



The Simon Fraser Student Society (SFSS)

**Maggie Benston Centre 2270
Simon Fraser University
8888 University Drive, BC V5A 1S6
sfss.ca**

Written Submission for the Pre-Budget Consultations in Advance of the 2020 Budget

August 2, 2019

Contact:

Jasdeep Gill | Vice President External Relations

Email: vpexternal@sfss.ca

sfss.ca



List of Recommendations

The SFSS' recommendations for *Budget 2020* are as follows:

- **Recommendation 1:** That the government provide funding for the Burnaby Mountain Gondola in the amount of 40 percent of the total cost of construction to provide a safe and sustainable way for people to travel to and from Burnaby Mountain.
- **Recommendation 2:** That the government provide additional funding in the amount of \$608 million for the Surrey Langley SkyTrain in Metro Vancouver to promote low carbon transportation options for citizens in the South of Fraser Area.

Preface

The Simon Fraser Student Society (SFSS) is a student union representing 25,000+ undergraduate students attending Simon Fraser University (SFU) across three main campuses in Burnaby, Surrey, and Vancouver. We would like to begin by thanking the Government of Canada for the following investments:

- Committing \$2.2 billion in 2017 towards transit funding in Metro Vancouver
- Providing \$45 million towards SFU Surrey campus' new Sustainable Energy Engineering Building
- Instructing the National Energy Board to reconsider the Trans Mountain Expansion Project in 2018, allowing for additional and improved consultation

Sustainability is one of the SFSS' guiding principles, which drive every decision we make as an organisation. The theme of pre-budget consultations, "Climate Emergency: The Required Transition to a Low Carbon Economy", aligns well with this principle. The SFSS supports increased efforts to reduce emissions, innovate, save money, and create jobs and healthier communities for the students we represent. Our recommendations to the Standing Committee on Finance are in line with the transition to a low carbon economy.

Background and Rationale of Recommendations

Background on Public Transit:

Sustainable transportation, which includes public transit, active transportation such as walking or biking, and even carpooling, has been shown to have many benefits, including contributing less to pollution, reducing traffic congestion and accidents, improving health, and reducing stress¹. Transit-oriented development is a key driving force of both sustainable mobility and sustainable urbanization². Increasing funding for public transit would allow for not only more sustainable transit development, but more sustainable land use and urban development planning Metro Vancouver.

TransLink, the transit authority and operator in Metro Vancouver, provides a discounted transit pass for students across the region. Nearly 95 percent of SFU undergraduate students consider reliable TransLink services important or very important³. This figure is unsurprising, as 88 percent of SFU students regularly commute to school on public transit, compared to the national average of 57 percent⁴. Furthermore, SFU students have an average transit commute time of 95 minutes roundtrip, compared to the national average of just 50 minutes. Investments in public transit in Metro Vancouver not only support a transition to a low carbon economy, but students' academic futures and well-being.

¹ Statistics Canada, "Commuters Using Sustainable Transportation in Census Metropolitan Areas," 2017, <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/as-sa/98-200-x/2016029/98-200-x2016029-eng.cfm?wbdisable=true>

² Patrick Miller, Alexandre G. de Barros, Lina Kattan, & S.C. Wirasinghe, "Analyzing the Sustainability Performance of Public Transit," *Transportation Research Part D: Transport and Environment* 44, (2016): 177-198, doi:10.1016/j.trd.2016.02.012.

³ SFSS 2019 Advocacy Survey

⁴ Student Services, "The Transportation and Transit Referendum, SFU and You," *Simon Fraser University*, 2015, <https://www.sfu.ca/students/transit.html>

Recommendation 1:

Background:

SFU Burnaby Campus is located on Burnaby Mountain and is host to the majority of all SFU undergraduate students. Transit service to Burnaby Mountain has become significant problem. Currently, 25,000 people commute by bus to and from Burnaby Mountain every day, with demand expected to grow by 60% over next twenty years⁵. Many people wait over twenty minutes before boarding due to regular pass-ups, despite service occurring as often as every two minutes at peak times⁶. Implementing a gondola to improve Burnaby Mountain transportation was first proposed in 2009. A 2018 feasibility study prepared for TransLink recommended replacing the current diesel bus service with a gondola alternative⁷. The feasibility report selected a straight-line route as the preferred alternative that would replace the existing 145 bus route that serves over half of the people who take transit to Burnaby Mountain (**Figure 1**). The proposed system would carry up to 3,000 people per hour with gaps of less than one minute⁸. This replacement would free up buses for use on other routes, reduce waiting times for riders and encourage greater use of public transit. The Burnaby Mountain Gondola Transit project feasibility study and project planning and development are funded; however, there is no committed funding for construction of this project yet.



Figure 1: Preferred gondola route from Production Way-University SkyTrain station to SFU

⁵ Navjot Sanghera, “Burnaby Mountain Urban Transit Gondola,” (presentation, Simon Fraser University VP External Relations, Burnaby, B.C., January 2019).

⁶ Mayors’ Council on Regional Transportation, “Public Meeting Agenda of the Mayors’ Council on Regional Transportation,” (revised agenda package, New Westminster, B.C., July 25, 2019).

⁷ CH2M HILL Canada Limited, “Burnaby Mountain Gondola Transit – Feasibility Study,” *TransLink*, April 2018, https://www.translink.ca/-/media/Documents/plans_and_projects/rapid_transit_projects/burnaby_mtn_gondola/BMGT_Feasibility_Study_04-27-2018.pdf

⁸ *Supra* note 5.

Rationale:

The report commissioned by TransLink recognises the proposed gondola route as a suitable transportation alternative for Burnaby Mountain. The gondola is more efficient, reliable, and safe than the current bus fleet, particularly in the event of heavy snowfall, earthquake, fire, or hazardous event caused by the Burnaby Mountain tank farm, located adjacent to SFU⁹. According to the 2019 SFSS Advocacy Survey, 62.1 percent of students identified Trans Mountain tank farm safety issues as very important or important. In the event of road closures, it is impossible for traffic, including emergency personnel, to enter or exit the mountain. Future student safety and well-being are a significant concern as the pressure on the existing transportation system over the next decade will increase with the growing SFU student population as well as the expected growth of the UniverCity residential community on Burnaby Mountain. Implementation of the gondola is also projected to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by an estimated minimum of 2,348 tonnes¹⁰ annually, due to decreased vehicular traffic traveling up Burnaby Mountain.

Recommendation 2:

Background:

In 2014, the Metro Vancouver Mayors' Council on Regional Transportation identified the need for rapid transit in the South of Fraser Area (**Figure 2**) in Metro Vancouver. Both a light rail transit (LRT) option and a SkyTrain (Metro Vancouver's mass rapid transit system) extension option were proposed. The LRT was the preferred option, and TransLink began conducting planning and development work. The Government of Canada committed to \$1.37 billion in funding, covering 40 percent of costs of the proposed LRT and the Broadway Subway, another major transit project in Vancouver¹¹. However, in 2018, the Mayors' Council of Metro Vancouver decided to suspend the project, proposing a SkyTrain Expo Line extension from Surrey to Langley along the Fraser Highway. The estimated cost of the Surrey Langley SkyTrain (SLS) is \$3.12 billion, as opposed to the LRT's cost of \$1.65 billion^{12,13}. Approximately \$1.6 billion is currently available for the project. Without additional funding, the SLS will only reach Fleetwood, a distance of 7 kilometres rather than 16 kilometres¹⁴.

SFU Surrey campus is located just one SkyTrain stop away from the proposed terminus of the extension. The SLS would also bring students to SkyTrain stations that have connecting buses to the Burnaby and Vancouver campuses. As of Fall 2018, one quarter of all SFU undergraduates live in the South of Fraser Area¹⁵. Approximately 20% of SFU undergraduates took one or more course at Surrey campus in Spring 2019¹⁶.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ Kendra Mangione, "Feds to Invest \$1.37B in Broadway subway, Surrey LRT," CTV News Vancouver, September 4, 2018, <https://bc.ctvnews.ca/feds-to-invest-1-37b-in-broadway-subway-surrey-lrt-1.4079644>

¹² TransLink, "South of Fraser Rapid Transit Strategy Refresh [Media Briefing]," (New Westminster, B.C.: July 19, 2019).

¹³ Amy Reid, "Surrey Council Unanimously Passes Motion to 'Cancel' LRT, Surrey Now-Leader, November 5, 2018, <https://www.surreynowleader.com/news/breaking-surrey-unanimously-council-passes-motion-to-cancel-lrt/>

¹⁴ *Supra* note 2.

¹⁵ Institutional Research and Planning, "Table ST-26: Students by Municipality of Residence - Fall 2018," *Simon Fraser University*, 2019, <https://www.sfu.ca/content/dam/sfu/irp/students/documents/ST26.pdf>

¹⁶ Institutional Research and Planning, "Table ST-40: Undergraduate Headcount by Location of Courses Taken," *Simon Fraser University*, 2019, <https://www.sfu.ca/content/dam/sfu/irp/students/documents/ST40.pdf>

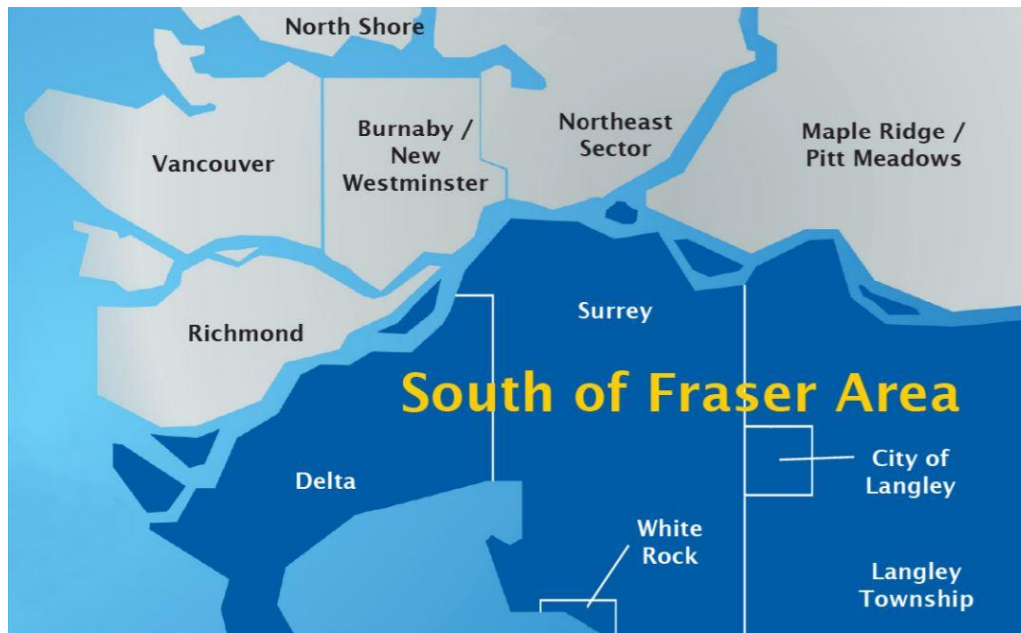


Figure 2: South of Fraser Area in Metro Vancouver

Rationale:

TransLink has developed the South of Fraser Area Transit Plan, which identifies that the South of Fraser Area has grown rapidly and is predicted to grow faster than Metro Vancouver as a whole in the future, bringing the population of roughly 600,000 to 1 million by 2031. With the opening of SFU Surrey’s new Sustainable Energy Engineering Building and the Sustainable Energy Engineering program in Fall 2019, over 500 new full-time equivalent students will call Surrey campus home. SFU students living in the South of Fraser Area, particularly those at Surrey campus, would particularly benefit from this project. The major environmental benefits of this project will be reducing greenhouse gas emissions from vehicles and replacing diesel buses with an electric SkyTrain service¹⁷.

The \$608 million is calculated by subtracting the funds currently available for the project from the cost of the full SLS project, multiplied by the proportion the Government of Canada is expected to contribute to new public transit construction and expansion as per the integrated bilateral agreement between Infrastructure Canada and the Province of British Columbia (40 percent)¹⁸.

Conclusion

Due to the environmental benefits, predicted high ridership, and benefit to SFSS students, the SFSS asks that the Government of Canada provides additional funding for these transit projects to ensure they are built in a timely manner, in order to advance Canada’s move to a low carbon economy. The SFSS would like to thank the Standing Committee on Finance for taking the time to read our recommendations. We look forward to the opportunity to speak to the Committee, if possible.

¹⁷ *Supra* note 2.

¹⁸ *Canada - British Columbia: Integrated Bilateral Agreement (for the Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program)*, (2018).