcerated parents in British Columbia and policy options to offer improved support for this vulnerable population. During that time she also conducted policy research with Legal Aid BC on strategies to assist self-represented litigants. Research projects Linda has recently worked include primary research on gender and diversity mainstreaming policy in Canada (for Dr. Olena Hankivsky, SFU); gender pay equity in universities (SFU Equity Advisory Committee); global care chains, gender, migration, and health (WHO Gender Equity Rights Unit); and a comprehensive literature review on gender policy machineries (government contract). Her research interests centre on policy issues in British Columbia, GBA+ and gender mainstreaming, refugee/immigration policy, and justice system involvement.

### **Sherry Yang**

Sherry Yang recently graduated with a Master of Public Policy from Simon Fraser University (SFU) and holds a Bachelor of Arts in Geography from the University of British Columbia (UBC). Her research focuses on the policy and intergovernmental processes of regional economic development and urban environmental sustainability.

Sherry has worked as an analyst with numerous public sector agencies in policy areas including economic development, innovation and First Nations treaties. She is currently working with the City of Vancouver on various policy and program initiatives.



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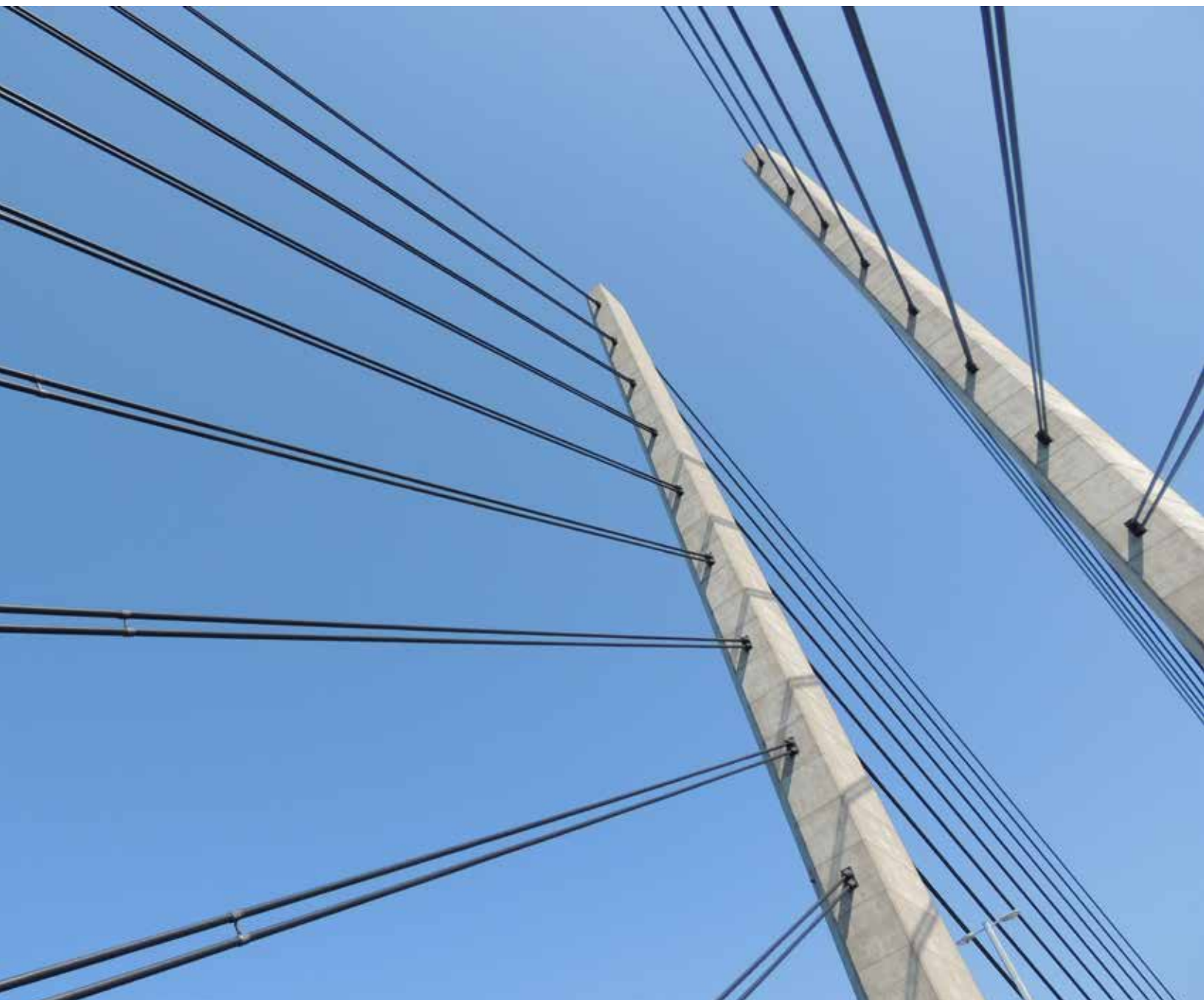
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