Eric Doherty, MCIP, RPP – Ecopath Planning
1555 Oakland Avenue, Victoria BC, V8T 2L1
250 818 8223
eric@ecoplanning.ca
www.ecoplanning.ca

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Submission to Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services regarding BC Budget 2020 – Transportation and CleanBC plan

The worlds scientists are telling us that we are in a climate emergency, and strong action is essential. And this week, the death toll from the climate emergency in Europe and India is headline news. **BC Budget 2020 must reflect the urgency of the climate crisis.**

Prime Minister Trudeau, former Premier Clark and most of Canada's premiers signed the *Pan-Canadian Framework on Clean Growth and Climate Change* in December 2016. This Framework contains a policy shift that could substantially reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) pollution from transportation, while also creating more good jobs and make life more affordable across BC, if fully implemented in BC Budget 2020.

The Framework builds on multi-party support for a shift to climate friendly transportation infrastructure. The NDP and Greens helped pass Liberal MP Andy Fillmore's private member's bill to the same effect in September 2016. Bill M-45 calls for analysis of the greenhouse-gas impact of every infrastructure funding proposal over half-a-million dollars, and for giving funding priority to projects that reduce climate pollution.

The transportation sector is the second-largest contributor of GHG pollution in Canada, representing 24% of total emissions, which is just behind the oil and gas sector. Despite this, successive federal and provincial governments have funded transportation infrastructure with little or no regard for climate pollution. Across the country they spent billions of public dollars every year on projects that increase greenhouse gas pollution, such as urban highway expansion. Largely as a result of this perverse spending, between 1990 and 2014 climate pollution from transportation increased 42%.[1]

The biggest driver of increased GHG pollution in transportation has been government spending on road and highway expansion in and near urban areas. The government of

[1] Greenhouse Gas Emissions by Economic Sector (2017) www.ec.gc.ca/indicateurs-indicators/default.asp?lang=en&n=F60DB708-1

BC is still spending public money to make the climate emergency worse. For example, the Trans Canada Highway is being widened in both the CRD and Metro Vancouver at a cost approaching $200 million. The government seems to also be seriously considering an irresponsible proposal to expand the Massey Tunnel form four to eight lanes at a cost likely to exceed $2 billion.

The Framework commits the federal and provincial governments to "shift from higher to lower-emitting types of transportation, including through investing in infrastructure."[2] The examples include shifting from driving to transit and cycling as well as shifting freight from trucks to rail. This shift in investment is complementary to many regional and municipal plans, and will be essential to meet the BC NDP commitment to reduce climate pollution from transportation by 30% by 2030 (over 2% per year).

The Association of Vancouver Island and Coastal Communities endorsed fully implementing this policy at their 2019 convention:

AVICC

Annual Meeting April 12 – 14, 2019

R19) Shifting Investment to Low-Emission Transportation **City of Victoria**

WHEREAS the Prime Minister of Canada and the Premiers of BC and most provinces signed the Pan-Canadian Framework on Clean Growth and Climate Change in 2016, endorsing a policy shift that could substantially reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) pollution from transportation while funding public transit improvements, including inter-city and commuter bus and rail service;

AND WHEREAS the transportation sector is the second-largest contributor of GHG pollution in Canada, representing 23% of total emissions:

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that local governments call on the Governments of Canada and British Columbia to fully implement their commitment in the Pan-Canadian Framework on Clean Growth and Climate Change, to shift investments "from higher to lower-emitting types of transportation".

ON MOTION, was ENDORSED

https://avicc.ca/2019-convention/2019-resolutions-disposition/

The cliché "you can't build your way out of congestion" is well supported by studies and experience. Roadway expansion in urban areas worsens both pollution and congestion. In a 2007 study Clark Williams-Derry of the SightLine Institute, found that "adding one mile of new highway lane will increase CO2 emissions by more than 100,000 tons over 50 years."

[2] https://www.canada.ca/en/services/environment/weather/climatechange/pan-canadian-framework/complementary-actions-reduce-emissions.html#3_3

My 2015 report *Making the Most of the Transit Referendum: Transportation Investments to Create More Jobs and Reduce Pollution* documents that improving public transit creates large numbers of good jobs. This is in stark contrast to the much lower numbers of jobs produced by spending in the petroleum sector. The automotive sector and highway and road construction also result in relatively few jobs per dollar spent. Therefore, reallocating resources away from roadway expansion projects such as the Massey Tunnel Replacement Project would enhance the creation of good local jobs people can feel proud of. This report is available from http://ecoplanning.ca/wp-content/uploads/2011/01/Make_Most_of_Transit_Report-FinalApril212015.pdf

The 2011 CCPA report I co-authored *Transportation Transformation: Building Complete Communities and a Zero-Emission Transportation System in BC* notes that the choice of governments to create automobile dominated communities and regions has created burdens for lower income groups, and that there are numerous strategies that would make life more affordable for ordinary people while also reducing climate pollution from transportation. Shifting transportation investments as called for in the Framework would help to level the playing field for seniors, youth, people with disabilities, and low-income families so they can live and move easily, even if they are not able to drive or cannot afford a car. The report discusses strategies for the whole province, from larger urban areas to rural communities. The report suggests that over one billion dollars per year could be re-allocated from projects that increase carbon pollution to transit and other projects that reduce pollution. The report is available from https://www.policyalternatives.ca/transportationtransformation

I recently wrote an article outlining why a Canadian Green New Deal must include good and affordable highway bus and passenger rail service to small towns and rural communities. The benefits of shifting transportation spending away from destructive highway expansion schemes would be shared province-wide. See Appendix below.

Fully implementing the shift in transportation infrastructure spending committed to in the Climate Framework would create more good jobs, make life more affordable, and allow BC to reduce climate pollution from transportation.

Sincerely,

Eric Doherty

Appendix

Green New Deal must include a transportation transformation

By Eric Doherty in Opinion | May 18th 2019

Three Canadian e-buses. From left: a double decker from B.C.'s Green Power and city buses from Quebec-based Lion Electric and Nova Bus. Handout photos from the manufacturers

On May 6, Canada joined the growing global movement for a Green New Deal. The Pact for a Green New Deal is endorsed by dozens of high-profile groups across Canada, and aims to cut greenhouse gas (GHG) pollution in half in 11 short years. If done well, a Green New Deal could make Canada a healthier and happier place to live.

The Pact notes that "Canada's emissions are stuck at historic highs," but leaves out the story of how this came to be. The Pembina Institute notes that Canadian GHG "reductions from electricity have been entirely offset by growth in our top two emitting sectors: transportation and oil and gas."

The role of government subsidies and direct investment in increasing climate pollution in the oil and gas sector has rightly gotten a lot of attention. But transportation, the second largest source of GHG pollution in Canada, must not be ignored.

Government subsidies make climate emergency worse and chokes cities with traffic

Like the oil and gas sector, direct and indirect government subsidies have driven up transportation GHG pollution levels. The Canadian government reports a 43 per cent increase in GHG pollution from transportation between 1990 and 2017.

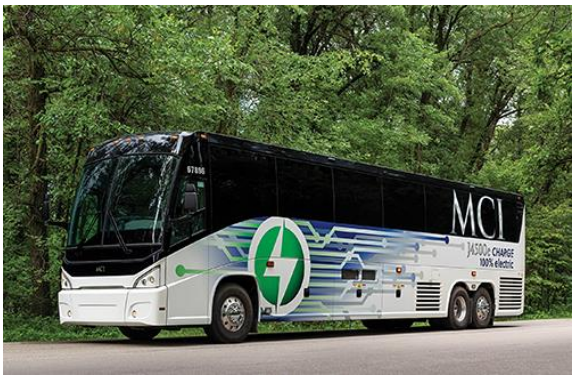
The biggest driver of increased GHG pollution in transportation has been government spending on road and highway expansion in and near urban areas. Governments understand full well that expanding highways results in more traffic and climate pollution. The 2016 Pan-Canadian Framework on Clean Growth and Climate Change (the federal-provincial climate agreement) already commits the federal and provincial governments to shift spending away from things that increase carbon pollution, such as urban highways and airport expansion, to low-carbon transportation including public transit, walking and cycling. However, both federal and provincial governments are largely ignoring this commitment.

Spending public funds on urban highway expansion also makes people's lives less satisfying and shorter. Long commutes driving alone lead to lack of exercise, exposure to high levels of air pollution, and social isolation.

Electric trains and buses must serve small towns

Travel on Canadian air carriers more than doubled and climate pollution increased by 65 per cent between 2005 and 2017. While the fuel efficiency of air travel has slowly improved, the massive increase in air travel means climate pollution is soaring. At the same time, rural Canadians are being left behind by cuts to highway bus and passenger train service.

Airports in Canada are almost all government owned, even when the boards controlling them as supposedly 'independent.'



MCI, a subsidiary of Winnipeg-based New Flyer Industries, is taking orders for battery electric highway buses. Photo from NFI website.

Every dollar now going to airport expansion could be re-allocated to low-carbon transportation, including electric passenger rail and long distance bus service, as part of a Green New Deal. Vancouver Airport alone is planning to spend $9 billion over the next 20 years to facilitate more flights, many of which cover short and medium distances that could easily be accommodated with electric passenger trains or buses.

A Canadian Green New Deal must avoid the temptation to focus too much on rail megaprojects connecting only major cities. True high speed rail, with expensive new tracks allowing speeds over 250 kilometres per hour, is not going to stop at most smaller cities and towns. The Green New Deal needs to include good quality passenger train service and highway bus service interconnecting the whole country, especially small towns and First Nations communities.

Upgrading existing train tracks for fast, comfortable and affordable passenger rail service across the country should be high on the action list. Sweden is planning to create new overnight sleeper train services to major European destinations to meet the demand for low-carbon transportation – and Canada should follow this good example. Converting the main rail lines across Canada to electric power, as most of the world has already done, could employ thousands of tradespeople who have been laid off from the oil and gas sector.

Much better highway bus service is a crucial complement for passenger rail service, since many smaller communities are not on train tracks. Transportation inequality is a huge issue in rural areas, and the Green New Deal must address the transportation needs of seniors who often can't drive long distances to medical appointments, youth who are often unable to access education, low income people, and Indigenous people who are now often forced to risk hitchhiking to travel.

If we want fewer cars choking our cities, and healthier rural communities, people need convenient and affordable ways to travel to and from smaller communities as well as between cities without driving.

Transform transportation for health, prosperity and justice

A report I co-authored, *Transportation Transformation: Building complete communities and a zero-emission transportation system in BC*, estimates that a billion dollars a year could be re-allocated from projects that increase GHG to climate solutions just in B.C. The national total would be much larger. This report concludes that "we can transform our transportation system in a way that vastly improves mobility, health, communities and social justice."

The Pact for a Green New Deal paints a stark choice. We can "either descend into division and disaster or come together with a far-reaching plan to avoid it and build a safe, just and prosperous future for all of us." Efforts to reduce climate pollution from transportation have the potential to make our communities safer, more just, and more prosperous. These improvements can largely be paid for by re-allocating funds from destructive projects and fossil fuel subsidies.

The changes needed will benefit every demographic, but young people, who are also pushing the climate agenda forward, are the most ready to leave the age of the automobiles behind. For example, vehicle ownership by 16 to 20-year-olds men in Quebec decreased by 20 per cent in just five years. And if government spending goes to wider roads instead of better public transit, sidewalks and protected bike lanes, then even young people will be forced to drive cars — making the climate emergency worse.

Automobile domination also leaves many seniors isolated once they can no longer drive. The Green New Deal should aim to create communities where a car is not a necessity.

Streets for people – Disappearing traffic

Reducing GHG pollution from transportation in half in only 11 years may sound like a nearly impossible task. But the effective policies needed to reduce driving, and the resulting fossil fuel consumption, are well understood. If there is less space available to drive and park cars, people will choose to drive less (and will take public transit, walk, or ride bicycles more).

Car traffic quickly expands to fill expanded road space in urban areas, but traffic contracts just as quickly when road space is no longer available to motor vehicles. When you make a car lane into a bus lane, a protected bike lane or more space for pedestrians, car traffic disappears.

The 2004 European Commission report, *Reclaiming city streets for people*, notes that:

> "It is typically assumed that reducing the capacity available for cars will result in increased traffic congestion in the surrounding streets. However . . . the experience in a number of European cities is that. . . some of the traffic that was previously found in the vicinity of the scheme 'disappears' or 'evaporates', due to drivers changing their travel behaviour."

The City of Vancouver's recent draft *Climate Emergency Response* plan aims to make a lot of traffic disappear, very quickly. The plan aims for an "allocation of public space [that] supports walking, cycling and transit [to] greatly reduce dependence on fossil fuels through a reduction in vehicle ownership and kilometres travelled by vehicle." The goal is for two thirds of trips in Vancouver to be by active transportation and transit by 2030, up from about half now.

Before you jump to the classic excuse for delay – improved fuel efficiency and potential of electric cars – consider that Canada's vehicles guzzle more gas and spew out more carbon dioxide pollution per kilometre driven than any other country (Between 2013 and 2017 fuel economy got *worse*, not better). Many of the vehicles that will be on the road in 11 years have already been purchased.

While the City of Vancouver is planning for a future with much fewer motor vehicles, and has already significantly reduced traffic volumes in some areas, the provincial and federal governments are spending big to get more polluting cars on the road. In April, the federal and B.C. provincial governments announced spending of about $100 million each to widen the Trans-Canada Highway in Metro Vancouver. Highway widening, including high occupancy vehicle lanes, induces increased traffic volumes and results in increased GHG pollution.

Having national and provincial governments undermine municipal climate action is not at all unusual. The Government of France unsuccessfully sued Paris to get a well-loved park on the River Seine turned back into a noisy, congested national highway. The government of Sweden is also trying to build a massive freeway project into and around Stockholm, over Stockholm City Hall's objections. The mobilization around a Green New Deal will have to push hard to overcome the entrenched power of big oil in setting transportation policy.

Photo of foot traffic along the Seine River in Paris. Photo by Eric Doherty.

As noted above, the federal and most provincial governments have committed to shift spending away from urban highway expansion to reduce climate pollution but are routinely violating their commitments.

If governments are forced to stop spending money on urban highway expansion, there will be billions of dollars a year available to create great

public transit, walking and bike riding facilities. This won't be enough funding, but the Pact for a Green New Deal notes that the billionaire class are ripe for some big tax increases to pay for climate action initiatives.

The Green New Deal can make our cities and towns healthier, more just and prosperous, and happier places to live. The other choice is to stay on the expressway to extinction we are on.

www.nationalobserver.com/2019/05/18/opinion/green-new-deal-must-include-transportation-transformation

www.ecoplanning.ca