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**TO:** ACTING CITY MANAGER **DATE:** 2021 July 07

**FROM:** DIRECTOR PLANNING AND BUILDING **FILE:** 90300 20  
*Reference: Burnaby Mountain Gondola  
Transit Project*

**SUBJECT: BURNABY MOUNTAIN GONDOLA ROUTE EVALUATION AND  
PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT RESULTS**

**PURPOSE:** To update Council on TransLink's evaluation of route options and results of public engagement for the Burnaby Mountain Gondola project.

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**RECOMMENDATIONS:**

1. **THAT** Council receive the findings of TransLink's technical work, which show an indication for Route 1 as the preferred route.
2. **THAT** staff be authorized to continue liaising with TransLink on the gondola project.
3. **THAT** a copy of this report be forwarded to:
  - a. Marisa Espinosa, Director of Major Studies, TransLink;
  - b. Terry Beech, MP; and,
  - c. Honourable Katrina Chen, MLA.

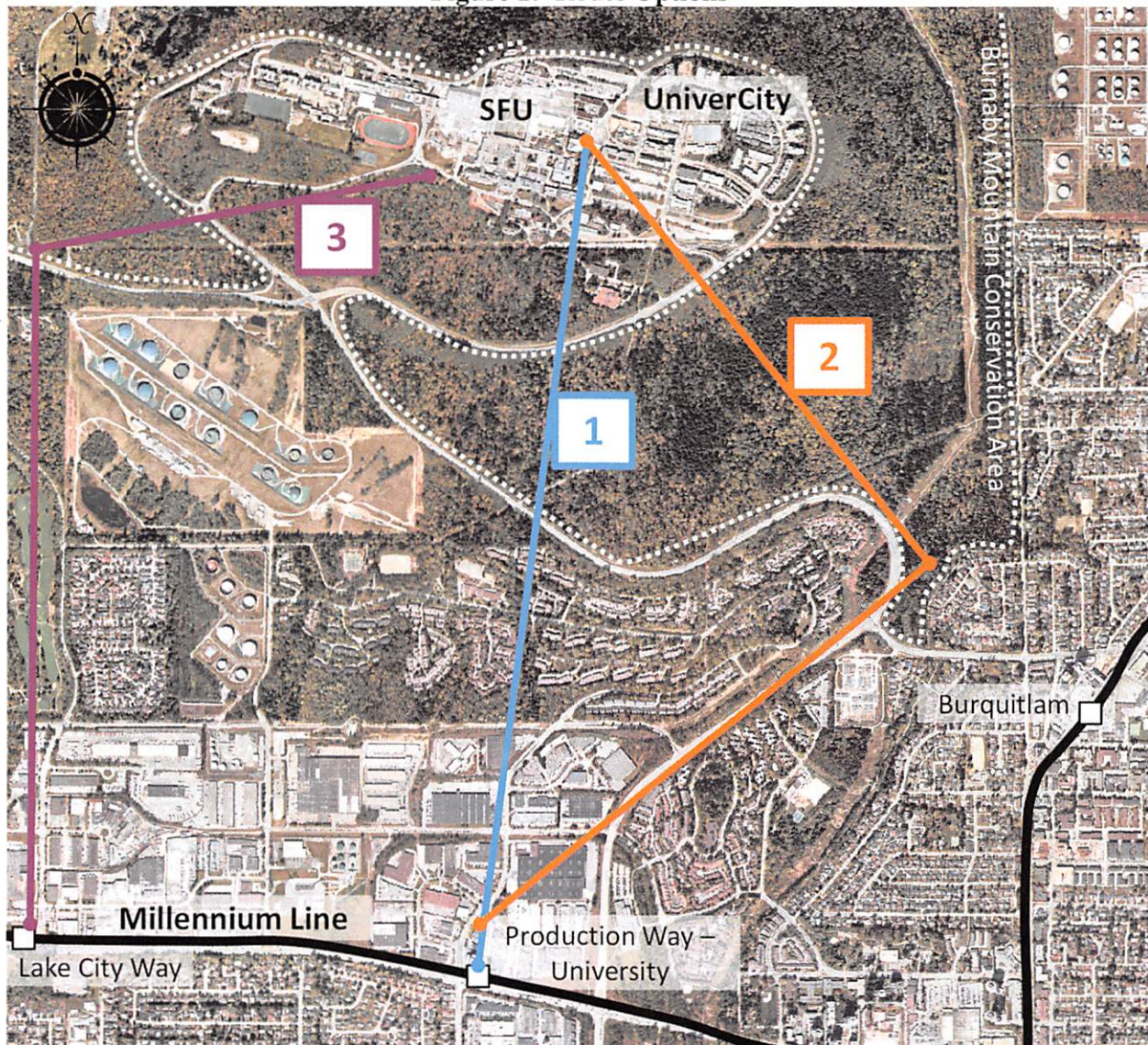
**REPORT****1.0 INTRODUCTION**

A gondola to Burnaby Mountain has the potential to provide shorter travel times, more frequent departures, greater winter reliability, and reduced noise and emissions. On 2019 May 27, Council expressed support in principle for a gondola link from SkyTrain to the top of Burnaby Mountain, subject to certain Core Principles identified at that time. TransLink has now conducted technical analysis and public engagement on the basis of those Core Principles. This report presents the results of their process and seeks further direction from Council.

**2.0 WORK DONE IN THE LAST TWO YEARS**

The work since 2019 May 27 has focused on three possible routes for the gondola. The three routes are shown in *Figure 1*, which also indicates the boundary of the Burnaby Mountain Conservation Area.

Figure 1: Route Options



## 2.1 TransLink’s Technical Findings

Each of the three routes offers varying levels of public benefits, as well as widely differing impacts. TransLink retained a team of consultants with gondola experience to evaluate those benefits and impacts. Their findings are described in TransLink’s *Burnaby Mountain Gondola – Route Selection Report*<sup>1</sup>, released on 2021 March 01.

TransLink’s analysis indicates that Route 1 has good financial performance, the highest societal benefits, lowest capital and operating costs, smallest footprint, best geotechnical conditions, fewest park impacts, and fewest environmental impacts. Route 2 has significant challenges that cannot be mitigated: impacts to forests, parklands and the riparian area of Stoney Creek, as well as a lack public

<sup>1</sup> Available at: <https://www.translink.ca/-/media/translink/documents/plans-and-projects/rapid-transit/burnaby-mountain-gondola/route-selection-report/route-selection-report.pdf>

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support. Route 3 has significant challenges that also cannot be mitigated: costs that exceed benefits and a resultant difficulty in attracting investment, forest and parkland impacts, proximity to Trans Mountain Pipeline's tank farm, and a lack of public support.

TransLink's report concludes that "Route 1 is the preferred and recommended route for a Burnaby Mountain Gondola."

## **2.2 TransLink's Public Engagement**

TransLink conducted two phases of public engagement in 2020. Results were reported separately for Forest Grove, UniverCity, SFU, and the rest of Burnaby. All these groups were represented in the responses.

Respondents from Forest Grove were opposed to the project on any alignment, with only 33% stating support or strong support for the gondola (omits those stating weak support). All other respondent groups indicated support in the range of 75% to 90%. All groups favoured Route 1, by a small margin in Forest Grove and overwhelmingly for all other groups.

Forest Grove residents expressed concerns about specific aspects of the project, including:

- noise, privacy, visual presence, property impacts, and compensation;
- system safety and objects falling from cabins;
- environmental impacts including trees, streams, and land; and,
- exploring alternative transit solutions, including battery electric buses.

## **2.3 TransLink's Commitments**

TransLink recognizes that many people in Forest Grove still have concerns about the project. Some of these cannot be fully resolved until the project is at a more advanced stage of design, and funded. That is not possible at this time because it is currently a planning exercise; not a funded capital project. However, to address concerns at this time to the extent they can, TransLink's *Route Selection Report* includes several commitments to Council and residents if the project proceeds. These are shown in *Appendix A*.

The strongest commitments relate to compensation and noise. TransLink will compensate the two multi-family properties beneath Route 1 for passage over their lands, and the gondola will not exceed background noise levels in Forest Grove.

Other commitments reflect work that would be done if the project proceeds to design. These include measures to reduce impacts related to: privacy, property, safety, visual presence, environment, and First Nations heritage resources.

## **3.0 TRANSLINK'S PROPOSED NEXT STEPS**

TransLink is now proposing to advance the project to the next level of detail: the preparation of a Business Case and the exploration of funding options. These would allow TransLink to determine if there is a viable capital project and where such a project would fit within their long-term plans. TransLink is proposing to conduct this additional work only in the context of Route 1. Routes 2 and 3 would not be considered further, due to the above-noted deficiencies.

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#### 4.0 DISCUSSION

City staff have reviewed TransLink’s technical report and concur with the key finding that Route 1 is the best technical solution. It is also clear that many residents of Forest Grove (the majority of those that responded) are opposed to the project. There is particular concern for the two multi-family residential properties that would be directly beneath Route 1.

TransLink is proposing to prepare a Business Case and explore funding options. This is not a decision on whether or not to construct, but it would provide additional information on whether or not to construct, and when. This is important information for TransLink’s larger planning process, identifying key projects region-wide.

There is no decision on construction at this time. TransLink’s proposed short-term actions are about financial planning, and would therefore not include additional public consultation. Further consultation would need to be based on additional information on impact mitigation or compensation that would not arise from a Business Case. However, it is clear that further discussions with residents of Forest Grove would be necessary if this were to become a funded project. This is covered in TransLink’s commitments, as mentioned above.

#### 5.0 CONCLUSION

TransLink has completed the work that Council requested, conducting additional technical analysis and public engagement consistent with Council’s Core Principles for the project. The results of that work indicate significant challenges and a lack of public support for Routes 2 and 3. In contrast, their analysis shows Route 1 has the highest benefits and is generally supported by the public, with the exception of Forest Grove where further discussions may be beneficial and warranted as next steps. It is therefore recommended:

1. **THAT** Council receive the findings of TransLink’s technical work, which show an indication for Route 1 as the preferred route.
2. **THAT** staff be authorized to continue liaising with TransLink on the gondola project.
3. **THAT** a copy of this report be forwarded to:
  - a. Marisa Espinosa, Director of Major Studies, TransLink;
  - b. Terry Beech, MP; and,
  - c. Honourable Katrina Chen, MLA.

  
E.W. Kozak, Director  
PLANNING AND BUILDING

SR:tn

**Attachment**

cc: Director Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services      Director Engineering  
Director Public Safety and Community Services      Director Corporate Services  
City Clerk

## **APPENDIX A: TRANSLINK'S COMMITMENTS**

### **Avoid increases in noise**

- TransLink commits to designing a gondola system that does not exceed background noise levels in Forest Grove.
- Additional noise modelling will be conducted to verify this commitment; in addition, TransLink will model in-cabin noise impacts on the Forest Grove neighbourhood.

### **Protect residential privacy**

- TransLink will explore outfitting gondola cabins with tinting windows that will automatically block visibility into homes in the Forest Grove neighbourhood.

### **Minimize property impacts**

- TransLink will continue to refine the gondola design to minimize the number of properties and residential units within the gondola right of way.

### **Compensate impacted residents**

- TransLink will provide compensation to the two multi-family property complexes for aerial passage of the gondola. Residents can remain in their homes and are not required to move.

### **Maximize safety**

- TransLink will undertake a safety assessment to better understand risks to the system from external sources and incorporate mitigations into the design.
- TransLink will develop operational safety procedures with guidance from ropeway experts.
- TransLink will conduct industry-standard maintenance to ensure the integrity of the system.
- TransLink will implement design and policy measures to ensure passenger safety.

### **Minimize visual presence**

- TransLink is committed to assessing the visibility of the gondola and using natural topographic features and design elements to minimize the visual presence of the gondola in the Forest Grove neighbourhood.

### **Minimize environmental impacts**

- TransLink will continue to assess and mitigate potential environmental impacts of the project.
- TransLink will seek to minimize construction-related environmental impacts.
- TransLink will adhere to tree replacement and other requirements in the City of Burnaby's Tree Bylaw.

### **Minimize impacts to Indigenous heritage resources**

- TransLink will commit to conducting an Archaeological Impact Assessment (AIA) for ground disturbing activities in areas identified as AIA required.
- TransLink will ensure that all crews conducting ground disturbing activities within any portion of the project area receive Chance Find Training and a project specific Chance Find Procedure.
- TransLink will continue to engage with the Indigenous Nations to better understand areas of current and traditional cultural importance.