

Rec'd Dec 12/11



DISTRICT OF METCHOSIN

File No. 8300-10

December 2, 2011

Victoria Regional Transit Commission
BC Transit
520 Gorge Road East
Victoria BC V8W 2P3

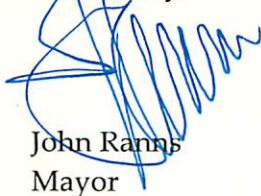
Dear Board of Directors,

Re: Victoria Rapid Transit

I understand that BC Transit is now proceeding with the development of a funding plan for the Victoria rapid transit project as directed by the Commission. Although the alignment and technology evaluation portion of the project are now complete, Metchosin council supports the further examination of the E&N corridor for a commuter rail pilot to service the West Shore. While we recognize that the E&N rail line must be assessed to determine whether passenger rail can be restored on the line, Metchosin council is hopeful for a more affordable option for multi-modal travel in the West Shore.

I have enclosed correspondence on this matter from Metchosin resident John W. E. Harris who was Metchosin's representative on the Victoria Regional Rapid Transit Project's Community Liaison Committee. Metchosin council requests that the BC Transit consider Mr. Harris's correspondence and provide the council with a response to his comments. Thank you for your consideration.

Yours truly,



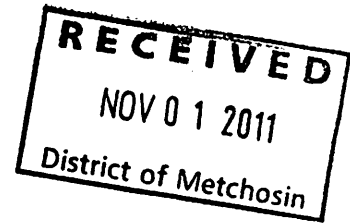
John Ranns
Mayor

Encl.

cc. Council
Rp

DISTRICT OF METCHOSIN
FILE NO. 8300-01

John W. E. Harris
3817 Duke Road (Metchosin) Victoria, BC V9C 4B2
2011.11.1



To: Mayor and Councillors
District of Metchosin
4450 Happy Valley Road
Victoria, B.C. V9C 3Z3
Re: Victoria Regional Rapid Transit Project

Dear Mayor and Councillors:

I was disappointed to learn from your letter of Sept 1st that you had "withdrawn your endorsement of the LRT option in favour of the E&N commuter pilot". Personally, I don't think it was wise to be seen to "turn down" a conclusion that has taken 2 years of study to reach. This is not the time to ask for still "another study" because this would once again **delay the implementation of an improved transit system by probably many years.**

Perhaps there is some misunderstanding of "LRT" and "E&N", as it appears they are being thought of as alternatives.

Let me once again try to clarify the situation as I see it.

First, the definitions of "LRT" and "E&N".

LRT means light rail transit, which simply means easily accessible, easily maneuverable passenger rail cars than can run on their own right of way or on roads (i.e. streetcars). They are about the same size and appearance as busses but are usually smaller than the E&N "heavy rail" cars, although these latter run on the same rails and also can run on rails along streets. BC Transit currently appears to be interpreting LRT as meaning "a rail based transit system approximating the route of what is known as the Galloping Goose. This existing right-of-way was originally a railway, and is now leased by the MOT to the CRD as a trail. This use was intended to be temporary but if rails are put down again the trail could still continue.

E& N refers to an existing rail system with right-of-way with rails already existing from Langford thru View Royal and Esquimalt to Victoria, although currently it is in some disrepair. It was given to the CPR back in the coal days along with a lot of land "the CPR land grant" in return for building the railway but there was no provision that the railway be continued or the lands returned to the province when no longer needed. Hence we now have the outright private ownership of these lands by timber companies, creating the current trail access problems on the southern Island and the controversial land problems around Sooke. Retaining Crown ownership, which they could easily have done with a lease arrangement, apparently never occurred to those early politicians. Actually, some people think it isn't too late.

However, up until a few months ago the E&N still was a working railway. Using diesel-electric heavy rail self-propelled passenger vehicles (large streetcars) it ran once a day each way, out of town in the morning and into town in the afternoon. Hence the "wrong way train". The right-of-way runs from Victoria through View Royal and Langford and north inter-city to Duncan, Nanaimo, Port Alberni, and Courtenay. We are currently only concerned with the Victoria to Langford portion; scheduling and direction of travel is a future issue.

When the recent rapid transit study began, observed for the past 2 years by the CLC, it was understood that it was to study the **linking** of the major parts of the Westshore to Victoria. This study was to include approximately what was touched on by the "Galloping Goose" and by the E&N, including destinations such as **Colwood Corners, Uptown, Mayfair, and the DND**. The study included **detailed estimates of the demand** for travel from various localities to various destinations and was to be a pilot study for eventually including other areas within the CRD, such as the University, ferries and airport. Unfortunately towards the end of the two year study it became apparent that BC Transit had decided to ignore the existing E&N route, for some reason now deciding that was the responsibility of the province (although a MOT representative was included in the study). LRT then became synonymous with **"that routing along Goldstream Avenue to Colwood Corners, down the strip to the highway, along TCH to Uptown and down Douglas Street to Victoria"**. The E&N (actually another form of "LRT") roughly **parallels Goldstream to Colwood Corners and then down the strip, but then travels through Esquimalt via the DND to Victoria**, currently ending in Vic West due to the unfortunate closing of the Blue Rail Bridge. It was originally suggested that it could route to the Outer Wharf and also up Douglas to Mayfair and Uptown, covering those areas.

So to me it is apparent that we should be talking about a system combining the two routes. It is really not a choice of one or the other but at least parts of both are needed to make up a truly useful and complete transportation system.

The fact that the E&N tracks also proceed up Island to Courtenay and Port Alberni is simply another factor that should not cloud the decisions that we are now concerned with. Yes, the long distance inter-city rail up-Island system needs to be protected and upgraded before it disintegrates. But as for the proposed transportation system from Westshore to Victoria it surely must include most of the significant features of the area, namely Colwood Corners, Uptown, Mayfair and the DND.

Unfortunately, only **in the final couple of months of the study were costs finally introduced**, intending, I think, to **shock** those favoring the proposal, and providing ammunition to kill it. BC Transit has in the past been clearly reluctant to become involved with rail, and the costs have stirred up a business association consisting of members who are afraid of having some of the costs thrust on them, although they would benefit from increased business.

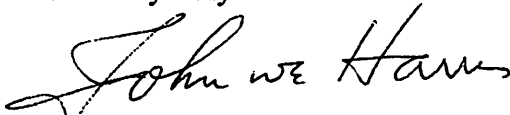
As for these costs, I will reiterate what I have said previously, that they have **“gold plated”** the result in order to “kill” it. An example might be “overbuilding” stations, as with Sky Train in Vancouver.

So it seems that we are about to, even after this extensive two-year study, fall for the old trick of saying **“let’s study it some more”**. There have been many transit studies in the CRD in the past 30 or so years and **this was to be one that would lead to some action**. It provided figures on numbers of people moving by various means now available to various destinations. But “sticker shock” has resulted in the ignoring of the conclusions and created once again **further expensive procrastination** without laying a single meter of track, or putting down a single tie, or buying a single rail car. **In short, “restudying” will be a waste of money while again postponing the inevitable.**

And another old trick again has again surfaced, already discounted by the study, **suggesting that there may not be “enough demand”**. But these figures are based on a wrong way system which was, in fact, **deliberately** designed to be inadequate and unattractive. This was the excuse the Province gave when it recently declined to support upgrading the E&N, actually stating that there was not enough traffic, and ignoring the fact they were **running only one train a day in the wrong direction**. The question might be, **are we really prepared to let them get away with these sorts of manipulations once again.**

Just glance around you at the **massive residential and business construction underway now within the CRD, particularly in the Westshore. And at the traffic jamming the roads.** Unfortunately, all these new residents are being forced to choose between buying cars or using an inadequate transit system. But unless we plan on simply building more and more roads, and there simply isn’t room, an improved transit system is **inevitable**. We can continue to tolerate this situation, always being one jump ahead of total lock-up. Or we can, sooner or later (and why not “sooner”?), take a giant leap forward and create a **comfortable, attractive, well used transit system**, which after much study we have concluded should be centered around a **light rail system**. Perhaps now, considering that we could be about to postpone the arbitrarily demanded, hugely expensive, unnecessary sewer expansion, we could trade the latter for a much more visibly useful, environmentally friendly, option.

Yours very truly

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "John W. E. Harris". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name.

John W. E. Harris
Metchosin