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**ORGANIZING FOR  
REGIONAL  
TRANSPORTATION  
OPERATIONS:**

**Vancouver TransLink Case Study**

**Prepared by**

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**For**

**FEDERAL HIGHWAY ADMINISTRATION**

**INSTITUTE OF TRANSPORTATION ENGINEERS**



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16. Abstract <p>This is one of six case studies exploring regional cooperation among transportation operating organizations. These studies, developed in conjunction with the National Dialog on Transportation Operations, document alternative approaches for developing and sustaining regional transportation operations and portray institutional practices and lessons learned. They provide examples of experiences that reflect National Dialog goals of facilitating cultural transitions within transportation operating entities that are driven by system performance and customer service measures. They are intended to serve as a resource guide for decision-makers as well as transportation management and operations staff.</p> <p>The six case studies associated with this project are TRANSCOM in New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut; TransLink in Vancouver, British Columbia; The Metropolitan Transportation Commission in the San Francisco Bay Area; The ITS Priority Corridor in Southern California; TranStar in Houston; and AZTech in Phoenix. Case studies were selected to present a variety of approaches that differ in regional size and characteristics, organizational structure, scope, and geography. An executive guide highlights the findings and perspectives of the six case studies.</p>					
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## **ACRONYMS**

AirCare	Air Quality Management Subsidiary
BC	British Columbia
BCTFA	BC Transportation Finance Authority
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
GVRD	Greater Vancouver Regional District
ICBC	Insurance Corporation of British Columbia
ITS	Intelligent Transportation Systems
LRSP	Livable Region Strategic Plan
MoTH	BC Ministry of Transportation & Highways
MRN	Major Road Network
MRTAC	Major Roads Technical Advisory Committee
MTC	Metropolitan Transportation Commission
ROO	Regional Operating Organization
TDM	Transportation Demand Management
TRANSCOM	Transportation Operations Coordinating Committee
UBC	University of British Columbia

## OVERVIEW

This is one of six case studies exploring regional cooperation among transportation operating organizations developed in conjunction with the National Dialogue on Transportation Operations. These studies document alternative approaches for developing and sustaining regional transportation operations and portray institutional practices and lessons learned. They provide examples of experiences that reflect National Dialogue goals of facilitating cultural transitions within transportation operating entities that are driven by system performance and customer service measures. They are intended to serve as a resource guide for decision makers as well as transportation management and operations staff.

The six case studies associated with this project are TRANSCOM in New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut; TransLink in Vancouver, British Columbia; the Metropolitan Transportation Commission in the San Francisco Bay Area; the Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) Priority Corridor in Southern California; TranStar in Houston; and AZTech in Phoenix. Case studies were selected to present a variety of approaches that differ in regional size and characteristics, organizational structure, scope, and geography. An executive guide highlights the findings and perspectives of the six case studies.



In October 1998, the Greater Vancouver Transportation Authority was created through provincial legislation. Since its launch on April 1, 1999, the Authority has been known as TransLink to reflect its role as the coordinator of the Regional Transportation Network. TransLink's mandate is to plan, finance, operate, and manage a regional transportation system that moves people and goods efficiently and supports the regional growth strategy, air quality objectives, and economic development of the Greater Vancouver metropolitan area. TransLink funds and oversees the planning, service levels, budgets, and financing of several subsidiary companies, which are responsible for operations of the Regional Transportation Network. To support its goals, the authority raises funds through regional transportation sources, including fares, gas taxes, parking and vehicle fees, and tolls. A 15-member Board of Directors comprising local elected officials governs the Authority. Key features of TransLink include:

- Planning and funding responsibility for regional transit, roads, transportation demand management, and emissions programs under a single authority
- Integration of transportation planning, funding, and operations functions within the context of a greater community vision and plan

- Funding through regional sources
- Contracted operations through wholly-owned subsidiary corporations and partnerships with local and provincial governments

## REGIONAL ENVIRONMENT

The Greater Vancouver region is a large and complex metropolitan area comprising 21 municipalities and 2 million residents. The region sits in a valley bounded by the Strait of Georgia and the Coast Mountains and is crossed by multiple waterways. Residents take great pride in the beauty of their natural environment. They support extensive community planning and management strategies to enhance the quality of life and

control development in the region. Rapid existing and predicted population growth and increasing automobile usage concern residents. These concerns prompted development of aggressive plans for transit service expansion and transportation demand management within the context of larger sustainable development plans. Implementation of these plans was the basis for the formation of TransLink.

### Transportation and population statistics for Greater Vancouver:

- 2+ million residents in 2000
- Population expected to grow to 3 million by 2021
- Highest car ownership in Canada
- No freeways in Vancouver
- 5 million person trips per day
  - 11 percent Transit
  - 75 percent automobile
  - 14 percent walking
  - 1 percent bicycle<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Rock, Clive, "Transportation in Greater Vancouver – Overview of TransLink," presentation (Vancouver, BC: TransLink, June 26, 2000).

## SERVICES AND ACTIVITIES

TransLink is responsible for planning and funding the following services—as well as overseeing their operations through its subsidiaries, contractors, and partners:

- *Public transit* — including buses, light rail, commuter rail, ferry, and paratransit services operated through subsidiaries and contractors
- *Air quality management (AirCare)* — including establishment and enforcement of emissions standards in conjunction with the Province and the Greater Vancouver regional District (GVRD)
- *Transportation demand management (TDM)* — promotion of trip reduction and transportation alternatives through formal programs for bicycles and pedestrians, carpooling and vanpooling, employer partnerships, and park and ride services
- *Major Road Network (MRN) management* — including maintenance, rehabilitation, and improvement of 2,100 lane-kilometers of roadways and 3 major bridges of regional significance in partnership with municipalities
- *ITS* — strategic planning and development of integration strategies for implementing ITS in Greater Vancouver and throughout British Columbia.

### TransLink Service Profile:

- Service area: 1,800 sq. km.
- Population: 2.0 million
- Major Road Network: 2,190 lane km. (of total 5,000 lane km. in service area), 3 bridges
- AirCare: 1,042,179 vehicles tested
- Ferries: 4 vessels, 2 routes
- Light Rail Transit: 28 km., 150 cars, 25 million passengers annually
- Bus: 177 Routes, 1,100 vehicles, 98 million passengers annually
- Commuter Rail: 65 km., 5 trains, 1 TrainBus, 1.7 million passengers annually
- Paratransit: 988,000 annual trips, 247 vehicles<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> TransLink, "Program Plan 2001, First Draft," (Vancouver, BC: TransLink, August 30, 2000), p. 3.



## DEVELOPMENT

The formation of TransLink in April 1999 was a result of several factors:

1989-1996	Growth management and sustainable development planning
June 1994	Transport 2021 Long- and Medium-Range Strategic Transportation Plans approved by GVRD Board
1996	Livable Region Strategic Plan approved by GVRD Board
1996-1998	Alternative transportation governance and funding models research and planning
Oct. 1998	Greater Vancouver Transportation Authority Act creates TransLink
Apr. 1999	TransLink launched
1999-2000	Development of TransLink Strategic Transportation Plan 2000-2005 and Program Plan 2001
Apr., May 2000	TransLink Strategic Transportation Plan approved by TransLink and GVRD Board
2000	Transit fare increase approved by TransLink and GVRD Boards (effective June 2000)
Oct. 2000	Vehicle levy passed by TransLink and GVRD Boards, not passed by Province, does not go into effect

- General recognition of the need for aggressive transportation improvements and management on a regional basis to address massive population and economic growth in the region
- Lack of a stable, ongoing funding mechanism and organizational structure for implementing improvements
- Transfer of many provincially held roadway assets to local authorities
- A desire for greater regional control and flexibility in the operation of the transportation system, particularly public transit assets.

Since the early 1990s the Vancouver region has taken an active stance in managing regional growth (population growth exceeded 20-percent, and trips by cars increased 45-percent between 1985 and 1992)<sup>3</sup> Throughout the early 1990s, the GVRD, which is responsible for regional comprehensive planning, conducted a

proactive community planning campaign. The campaign involved more than 6,000 citizens<sup>4</sup> and culminated in the development of a series of strategic and functional plans, including the 1993 Transport 2021 Long- and Medium-Range Strategic Transportation Plans and the 1996 Livable Region Strategic Plan, which addressed transportation in the context of larger regional goals.

<sup>3</sup> Greater Vancouver Regional District (GVRD), *Transport 2021 Long Range Plan for Greater Vancouver* (Vancouver, British Columbia: GVRD, September 1993), p. ii.

<sup>4</sup> GVRD, *Creating our Future: Steps to a More Livable Region* (Vancouver, British Columbia: GVRD, 1993), p. 8.

These plans, though valuable for determining a desired course of action, were not directly linked to a funding and implementation source. At the time of their development, transportation leaders hoped for the passage of Federal legislation, similar to the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991 in the United States, that would provide stable and ongoing support for regional transportation improvements; however, this never materialized. Instead, Canadian transportation legislation provided funding through grants on a project-by-project basis, a system that was not conducive to the broad-scale improvements outlined in the plans. In 1996, when area leaders examined progress toward the transportation plans, they recognized that little was being accomplished and alternative action was needed.

At the time, the Province of British Columbia (BC) had primary responsibility for public transportation, vehicle emissions testing, and many major roads (though it was in the process of transferring many roadways to local authorities). Municipalities controlled other roads with little regional coordination. The regional authority, the GVRD, was responsible for planning, but had few means of implementation. This fragmentation of responsibilities led to a number management challenges and inefficiencies (see Figure 1).

**Figure 1: Management Challenges of the Greater Vancouver Transportation Governance Structure Prior to TransLink**

	SITUATION	CHALLENGES
<b>TRANSIT</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Defined regional transit system</li> <li>• Provincially operated through provincially appointed Board and Regional Transit Commission</li> <li>• Unmet demand</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No individual municipal role</li> <li>• Slower-than-planned expansion</li> <li>• Insufficient services and funding to meet demand</li> </ul>
<b>ROADS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 60+ percent of travel is regional or intermunicipal<sup>1</sup></li> <li>• No recognized regional road system</li> <li>• Fragmented responsibility for roads</li> <li>• Municipalities responsible for many roads of regional significance</li> <li>• Transfer of provincial roads to local authority</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• System not managed as a whole</li> <li>• Insufficient coordination/ discontinuities</li> <li>• Inadequate local funding to support transferred roads</li> </ul>
<b>FUNDING</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Transit: 47 percent provincial general revenue, remainder – fares, regional gasoline tax, residential electricity levy, non-residential property tax<sup>1</sup></li> <li>• Road: provincial from general revenue, municipal from property taxes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of coordination between transit and roadway funding</li> <li>• Transportation decisions often driven by provincial objectives (e.g. debt reduction) rather than recognition of transportation/growth management needs</li> </ul>

The GVRD wanted institutional restructuring that would provide

- Stable, predictable, and appropriate financing capabilities
- Local control and expanded transit service
- Coordination of the road system
- Programs for managing transportation demand.

In 1996, the GVRD approached the Province and launched an initiative to explore transportation governance and funding alternatives. The initiative was formalized on April 5, 1997, when the GVRD and the Province signed a "Framework Agreement for Negotiations of Transportation Governance and Funding in Greater Vancouver." The negotiations encompassed all aspects of planning, development, financing, administration, and operation of highways, roads, bridges, tunnels, cycling and pedestrian facilities, transit services, and related demand measures.

Through a series of workshops organized by the GVRD in 1996 and 1997, area transportation leaders and political officials defined principles and objectives for the new governance structure and evaluated alternative approaches. The GVRD staff supported these workshops by researching case studies (including Calgary, Toronto, Montreal, Albany, San Francisco, Boston, and Zurich) and organizational models. In May 1999, a total of 112 leaders, including 75 elected officials, 28 municipal staff and 5 regional staff,<sup>5</sup> participated in a professionally facilitated decision-making workshop that determined a final approach for the governance structure. The approach was based on a regional authority and local agencies having cooperative control over transit and roads. The approach was intended to provide regional coordination of transit, roads, and transportation demand management as a single system, with operations under local control.

Local champions of the approach worked with the provincial Minister of Municipal Affairs to draft authorizing legislation to create a new regional government authority based on the conceived model. Negotiations and a final plan were completed in October 1997. An extensive review process, including multiple studies and ratification by each municipality affected, was required before acceptance by the GVRD Board in February 1998. Passage of the authorizing legislation<sup>6</sup> by the BC Cabinet in October 1998

<sup>5</sup> Mackey, Andrew, Summary of Input, Transportation Governance and Funding Workshop, Robin Square – May 24, 1997 (Vancouver, BC: GVRD, May 1997).

<sup>6</sup> Greater Vancouver Transportation Authority Act, Chapter 30, updated November 2, 1999, available from [http://www.ap.gov.bc.ca/bcstats/98030\\_01.htm](http://www.ap.gov.bc.ca/bcstats/98030_01.htm).

by the BC Cabinet in October 1998 created TransLink, which officially assumed responsibilities on April 1, 1999.

Two statutory responsibilities of the new Authority included defining a major road network and developing a strategic transportation plan. A committee of municipal engineers defined the MRN according to established criteria, after which it was approved by each municipality and then ratified by the TransLink Board, all of which took place before the end of 1999.

The TransLink Strategic Transportation Plan 2021 was completed and approved by the TransLink Board in April 2000, a year ahead of schedule. It was based on the earlier Transport 2021 plan, but also provided a financial plan for funding recommended actions. Nearly 7,000 people commented on the draft plan before it was finalized. Polling indicated that most were supportive of the ambitious improvement program and recognized the need for higher fares and new taxes to pay for services.

## ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

### Legal Status and Authority

TransLink is a government corporation governed by a Board of public officials. It has a statutory mandate to fulfill specified obligations related to managing and operating the regional transportation system, and is empowered to do so. The Authority may:

- Carry on a business within and outside its service area;
- Enter into contracts;
- Adopt bylaws and recommend regulations;
- Raise revenues through taxes, levies, tolls, user fees, and motor vehicle charges; and
- Expropriate land.<sup>7</sup>

It also has rights to municipal easements, rights-of-way, and licenses for purposes of developing and operating the rail transportation system.

### Governance

TransLink is responsible for planning, funding, building, marketing and setting policy for the transportation system. It is governed by a 15-member Board of Directors, 12 members of which are mayors and councilors of the local municipalities appointed by the GVRD Board; the remaining 3 are cabinet ministers appointed by the provincial government. The Board meets twice a month, once to receive citizen and delegate input and once to oversee TransLink's mandated responsibilities. Decisions are made by majority vote.

### Participants, Partners, and Responsibilities

The operation and delivery of TransLink services are carried out by subsidiary companies, contractors, and local government partners (see Figure 2).

**Subsidiary Corporations** — Subsidiaries are corporations that are wholly owned by TransLink and provide operations services. TransLink appoints their Boards of Directors and has a service agreement with each. Annually, TransLink evaluates whether the subsidiary achieved contract objectives and can select a new subsidiary or a contractor from the private sector. The subsidiary's Board of Directors and officers determine operations of the subsidiary, including staffing, scheduling, and provision of services.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

*We're a steering not rowing organization*

– Ken Dobell,  
CEO,  
TransLink

**Major Road Network** — TransLink funds maintenance, rehabilitation, and improvements to the MRN. These services are carried out by the jurisdictions that own the roadways. Approximately one-third of the MRN are owned by the Province and two-thirds by municipalities. TransLink maintains a service agreement with each agency and provides funding based on a lane-kilometer formula. The Major Roads Technical Advisory Committee (MRTAC), comprising municipal engineers, advises the TransLink Board on matters concerning the MRN.

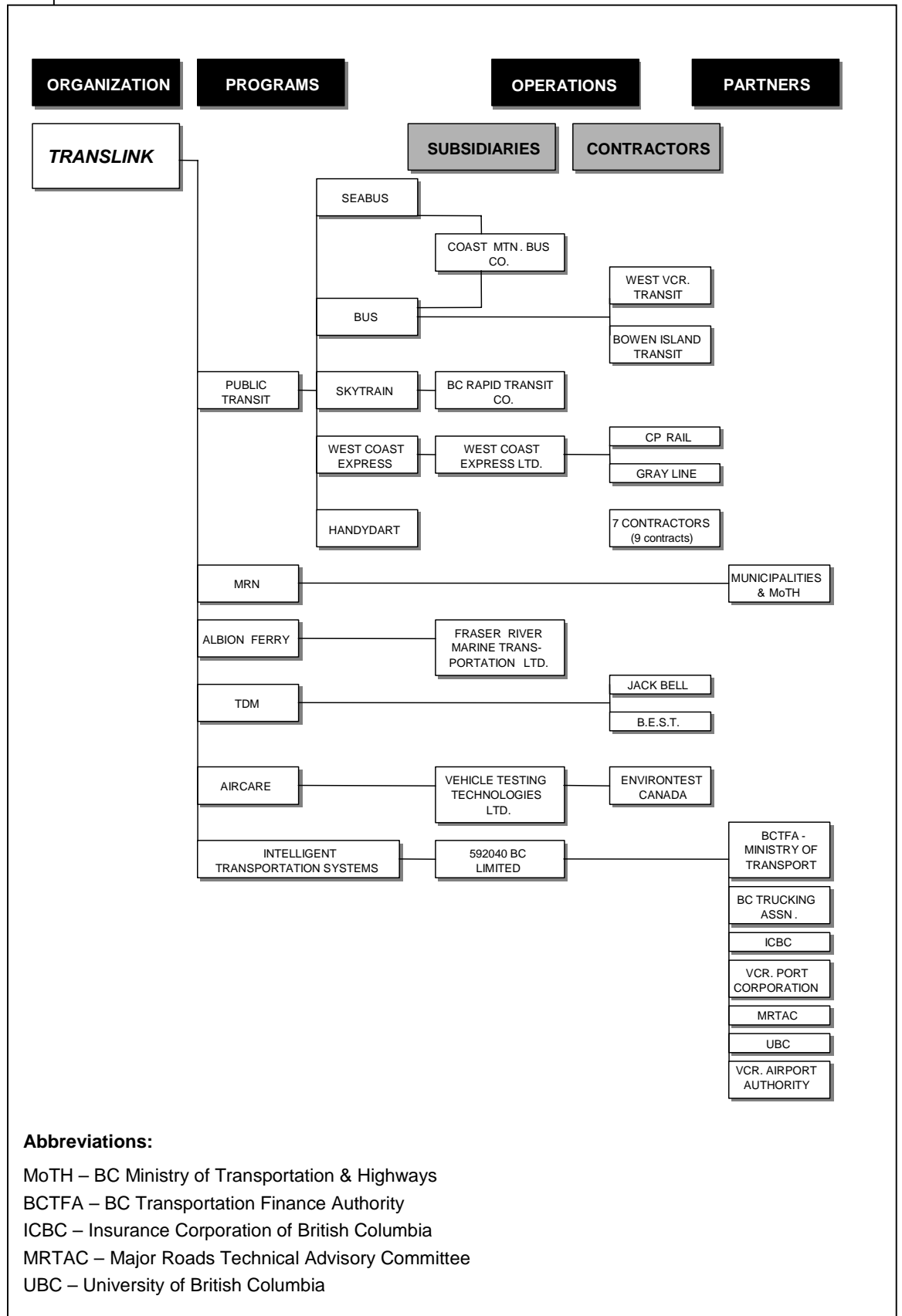
**ITS Corporation** — The ITS Corporation is the coordinating body for ITS in the region. Currently, there is limited application of ITS in Greater Vancouver. Local control centers are not integrated and there are no major Traffic Management Centers. Consequently, the ITS Corporation is overseeing development of an ITS Strategic Plan for the region and the entire Province. TransLink appoints the members of the ITS Corporation's Board, which includes representatives from the Province, municipalities, the BC Trucking Association, Port and Airport Authorities, and the Insurance Corporation of British Columbia (ICBC). TransLink is the technical and contract manager of the project. The ITS Corporation receives funding for specific projects through the pooled resources of its constituency. Funding for the ITS Strategic Plan was provided by TransLink (C\$50 K), Vancouver Airport Authority (C\$20 K), Vancouver Port Corporation (C\$20 K), the Province of BC (C\$50 K), and the Federal government (C\$250 K).

**The Insurance Corporation of BC (ICBC)** — ICBC is also a government corporation, responsible for registering and insuring vehicles in British Columbia. It has a significant interest in highway safety; consequently, it works in partnership with TransLink to fund studies and plans (including the ITS Strategic Plan) and share data for research and development purposes. It maintains a memorandum of understanding with TransLink outlining general principles and provisions for the exchange of funds.

*ITS doesn't drive TransLink. The ITS vision is linked to a broader transportation vision.*

– Keenan Kitasaka, Manager of ITS, TransLink

**Figure 2: TransLink Programs, Operating Subsidiaries, and Partners**



**Abbreviations:**

- MoTH – BC Ministry of Transportation & Highways
- BCTFA – BC Transportation Finance Authority
- ICBC – Insurance Corporation of British Columbia
- MRTAC – Major Roads Technical Advisory Committee
- UBC – University of British Columbia

**Gateway Council** – The Gateway Council represents the region's commercial freight operators and goods movers. TransLink worked with the Gateway Council members to define a major commercial road network that is eligible for special funding within the MRN. As a result of the established relationships, some members of the Gateway Council are helping to fund several TransLink studies, including the ITS Strategic Plan and a rapid transit study.

In addition, TransLink staff and board members work with a number of advisory committees and working groups to address transportation issues of regional significance.

**Relationship to the GVRD**

The GVRD is a partnership of the 21 municipalities within the metropolitan area of greater Vancouver. It has responsibilities similar to those of a metropolitan planning organization in the United States. Since 1967, the GVRD has provided regional utility services including water, sewage, solid waste, and parks services. It also conducts planning and produces the Livable Region Strategic Plan (LRSP) for land use and growth management within the region. The concept for TransLink was developed within the GVRD, and the GVRD provides checks and balances to TransLink's activities, as outlined in Figure 3. However, TransLink is a statutorily defined government authority and has the power to levy taxes and fees, whereas the GVRD does not.

**Figure 3: GVRD and TransLink Roles in Regional Transportation Functions**

The GVRD	TransLink
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ratifies TransLink's Strategic Transportation Plan</li> <li>• Approves TransLink tax increases</li> <li>• Approves TransLink borrowing</li> <li>• Appoints 12 members of the TransLink Board</li> <li>• Develops the Livable Region Strategic Plan</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supports the LRSP</li> <li>• Plans and funds transportation elements in accordance with the LRSP</li> <li>• Conducts transportation system operations through its subsidiaries, contractors, and partnership</li> </ul>

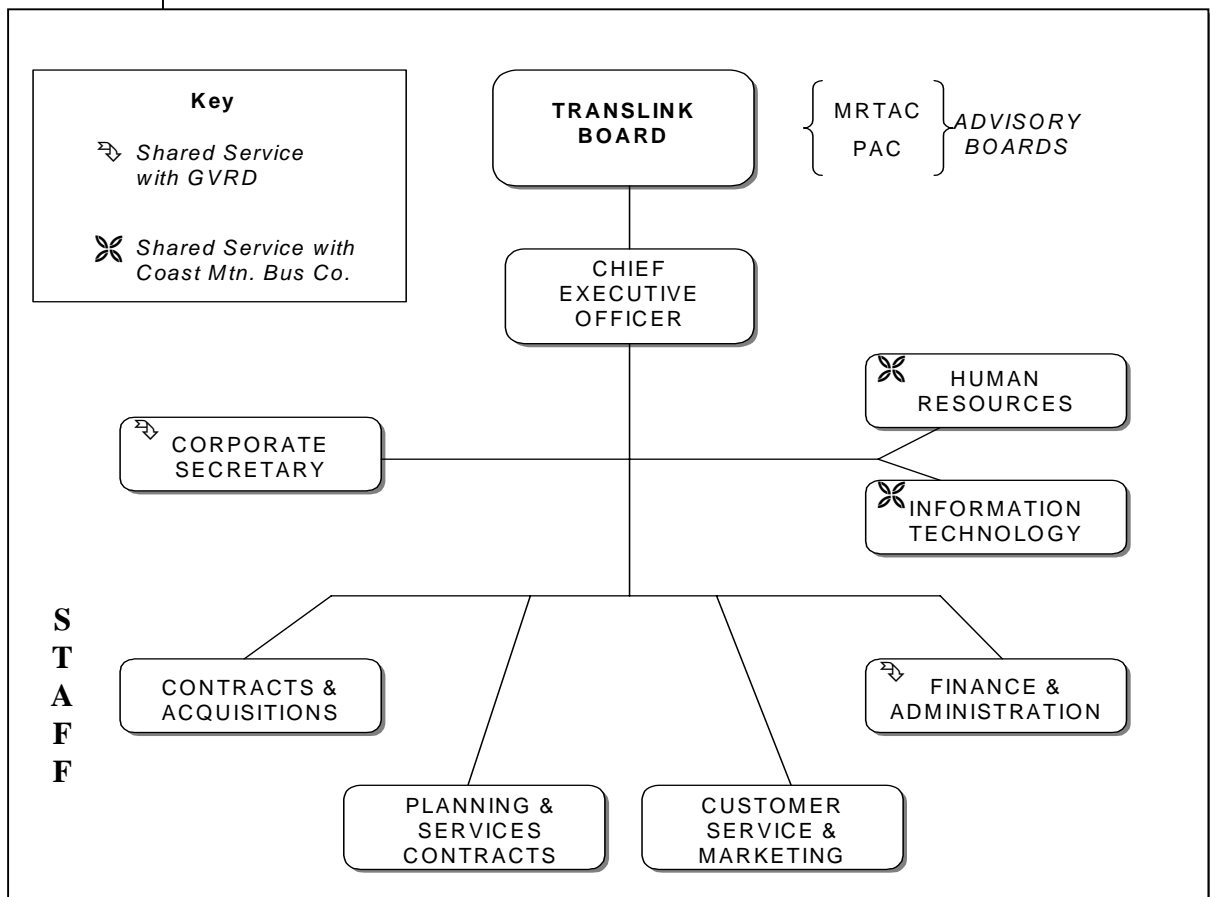


# RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

## Staffing

Approximately 200 staff members, most of whom transferred from existing transportation authorities, work for TransLink. Most personnel are involved in the two service roles that TransLink provides. TransLink maintains a security force of approximately 85 constables and a customer information staff of about 65. The remaining staff perform planning, contract administration, and management roles. TransLink receives human resources and information technology support from its largest subsidiary, Coast Mountain Bus Company, and shares finance, administration, and corporate secretary functions with the GVRD. A Chief Executive Officer reports to the Board of Directors and manages the organization with support from the Executive Officers, who manage each of the divisions (see Figure 4).

**Figure 4: TransLink Organizational Chart**



## Assets

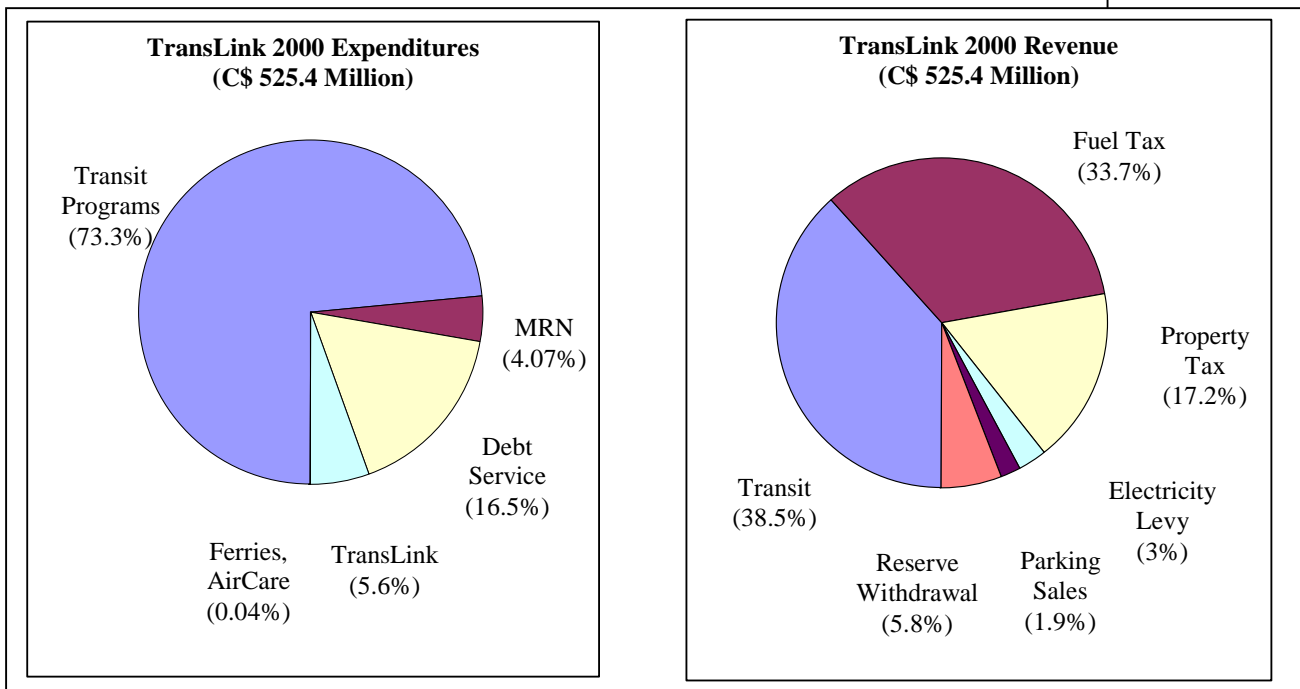
TransLink owns its equipment assets and those of its subsidiaries. This simplifies resource sharing among the subsidiaries and TransLink. For instance, TransLink and its subsidiary Coast Mountain Bus Company share information technology resources — personnel and equipment. The subsidiaries provide operations services, but do not own equipment. This provides TransLink flexibility in selecting subsidiaries and contractor for services, since it maintains ownership of equipment in the event of having to select a new service provider.

Municipalities and the Province own the MRN, although TransLink sets standards for its management, operation, construction, and maintenance. These standards include limitations on a local jurisdiction's ability to reduce road capacity or restrict truck movement.

## Funding

In 2000, TransLink's programmed operating budget was approximately C\$525 million (see Figure 5). Of this, 73 percent was for transit operations, of which approximately 30 percent would be recovered through fares. Other TransLink revenue sources include fuel taxes, residential and commercial property taxes, levies on residential electricity accounts, parking sales taxes, and emissions-testing fees.

**Figure 5: TransLink 2000 Programmed Expenditures and Revenue**



TransLink's expenditures are projected to increase to over C\$800 million (1999 constant dollars) annually in 2005. In addition, TransLink plans to fund approximately C\$1.43 billion in capital investments (C\$1.055 billion for transit, C\$333 million for roads, C\$43 million for other) between 2000 and 2005. To fund these anticipated investments, the TransLink Strategic Plan calls for:

- Increases in transit fares
- Implementation of a new vehicle charge
- Increase in the parking tax

A transit fare increase went into effect in June 2000 after approval by the TransLink and GVRD Boards. A vehicle levy was also approved by the Boards in the fall of 2000. However, implementation of the levy would require enforcement by the Province, which handles vehicle registration. The Province did not approve the responsibilities associated with the levy; consequently, it did not go into effect. As a result, TransLink had to curtail some plans for improvements and service upgrades.

In addition, TransLink is asking for Federal government assistance through infrastructure programs, a tax exemption for transit passes provided to employees, and the transfer of a portion of the Federal gasoline taxes collected in the region.

## **BENEFITS AND KEY ACHIEVEMENTS**

### **System Operations Benefits and Achievements**

- *Coordination of resources* - TransLink can utilize its entire system (roadways and transit) to respond to emergencies, special events, roadwork, or other activities.
- *Accountability and responsiveness to problems and issues* – Because TransLink is responsible for the entire transportation system, regional or interjurisdictional problems and issues are less likely to fall between the cracks than when left to multiple individual jurisdictions.

### **Institutional Benefits and Achievements**

- *Regional approach to decision making* - Because TransLink is concerned with the transportation operations of the region as a whole, decisions are based on regional system needs rather than on requests by local jurisdictions.
- *Operations-oriented planning* - Integration of planning and operations functions under a single authority enables planning activities to encompass and fund operations as well as capital development activities.
- *Streamlined processes* – Prior to TransLink, the transit operator had to seek permission from the road operator to locate a bus stop, and the road operator had to apply to the transit operator to adjust schedules. Bringing functions under one authority streamlines these and other similar processes.
- *Implementation power* - Statutory authority and the ability to raise revenue give TransLink the power to implement programs and carry out a coordinated agenda.
- *Platform for regional issues* – TransLink provides a platform for addressing regional issues relating to transportation.
- *Enhancement of cooperation* – Creating a focus on regionalism enhances awareness of regional transportation issues and fosters cooperation beyond the formal authority of TransLink.
- *Flexible funding* – TransLink's enabling legislation places few restrictions on the use of funds collected through local sources, allowing these funds to be used on transit, roadways, or other programs to provide the greatest benefit to the entire system.

*Programs are happening now that weren't happening before.*

– Sheri Plews,  
TransLink, Vice  
President,  
Contracts and  
Acquisitions.

When a barge damaged the structural integrity of one of TransLink's bridges, a structural engineer from the City of Vancouver was on the scene within an hour despite the fact that the bridge was not a formal responsibility of the City.

- *Stable funding* – Receipt of funding through dedicated regional sources (compared to provincial general funds) ensures stability of funding and reduces competing demands.
- *Accountability and efficiency of operations* – Contracted operations through subsidiaries creates enforceable performance standards, even when operations remain in the government domain.
- *Flexibility in contracting and labor issues* – Because TransLink is a government corporation, it has greater flexibility in contracting for services than does BC transit, resulting in more control over labor issues and performance standards in transit operations.

## CHALLENGES AND BEST PRACTICES

### Developing Commitment /Building a Sustainable Organization

- *Local and regional initiative* – The impetus for creating TransLink came from local officials through the existing regional body, the GVRD. The province supported the initiative through enabling legislation and delegation of funding authority.
- *Development through a consensus process* – Development of TransLink through a political process that required approval by all local jurisdictions garnered support for the newly formed organization and established a consensus-oriented culture from the beginning.
- *Public participation* – Planning efforts within the region are shaped through extensive public participation (an estimated 7,000 people participated in the development of the TransLink Strategic Plan) through community meetings, workshops, and polling. This creates robust plans with wide-scale community support, and educates the community about transportation needs and funding required to meet those needs.
- *Maintaining decision-maker participation* – Specifying Board membership in the authorizing legislation creates legitimacy for the authority and ensures that high-level officials will continue to be involved in its governance.
- *Rapid development and deadlines* – Tight statutory deadlines are imposed for development milestones, such as creation of the TransLink Strategic Plan and approval of the MRN. This keeps activities from getting bogged down in negotiations, helps to create early achievements, and fosters synergy and excitement for the organization and its activities.
- *Integration with a larger community plan* – Integration of all TransLink planning processes with a larger community plan, developed by an outside organization, provides a context for transportation planning and provides a check on TransLink's power to affect local municipalities.
- *Combination of staff backgrounds* – TransLink staff came from a number of agencies and organizations (BC Transit, GVRD, cities, BC Ministry of Transport and Highways), giving the Authority a variety of experiences, skills, and contacts to leverage.

*We have never done transportation planning in isolation.*

— Clive Rock,  
Director of  
Strategic Planning,  
TransLink

- *Municipal experience of the Chief Executive Officer (CEO)* – TransLink's CEO was the former City Manager for the City of Vancouver. Consequently, he came to TransLink with a broad contact base of local officials and administrators, an intimate familiarity with municipal government needs and processes, and experience managing a large public works organization.

### **Addressing Operational Challenges**

*Funding* – Achieving consensus on funding mechanisms was the most difficult part of approving and implementing the TransLink Strategic Plan. Public polling indicated that the public was sensitive to the introduction of higher fares, taxes, and fees. However, most participants supported the planned improvements and indicated that the cost of not doing them would be unacceptable. There was general agreement regarding the following principles on which to base funding programs:

- Any money raised should go toward improving the system
- Motorists and transit customers alike should see value for their money
- "User pay" is the preferred approach.<sup>8</sup>

Consequently, the TransLink Board approved higher transit fares and a vehicle levy. Higher fares were implemented. However, the Province would not pass legislation to enforce the vehicle levy through the vehicle registration process, effectively killing the action. Consequently, TransLink had to reduce some of its planned improvement programs. It also shifted some responsibilities for light rail transit operations to the Province.

<sup>8</sup> "STP Background," TransLink web site, Vancouver, British Columbia: TransLink, March 2001. <http://www.translink.bc.ca>.

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