

REPORT
REGULAR COUNCIL MEETING
1990 OCTOBER 09

TO: HIS WORSHIP, THE MAYOR AND
ALDERMEN

FROM: HERITAGE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

SUBJECT: **B.C. PARKWAY/CENTRAL PARK TRAMLINE
INTERPRETIVE HISTORY TRAIL**

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. THAT the draft Walking Tour Guide of the Central Park Tramline be approved and that staff be authorized to prepare a report on the costs of printing and distribution of a brochure.
2. THAT staff be authorized to begin work on the design and cost for the Phase I site works of the plan to install three interpretive plaques which outline the history of the Central Park Tramline, Central Park and Power House Site.

REPORT

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This implementation plan stems from the Interpretive History Trails report adopted by Burnaby Council on 1990 May 14. This report recommended that the B.C. Parkway be considered as one of the pilot projects for development.

On 1990 June 27, the Heritage Advisory Committee passed the following resolutions:

"THAT the B.C. Parkway/Central Park Tramline be designated as the first Interpretive History Trail for development.

THAT staff prepare the design guidelines and implementation costs for developing the B.C. Parkway as an Interpretive History Trail.

THAT staff prepare a walking tour brochure of the B.C. Parkway to promote the implementation of the Interpretive History Trail."

An evaluation of the Central Park Tramline Interpretive History Trail has identified four main issues:

1. The identification of heritage resources and the development of an interpretation plan.
2. The implementation process for this project with the B.C. Transit Corporation which now administers the British Columbia Parkway.
3. The integration of this project with other plans developed by the Burnaby Parks and Recreation Commission.
4. The development of a phased implementation process.

INTERNAL DISTRIBUTION:

AGENDA 1990 OCTOBER 09
COPY - MUNICIPAL MANAGER
- DIRECTOR FINANCE
- DIR. PL. & BLDG. INSP.
- DIR. REC. & CULT. SERV.

2.0 CULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE CENTRAL PARK TRAMLINE

The Central Park Tramline is the most logical choice to use as the initial demonstration of an interpretive history trail because of its cultural significance to Burnaby. This Parkway has the ability to unite some of the Municipality's most important historic sites which are linked to the development of one of Canada's oldest interurban electric railways. (See Appendix I for a brief history of the Central Park Tramline).

The creation and operation of this interurban railway provided the stimulus needed to unite the settlers in the district between the cities of Vancouver and New Westminster. The introduction of a reliable transportation method to a district ripe for agricultural and residential development hastened the need for a Municipal Government to manage growth. Burnaby's Municipal Government began as the tramline was being constructed. Initial meetings and the first election even took place at the the tramway company's own power house in Burnaby.

In Burnaby the rate of growth following the introduction of the tramline was rapid and substantial. The Central Park Tramline was also a primary force behind the development patterns of South Burnaby. Real estate speculators subdivided large tracts of land along the tramline for sale to settlers. The Provincial Government established a large public park and later created a subdivision to increase settlement and agricultural production along the tramline. Where a station was established at major cross roads these became the focus of settlement, commerce, industry, and cultural activities. Station communities such as Central Park, Jubilee, and Edmonds were the focus for South Burnaby's residents from the 1890's to the time of World War II.

As a result of the tramline's importance in Burnaby's early development many of its most important heritage resources are located along its original route. These include the historic right-of-way and station locations, heritage buildings and landscapes, and historic sites which include the location of Burnaby's first municipal meetings. All of these elements form an important heritage resource in the community, which can be united for the purpose of protection and interpretation of this key part of our history.

2.1 CENTRAL PARK TRAMLINE

2.1.1. Route

The original 1891 route of the tramline followed Sixth Street from Tenth Avenue in New Westminster, and along Edmonds Street to Kingsway. A private right-of-way was secured from Kingsway and Edmonds to Boundary Road. In 1893 a second branch was built from Edmonds along Kingsway to New Westminster's Twelfth Street. In 1912 when the line was double-tracked, the Connaught Hill Cut-off was constructed from Buller Avenue on the original line to Tenth Avenue and into New Westminster. Today the old Central Park Tramline route can be divided into three sections: the street section including the portions of Kingsway, Edmonds, and Sixth Street; the SkyTrain/B.C. Parkway route; and the Highland Park Line between Buller Avenue and Kingsway. For the purpose of the interpretive history trail only the separated right-of-way sections, that is those portions of the line not on the streets, are proposed to be used.

2.1.2. Stations

Stations along the route of the Central Park Tramline were established at important cross roads to serve the needs of the community. During their life they became a focus for the surrounding neighborhood and often the station name became associated with the district. Research has discovered the following stations:

Mainline and Highland Park Line Stations

Central Park Station	Kingsway
Patterson Station	Patterson Avenue
McKay Station	McKay Avenue
(formerly Keeper Station)	
West Burnaby Station	Sussex Avenue
Dow Station	Dow Avenue
Jubilee Station	Imperial Street.
Royal Oak Station	Royal Oak Avenue
Highland Park Station	Buller Avenue
(formerly Ladysmith Station)	
Gilley Station	Gilley Avenue
Power House Station	Griffiths Avenue
Edmonds Station	Edmonds Street
(formerly Junction Station)	

Connaught Hill Cut-off Stations

Fraser Arm Station	Gilley Avenue
Prenter Station	Conway Avenue
McGregor Station	Griffiths Avenue
Leaside Station	Stride Avenue
Connaught Hill	Tenth Avenue

(See attached Figure 1)

2.2 HERITAGE RESOURCES ALONG THE CENTRAL PARK TRAMLINE

2.2.1. Historic Sites

The Central Park Tramline has been witness to many historic moments in the history of Burnaby. The sites of historic meetings, first time occurrences, celebrations, important buildings and special visits are all part of the collective memory of a place. The sites identified here have special significance for Burnaby and deserve commemoration with a descriptive plaque and in some instances reconstruction of site elements.

(See attached Figure 2)

- A) The Central Park Station Community included Burnaby's first store, post office and Church all located on the B.C. Telephone Building Site.
- B) The Royal Engineer's Military Reserve set aside on the False Creek Trail for the defense of New Westminster the Capital City for the Colony of British Columbia. This old reserve comprised District Lots 151, 152, and 153, which today includes most of Metrotown and Central Park.
- C) Central Park is Burnaby's oldest public recreation ground and was set aside as a Provincial Park in 1891. It comprised the lands set aside for the Military Reserve. In 1894 the Park assumed its present configuration when the eastern half was sold to settlers.

The Park includes many historic sites which are part of Burnaby's cultural history. The picnic grounds, bandstand, rifle range, sports field and agricultural hall were important in the lives of early Burnaby residents. For example, the Central Park Agricultural Hall was the site of Burnaby's annual Fall Fair, political meetings and elections between 1901 and 1921.
- D) A portion of Central Park was sold by the Provincial Government to farmers in order to increase agricultural production and settlement along the Central Park Tramline. The original subdivision focused on the tramline and has given Metrotown a distinctive street pattern. Many of the street names in Metrotown can be traced back to the original settlers and Pioneer Avenue was named in their memory.

- E) The Jubilee Station Community was one of Burnaby's most well known shopping and residential areas. Some of the original stores and homes still surround the old station site.
- F) Gilley Ave was originally constructed by the Gilley Brothers as a logging road to access their timber land in District Lot 97. Historic photographs show the original logging operations there.
- G) The Westminster and Vancouver Tramway Company constructed an impressive combined steam-powered electric generating plant and a four stall tram barn at a cost of \$20,000 at Griffiths Avenue in 1891. This Power House could provide all of the energy needed to operate the tramline and streetcar operations in the two cities. Also at this site was Sample's Boarding House and cottages for the tramline's workmen. In 1892 the residents of Burnaby met at the Power House to discuss Municipal Incorporation and later to elect the first council.
- H) In 1899 Burnaby constructed its first Municipal Hall at Kingsway and Edmonds at a cost of \$906. In 1912 a substantial concrete and brick hall was constructed and used until 1953 when the first section of the present hall was completed in Central Burnaby. The old hall served briefly as the Police Building until 1970 when it was demolished. During its life the Hall was the focus for many Community celebrations and visits from the Royal Family including the Prince of Wales, King George VI and Queen Elizabeth, and Princess Elizabeth. Canadian dignitaries such Prime Minister Arthur Meighan and Governor Generals including the Duke of Connaught and Lord Willingdon also made ceremonial visits.
- I) The Edmonds Station Community included the Municipal Hall and many important businesses and cultural institutions. Business blocks faced both Kingsway and Edmonds as did many prominent residences. The Edmonds Block was a large flatiron building located on the south-east corner of Edmonds and Kingsway.

2.2.2. Heritage Buildings and Landscapes

Adjacent to the Central Park Tramline are some of Burnaby's most important heritage structures and others which may also have heritage value. Important Municipal landscapes are also present and should be considered for preservation. The following list of resources should be considered as part of the Tramline's heritage potential.

(See attached Figure 3)

- A) St. John the Divine Anglican Church (3895 Kingsway) which was constructed in 1905, is Burnaby's oldest religious building and an important South Burnaby landmark.
- B) The Central Park entrance arch and stone wall was constructed c.1912 as the result of a land trade with the B.C. Electric Company. The wrought iron arch and illuminated "Central Park" sign was a familiar landmark until the iron was removed in 1968. The stone wall still outlines the former Central Park Station site. This municipal landmark could be considered for a future restoration project.
- C) The Royal Arch at the corner of Patterson and Kingsway commemorates the Silver Jubilee of the Reign of King George V. The arch was the former entrance to the Vancouver Club and was moved to Central Park in 1935 after the 1891 building was demolished. It requires careful conservation and commemoration as a community monument.

D) Although the Burnaby South School site will soon be redeveloped, some heritage elements will be preserved. This includes the War Memorial, tennis court and the present Drama Building. This structure was designed in 1914 by the School Board Architect Joseph Bowman. Originally named Kingsway West School, the building became part of Burnaby South High School in 1923.

E) The old Municipal Hall site at Edmonds and Kingsway still retains plants and open spaces which were once part of the Municipal Hall civic park. These elements could be utilized to commemorate the important cultural history of this site.

3.0 INTERPRETATION PLAN

3.1 INTERPRETATION FOCUS

The Central Park Tramline is the focus of so much of South Burnaby's heritage that key resources are considered excellent opportunities for interpretation.

The main focus should concentrate on the history of the tramline itself and its contribution to Burnaby's development. The identification of the tramline's stations along the entire route would assist in demonstrating the theme of transportation development and also serve to unite the interpretive history trail. Following this theme the identification of the Powerhouse site can be seen to be key in demonstrating the importance of the tramline to the Municipality's incorporation.

The secondary theme or interpretation focus is the identification of sites along the route which relate to the introduction of the tramline. These include the Municipal Hall site, Central Park and the station communities of Central Park, Jubilee, and Edmonds.

3.2 INTERPRETIVE TECHNIQUES

Several techniques have been identified to interpret the heritage of the Central Park Tramline. These methods can be used together in order to give the interpretive history trail a high level of prominence in the community.

a) **Walking Tour Guide:**

Small brochures have been used frequently throughout the Lower Mainland to bring heritage information to residents and visitors. These guides can be produced relatively inexpensively and can be distributed through schools, public buildings and tourism centers.

b) **Interpretive Plaques:**

Interpretive plaques can provide a good opportunity to mark heritage sites along the Central Park Tramline. They have the distinct advantage of being always on site and accessible to the public for viewing. These plaques can now be produced with enamel to use colour and images for increased visual interest and legibility. Enamel plaques can also resist weathering and most vandalism attempts over a long period of time.

c) **Interpretive Markers:**

Interpretive Markers differ from plaques in that they are smaller and contain less written information. They have been used to mark historic transportation routes and the boundaries of historic town sites and forts. They could prove useful to unite the heritage of the 6.5 Kilometer Central Park Tramline route in Burnaby and complement a walking tour guide. Markers could be installed at the sites of the 16 former tram stations in order to provide a continuous interpretation to the B.C Parkway.

d) Indoor Interpretation Centres:

The heritage of Central Park (Metrotown) and Edmonds is so extensive that single interpretive plaques and a walking tour guide may be supplemented by more detailed displays within Public Buildings in these communities. Extensive interpretation could be provided through permanent photographic murals and text. Historic photographs can bring to life the history of the these communities and contribute to its identity. These interpretive areas could be highlighted in a Walking Tour brochure and signage along the interpretive history trail.

e) Reconstruction of Historic Structures:

The previous report identified two historic structures which could be reconstructed for the purpose of commemoration and interpretation. The old Central Park Bandstand was a prominent feature of the picnic grounds from the 1890's to the 1930's. This heritage feature could be reconstructed to commemorate the Centennial of Central Park in 1991 and provide a reminder of the history behind this important public amenity and serve as a focus for public events. The old Central Park Tramline had many attractive small tram shelters which identified important stops along the route. Reconstructing one of these structures could provide a useful shelter for bus passengers at Edmonds and restore a symbol to an important heritage resource.

4.0 IMPLEMENTATION PROCESS

4.1 COORDINATION OF INTERPRETIVE HISTORY TRAIL PROJECT

4.1.1 Burnaby Parks and Recreation Department

The Burnaby Parks and Recreation Department has leased the Highland Park Line section of the Central Park Tramline. They have developed this as a park trail from Edmonds to Buller to link several Parks. Installation and maintenance of plaques along this section must be coordinated with the Parks and Recreation Commission and Staff.

The Burnaby Beautification Committee, which is responsible to the Parks & Recreation Commission, has developed the landscaping along portions of this section. As part of their plans a commemoration of Powerhouse Park has been suggested. The installation of a plaque could be undertaken by the Heritage Advisory Committee in cooperation with the Beautification Committee. The placement of an interpretive plaque within a redeveloped setting will enhance the public's appreciation of the contribution local history can provide to the urban landscape.

4.1.2 British Columbia Transit

The responsibility for the B.C. Parkway was once organized under the B.C. Parkway Society. However, since the completion of this project the B.C. Rapid Transit Company Ltd., a Crown Corporation, has assumed responsibility for the maintenance of the Parkway. Another Crown Corporation, B.C. Transit, is responsible for the approval of new projects.

Contact has already been established by Municipal Staff with B.C. Transit concerning the interpretation of the former Central Park Tramline. Any proposals will be brought before B.C. Transit staff to discuss approval, installation and future maintenance.

4.2 IMPLEMENTATION PLAN - PHASE I

Work on the implementation of the Central Park Tramline Interpretive History Trail could begin immediately in order to commemorate the Centennial of its construction in 1991. This initial phase should also include recognition of the site of the Powerhouse and the Central Park Centennial. With the concurrence of the Heritage Advisory Committee, staff will undertake to prepare detailed plans and cost estimates for consideration and final presentation to Council.

Projects for Phase I:

a) **Walking Tour Brochure**

Completion and distribution of a Walking Tour Brochure of the Central Park Tramline. This guide will outline the history of the tramline and its contribution to Burnaby's development. The guide will also highlight the historic sites, buildings and landscapes along the B.C. Parkway and Highland Park Line routes.

This guide will be printed and distributed to public buildings in Burnaby and local tourist information centers. The guide could also be available to schools for use in local history classes.

b) **Central Park Tramline Interpretive Plaque**

A plaque which outlines the history of the construction and operation of the Central Park Tramline could be constructed at a prominent location on the B.C. Parkway. The Metrotown SkyTrain Station is one possible location which would receive a great deal of pedestrian traffic. The plaque could be unveiled on the anniversary of the first tram run through Burnaby.

c) **Central Park Interpretive Plaque**

Burnaby's first Park celebrates its Centennial on June 10, 1991. A plaque could be prepared to commemorate the anniversary of the dedication of this historic park by the Provincial Government.

d) **Power House Site Interpretive Plaque**

Of all the historic sites along the Central Park Tramline the location of the Power House deserves commemoration. Not only was it an important building for the Tramline, but it was the site of Burnaby's first Municipal meetings and elections.

The project initiated by the Burnaby Beatification Committee provides the ideal opportunity to identify the site of Burnaby's incorporation.

4.3 IMPLEMENTATION PLAN - PHASE II

The second phase will build on the lessons learned during the first phase. The effectiveness of the guide and plaques can be monitored and any necessary improvements made to later additions.

The first step in entering Phase II will entail setting out a course of action for further interpretation. Concepts outlined in this report which can be investigated further and the Heritage Advisory Committee can guide the future direction. Then detailed design and costs can then be formulated for consideration.

Success during the first phase of implementation will also give support for fundraising activities from public and private sources. Considerably more funding will be needed to complete some of the more ambitious interpretation methods such as reconstructions and indoor interpretation areas.

Projects for consideration in Phase II include:

- a) Interpretive Plaques:
 - Royal Engineers Military Road & Reserve
 - Central Park Agricultural Hall Site
 - Burnaby Municipal Hall Site
- b) Interpretive Markers:
 - Markers for all 16 former Tram Stations
- c) Indoor Interpretation Areas:
 - Display at the Burnaby Public Library or Edmonds House detailing the history of the Municipal Hall Site.
- d) Reconstructions:
 - Rebuild Central Park Bandstand as heritage element in the picnic grounds in consultation with the Parks and Recreation Commission.

5.0 CONCLUSIONS

The development of the Central Park Tramline route as an interpretive history trail will serve to revitalize this heritage resource. Interpretation will reveal this almost forgotten part of our past and serve to reinforce its importance to citizens. As the tramline was a primary force behind the creation of the Municipality of Burnaby in 1892, it is important to celebrate its contribution during its Centennial.

This first interpretive history trail will also serve as demonstration of incorporating local history into the urban environment of Burnaby's Neighbourhoods. The installation of commemorative features will enhance the municipal trail system and will add variety and interest to the urban landscape.

Alderman D. P. Drummond,
Chairman

HISTORY OF THE CENTRAL PARK TRAMLINE

APPENDIX I

The history of the Central Park Tramline is closely entwined with the formation and early development of the Municipality of Burnaby.

The **Westminster and Vancouver Railway Company** was formed on April 20, 1891 by B.C. businessmen Henry V. Edmonds, John A. Webster, Benjamin Douglas and David Oppenheimer (Vancouver's then Mayor). The Company sought land grants from property owners between the two cities and soon a private right of way had been secured for a large section of the route. The original line wound its way up from New Westminster's Columbia Street and Queens Park District to Sixth Street and along Edmonds. H.V. Edmonds created the Edmonds Road right-of-way through his own Property (D.L. 30) in order to sell lots in his new subdivision. The tram crossed Westminster Road (now Kingsway) to join the private right of way which continued through Burnaby to Boundary Road.

The tram also strategically crossed directly through the "Interurban Park" dedicated by the Provincial Government on June 10, 1891. This included District Lots 151, 152, and 153 which had been set aside as a Military Reserve by the Royal Engineers in the early 1860's. The first station for the line was established where it crossed Westminster Road within the new Park. The station was named Central Park by David Oppenheimer, a former resident of New York, and the adjoining park assumed this grand name.

Another station was established at the Powerhouse which was built where the line crossed Griffiths Avenue. This impressive structure built at a cost of \$20,000 was a combined steam powered electric generating plant and four stall car barn. Also at this station was a large boarding house and several cottages built for the tram employees and their families. Burnaby's residents met at this site to discuss incorporation and elect the first Council to administer the Municipality in 1892.

The first trip from New Westminster through Burnaby occurred on June 1, 1891. However, the tramline was not completed through to Vancouver's 16th Avenue Boundary until October 1st and the first tram reached Downtown on October 7, 1891. The British Columbian newspaper noted that "tram cars are now making daily trips to Vancouver, leaving this City at 8:30 a.m. and 4:30 p.m., and returning, leave Vancouver at 10 a.m. and 6 p.m.. The single fare is 50 cents and the round trip 75 cents."

In 1893 a new branch of the tramline was built from the original line at Edmonds and followed Kingsway/12th Street down to New Westminster. In 1912 when the line was double-tracked, the Connaught Hill "cut-off" was built to further reduce the grade and now serves as the SkyTrain route. The old right-of-way continued to be used as an alternate tram route and part of the New Westminster-Burnaby streetcar system and became known as the Highland Park Line.

During its life the Central Park Tramline was the hub of the electric railway system in Greater Vancouver. In 1912 alone the line carried over three million passengers. The line was finally closed in Burnaby in 1953 in favour of more flexible and modern bus transportation.

The Central Park Tramline was the primary instrument of South Burnaby's growth and development pattern. The construction of stations at well traveled roads became focal points of commercial and residential development. Real Estate developers relied on the convenience of these stations to sell homesites to the working class families of Vancouver and New Westminster. Centers such as Central Park, McKay, Jubilee, Royal Oak and Edmonds grew to include churches, schools and community halls. These communities became the centers for the surrounding residents and formed the primary focus for the Community prior to World War II.

