

MEMORANDUM

July 20, 2010

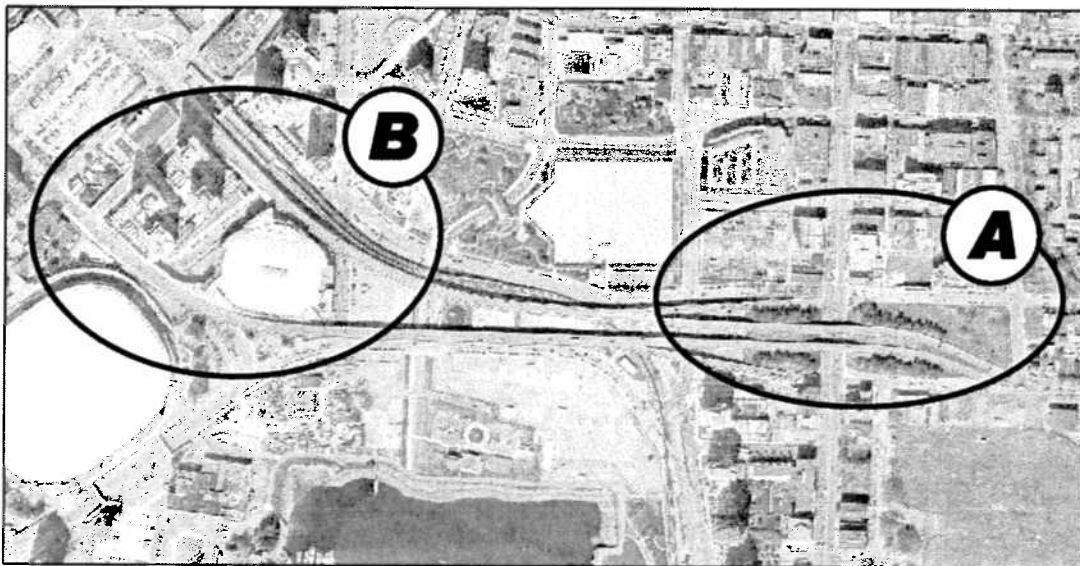
TO: Mayor and Council

CC: City Managers Correspondence Group;
Jerry Dobrovolny, Assistant City Engineer, Transportation;
Brent Toderian, Director of Planning;
Lon LaClaire, Manager, Strategic Transportation;
Rob Jenkins, Assistant Director Central Area Planning

FROM: Penny Ballem, City Manager

SUBJECT: Georgia and Dunsmuir Viaducts Study

The Georgia and Dunsmuir Viaducts were constructed in a time when freeways were being built throughout North America. The figure below highlights the two main characteristics of the viaducts. The eastern end (A) is the section that was built based on the old freeway plan and the western end (B) is an extension of the downtown grid.



In the past two decades, even though there has been an increase in the number of people travelling to and from the downtown core, there has been a decrease in the number of

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vehicle trips. With the recent addition of the Canada Line there has been a further reduction in vehicle trips. This trend indicates that as more people shift modes to walking, cycling and transit less road space is required for vehicles. The question is when can capacity be reduced and by how much?

The Council initiative to examine the viaducts will help to develop a new vision that could include removal of some portions or all of the viaducts as well as provide options for phasing the timing of any initiative. This study is timely as it will provide information for both the Northeast False Creek Planning Study that is currently underway and the update of the Transportation Plan that is planned to commence this fall.

During the discussion on the Georgia and Dunsmuir Viaduct Study at the Planning and Environment subcommittee meeting on June 24, 2010, Council indicated that they would prefer to see a phased approach for the viaducts study. They also indicated that in the first phase they would like to have a better understanding of

- The potential traffic diversion to other City streets, including an assessment of future traffic volumes, resulting from removing some portions or all of the viaducts
- A better understanding of the soils conditions and contamination in the area around the viaducts.

To undertake this work Council approved a budget of \$300,000 for the first phase. The following outlines the proposal for the phasing of the study with a first phase of \$300,000.

Phasing the study would allow for Staff to report back to Council with further information without committing to the full funding of the study. The summary at the end of the first phase would not provide all the details required to make a decision on the future of the viaducts, however it would help Council decide if they want to proceed with Phase 2 and which alternatives should be included.

The first phase of the study would not conduct any analysis of land use, structural costs or review of urban design opportunities. It would be a technical study of transportation impact and environmental contamination issues that would inform Council of some of the major risks associated with alterations to the viaducts, but not the potential benefits resulting from reconfiguration and potential redevelopment.

The first phase would also not involve any substantial public consultation activities.

Phase 1

The initial phase of the study would focus on providing more information to Council on the potential traffic diversion to other City Streets and a summary of soils conditions in the properties surrounding the viaducts. The first phase is expected to be completed by February 2011. In the timeline previously reported to Council, this date coincides with the Council briefing after the completion of the technical work. In both cases this is the time required to procure a consultant and for them to undertake the technical work.

Transportation

The transportation work will help to better understand the transportation flows and modes that use the viaducts as well as trip origins and destinations. Tasks in this phase would include:

- Summarising the traffic volumes that currently use the viaducts by mode and determine where the trips originate and terminate including forecasts of the volumes of people and goods that need to be moved into the downtown now and into the future.
- Evaluate the carrying capacity of the vehicle based transportation routes into the downtown
- Evaluate the carrying capacity of the transit based transportation routes into the downtown
- Based on the origins and destinations of trips into the downtown provide a summary of the vehicle volumes that would be diverted to alternate routes if the viaducts were A) Completely removed B) Capacity reduced by 50% (which could be achieved by taking down one viaduct) C) Capacity reduced by 20% (which could be achieved by bringing them down to Main Street)
- Based on previous experience of removing transportation capacity (Burrard Bridge Bike lane, Canada Line Construction, Olympic Experience) examine the ability of the other routes to carry the volumes for the three scenarios without traffic diverting into adjacent neighbourhoods.
- Estimate the volume of vehicles that would need to be displaced in order to not surpass the roadway carrying capacity. Does this change in the future?
- Based on the origins and destinations of people entering into the downtown what options are there to divert more people to transit. Are any of these in existing plans? Are there any other options?
- Based on the history of vehicle traffic volumes entering the downtown and other transit initiatives develop a timeline in which capacity could be reduced on the viaducts.

Soils Conditions

- Research what soils conditions reports currently exist and summarise
- Where information is missing, such as the two large parcels of land adjacent to Main Street, conduct soils testing to evaluate the conditions

Phase 2

At the end of Phase 1 Staff will report back to Council with the results of the above studies as well as the costs and staffing requirements for Phase 2. At this point Council can decide whether or not to proceed and refine the options to be examined. Phase 2 would involve

Structural Analysis

- the detailed look at any options to be explored including structural feasibility and cost estimates,

Urban Design Analysis

- Detailed urban design analysis of the issues and opportunities created by each of the viaduct options including impacts on public realm, parks, greenways, livability, public views, and urban structure.

Land Use Options Analysis

- Analysis of land use options and opportunities created by each of the viaduct options.
- Exploration of opportunities for increased open space.
- Exploration of opportunities for increased development potential.
- Exploration of opportunities for increased open space and cultural space
- Exploration of opportunities for City initiatives such as affordable housing

Financial Analysis

- Summary of the costs and benefits of each of the options including demolition, construction, SkyTrain reconfiguration and any new development potential.

Public Consultation

- Consultation would include a broad range of local and regional interests including local residents, business associations, transportation groups (including goods movement), development interests (large property owners and development associations), government agencies (e.g. Translink and the Port) and other interested parties.



Penny Ballem, MSc MD FRCP
City Manager

tel: 604.873.7626
fax: 604.873.7641
penny.ballem@vancouver.ca

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