

TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE

*HIS WORSHIP, THE MAYOR
AND COUNCILLORS*

SUBJECT: METROTOWN TRANSIT VILLAGE STUDY

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. THAT Council approve in principle the conceptual approach for improvements related to the Metrotown Skytrain Station as outlined in this report, on the understanding that further reports will be forwarded for Council consideration as specific elements are advanced.
2. THAT Council send a copy of this report to M. Rossi, Program Manager – Showcase Program, TransLink.

REPORT

The Transportation Committee, at its meeting held on 2007 October 10, received and adopted the *attached* report presenting the findings of the Metrotown Transit Village Study. The study provides a conceptual approach to improvements relating to the Metrotown Skytrain Station with greater emphasis on alternative modes of travel and to upgrade Metrotown Station as a focus of the regional town centre.

Respectfully submitted,

Councillor N. Volkow
Chair

Councillor S. Dhaliwal
Vice Chair

Councillor L. Rankin
Member

Copied to:	City Manager
	Director Engineering
	Director Parks, Recr. & Cult. Services
	Director Planning & Building

TO: CHAIR AND MEMBERS
TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE

DATE: 2007 October 5

FROM: DIRECTOR PLANNING & BUILDING

FILE: PL 94000 – 20
*Reference: Urban Transportation
Showcase Program*

SUBJECT: METROTOWN TRANSIT VILLAGE STUDY

PURPOSE: To present the findings of the Metrotown Transit Village Study.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. **THAT** the Transportation Committee recommend that Council approve in principle the conceptual approach for improvements related to the Metrotown SkyTrain Station as outlined in this report, on the understanding that further reports will be forwarded for Council consideration as specific elements are advanced.
2. **THAT** Council be requested to send a copy of this report be forwarded to M. Rossi, Program Manager – Showcase Program, TransLink.

REPORT**1.0 BACKGROUND**

Metrotown is the most established of four town centres in the City of Burnaby and the largest of Metro Vancouver's regional town centres. Within walking distance of the Metrotown SkyTrain Station are residential uses ranging from single-family to high-rise with employment spread across the retail, office, community, recreation, and tourism sectors. Metrotown is a regional town centre with a robust transportation network including a well developed road network, a high level of transit service and a variety of cycling and pedestrian routes.

The continuing growth and development of Metrotown has, however, increasingly taxed the existing capacity of the transit system resulting in overcrowding at the Metrotown SkyTrain station, a transit exchange operating at capacity, and increasing need for improved bike and pedestrian facilities at and connections to and from the Station area. To review these issues, Council, in 2005 September, approved cost share funding for a joint project with TransLink and the federal government under the Urban Transportation Showcase Program to complete a Transit Village Study for Metrotown. The budget for the Transit Village Study was \$150,000 shared equally by the partners in the Study.

The primary purpose of the Transit Village Study was to identify concepts to enhance the use of alternative modes of travel in Metrotown in relation to the Metrotown SkyTrain Station, transit exchange, and pedestrian and bike connections to and from the Station area. This report outlines the findings of the study for the information of the Committee and Council.

2.0 TRANSIT VILLAGE APPROACH

The transit village approach applied in the study emphasized the need to focus on alternative modes to give higher priority to the needs of pedestrians, cyclists, and transit users in the future planning, design, and improvement decisions in the Station area and the larger Metrotown area. The aim of the study was to identify means to enhance the comfort, safety and legibility of Metrotown SkyTrain Station and its immediate area to support and encourage people to use transit and other sustainable transportation modes. The study developed concepts to improve the Metrotown Station, the transit exchange function, and accessibility to/from the catchment area of the station based on the following specific objectives to:

- **maximize the efficiency** of the SkyTrain and bus systems
- **provide better accessibility** for all users of the station and the transit exchange
- **improve the transit experience** by providing more transit capacity, better bus transit exchange facilities and wayfinding for transit passengers
- **improve the quality of life** for local residents, employees, shoppers and visitors
- **support development of the BC Parkway** as a community amenity through a high standard of design
- **support future development potential** in the station area
- **improve actual and perceived safety and personal security** throughout the station area
- **create a strong sense of identity** and make the station area a memorable place
- **support national, regional and local efforts** to promote a more sustainable future.

The study was undertaken with the assistance of a team of consultants and the work has been summarized in a report entitled “Metrotown SkyTrain Station Transit Village Plan: Options and Evaluation”. The following outlines the key findings of the report for the information of the Transportation Committee and Council.

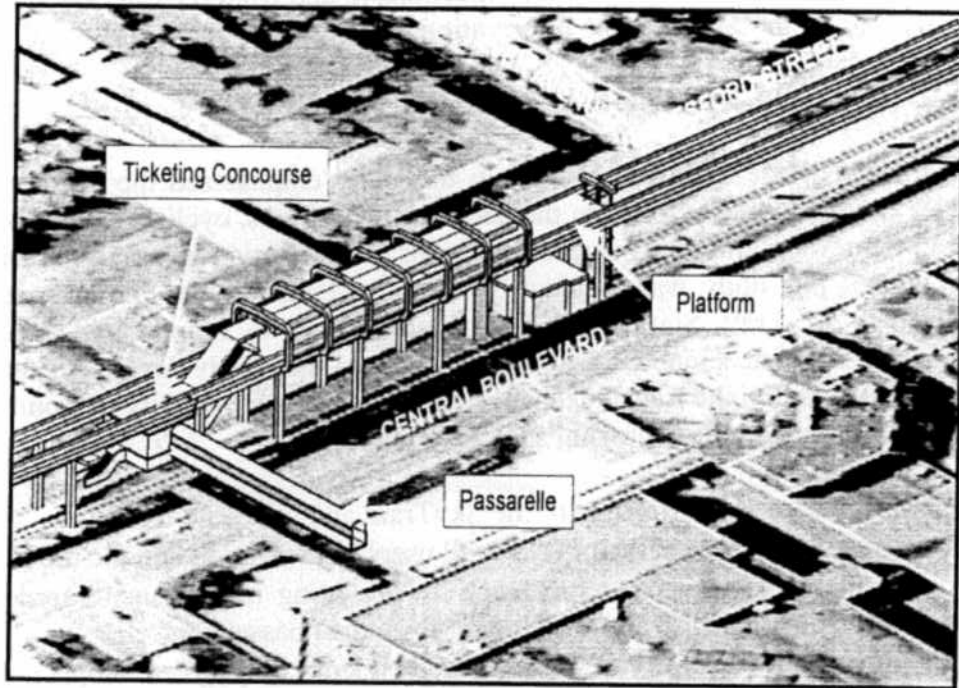
3.0 METROTOWN TRANSIT VILLAGE STUDY

3.1 Issues

The study identified a number of issues to be addressed through a transit village approach primarily related to the functionality of Metrotown Station, the transit exchange and access to and from the station for transit buses, pedestrians and cyclists. Key issues included:

- **Metrotown SkyTrain Station Capacity:** The existing SkyTrain Station, as shown in *Figure 1*, does not have sufficient capacity to meet the existing demand for transit travel in the Metrotown area. The centre platform, escalators, ticketing concourse and elevators are undersized to meet current demand. Current overcrowding of the station platform during peak periods does not allow bikes to access the system.

Figure 1 Existing Metrotown Station



- **Station Access:** Access to and from the station and its immediate surroundings is challenged as evident in the overcrowded passarelle between the Station concourse and Metropolis, the need for more direct and convenient at-grade and second level access from the west, and the need for improved access to the office towers, the Maywood neighbourhood to the south and for persons with disabilities.
- **Transit Exchange Connections and Capacity:** The existing Metrotown Transit Exchange, currently located across Central Boulevard from the SkyTrain Station, is not well connected to the station, requiring use of an escalator and a crowded passarelle for the able-bodied. For persons with disabilities, access to the Station from the Transit Exchange involves crossing the busy Central Boulevard at-grade and using an elevator. The Metrotown Transit exchange (*Figure 2*) is also currently operating at capacity with insufficient space for layover buses. Bus access to and from the Exchange is also limited by its single access to Central Boulevard.

Figure 2 Metrotown Transit Exchange



- **Pedestrian and Bicycle Connections:** The BC Parkway, as shown in *Figure 3*, is the major access to Metrotown station from the east and west for pedestrians and bikes. The aging BC Parkway is not built to a sufficient width to appropriately accommodate both cyclists and pedestrians given its increased usage and is not currently lighted. Improvements to pedestrian and cycling connections and wayfinding are also needed to enhance access to the Station through the mall developments from the Kingsway frontage and developments north of Kingsway. As noted, due to overcrowding on the Station platform, bikes are not permitted to use Metrotown Station during peak periods, and bike lockers are not available at Metrotown Station.

Figure 3 Existing BC Parkway



3.2 STUDY PROPOSALS

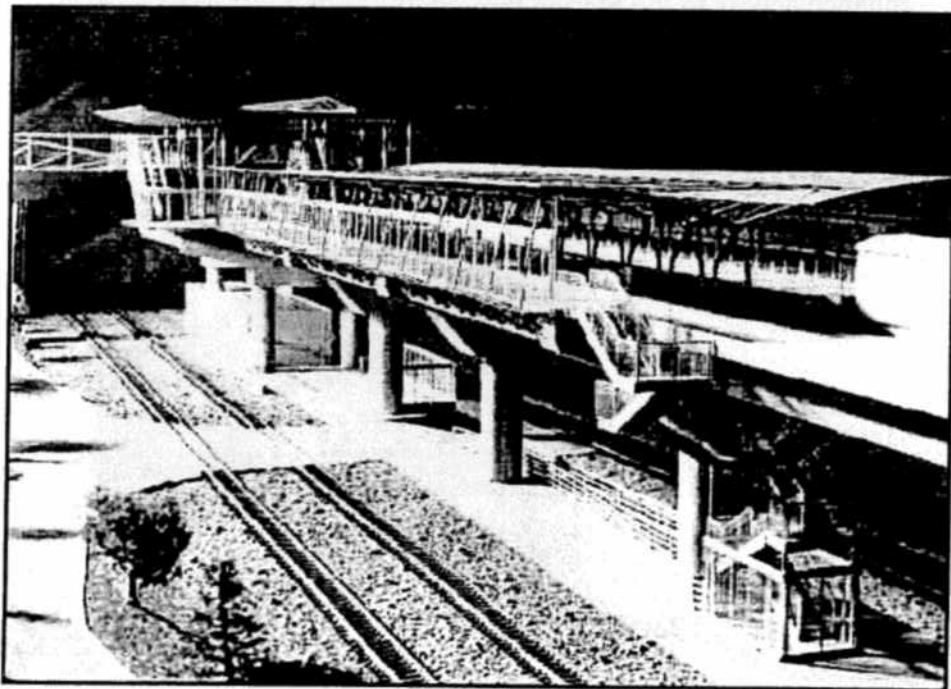
The study reviewed these issues and developed preliminary concepts for the Metrotown Station, the transit exchange and alternative modes to improve the functionality, efficiency and accessibility of the Station and station area for pedestrians, cyclists, transit users and bus transit.

3.2.1 Metrotown Station Expansion and Upgrading

The major component of the study was the development of a concept for expansion of the Metrotown Station to accommodate ridership growth and upgrading to meet functional requirements. Funding for improvements to Metrotown Station have been included in the TransLink 2008 Transportation Plan and the specific improvements to the station will be considered by Council as part of a forthcoming rezoning application process. Enhancements identified by the study to improve the functionality of and access to Metrotown Station included the following:

- **Redesigned Station Roof and Enclosure:** Installation of a new station roof and enclosure similar to those on the Millennium Line, as shown in *Figure 4*. The new roof would provide weather protection for the entire length of the platform, improve the transparency of the Station, and create a landmark feature for this flagship station.

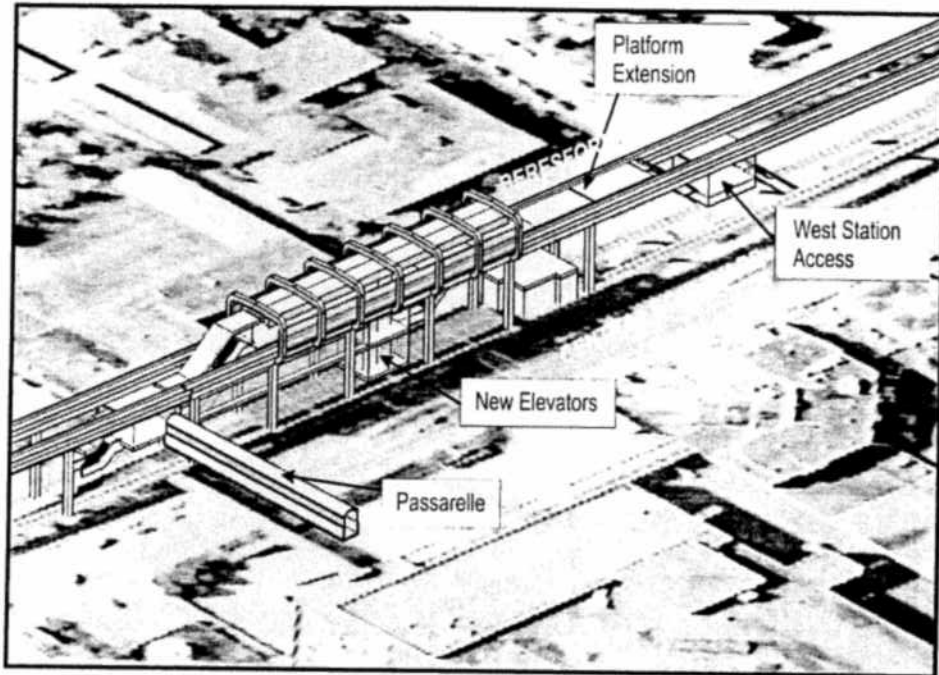
Figure 4 Station Roof and Enclosure Example



- **Extension of the Station Platform (Figure 5):** Extension of the station platform to the west to increase capacity on the platform and to provide for a new west

access, concourse and ticketing area to better serve the activity centres further west in Metrotown including Station Square, Library Square and the Crystal.

Figure 5 Lengthened Station Platform and West Station Access



- **Improved Passarelle:** Replacement or improvement of the existing station passarelle (*Figures 1, 5 and 6*), which currently accommodates 40,000 persons a day, with a widened, more transparent and wheelchair accessible passarelle to provide for better passenger comfort, personal security, accessibility and capacity.

Figure 6 Existing Metrotown Passarelle



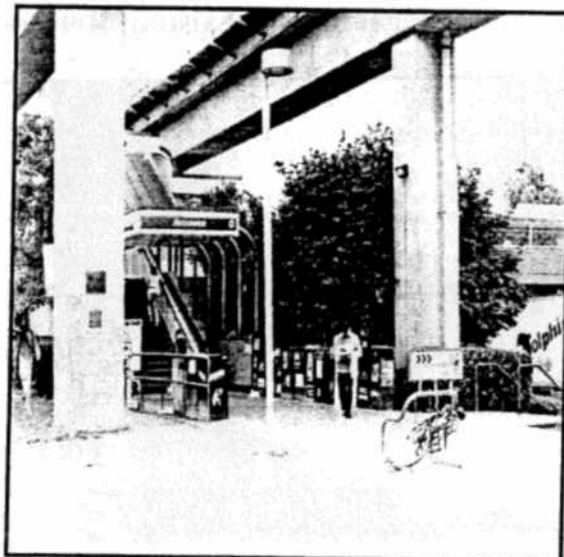
- **New Elevators:** Replacement of the existing elevator (*Figure 7*) by a pair of modern, transparent elevators located at the new midpoint of the lengthened platform, to provide access from the station platform to a new mezzanine level. The new mezzanine level, under the platform, would connect to the new east station access and the passarelle to Metropolis.

Figure 7 Existing Elevator



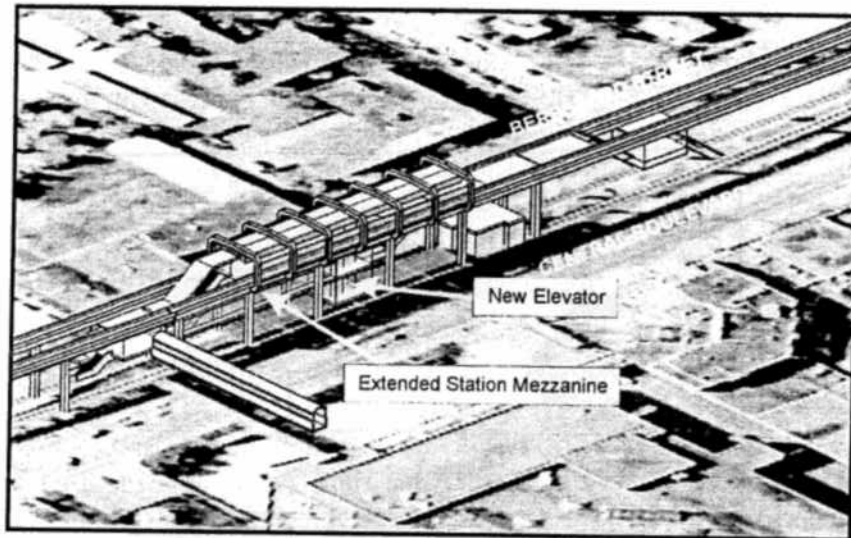
- **New Mezzanine and Upgraded East Access:** Upgrade of the existing east station entrance (*Figure 8*) to a new mezzanine and with level access to the passarelle.

Figure 8 Existing East Station Entrance



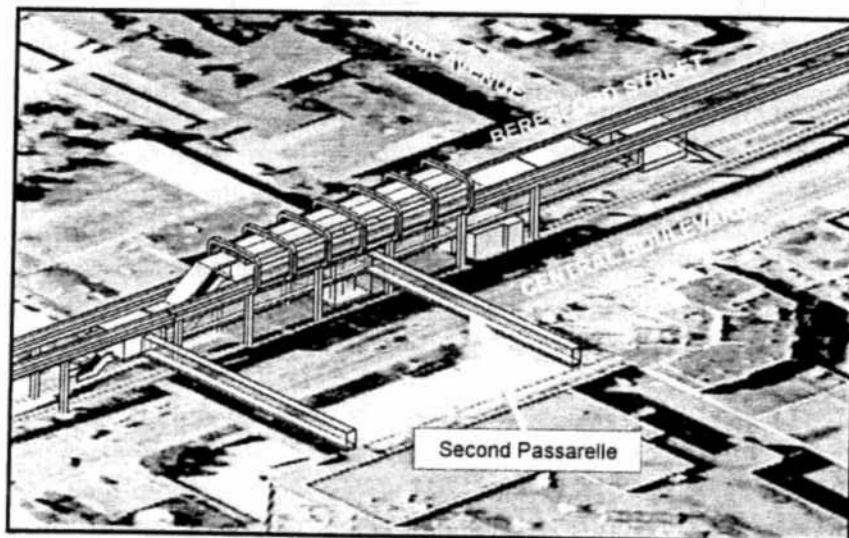
- **Extended Station Mezzanine:** Extension of the mezzanine connection (*Figure 9*) from the re-built East Station House to a new Mid-Station House. This connection will allow handicapped access from the existing passarelle (with no stairs) to the station platform using the new mezzanine to access elevators located at the Mid-Station House.

Figure 9 **Extended Station Mezzanine**



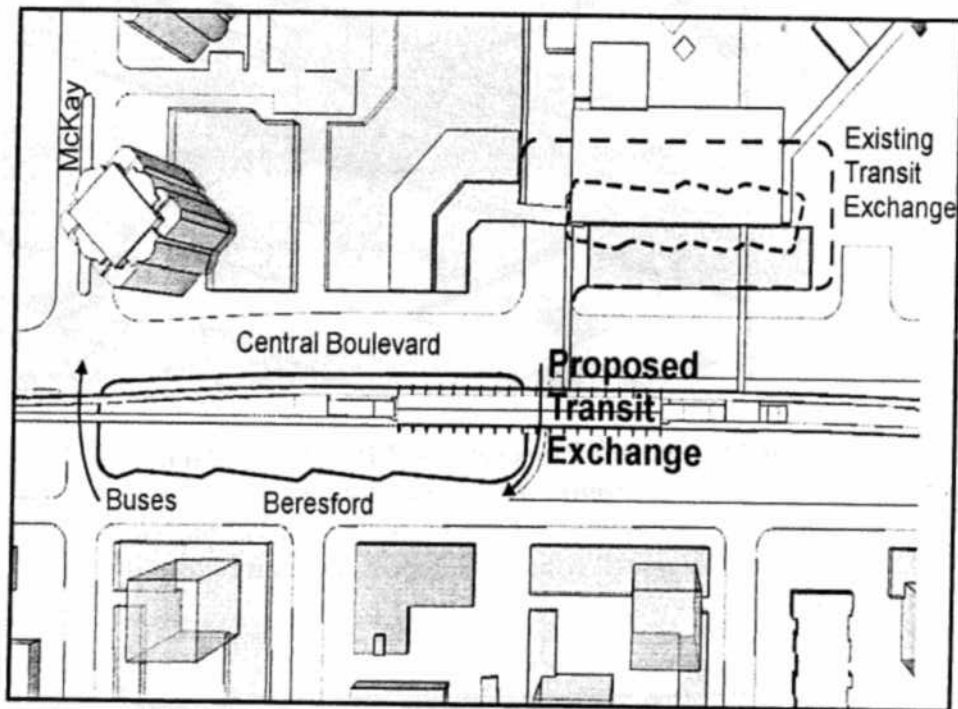
- **Possible Second Passarelle to Mid-Station House:** A future second passarelle, as shown in *Figure 10*, would connect the second level of Metropolis to the planned mid-station house of the upgraded Station. This passarelle connection could be pursued with any future significant redevelopment of Station Square.

Figure 10 **Future Second Passarelle**



- **New Bus Transit Exchange:** A new transit exchange, as shown in *Figure 11*, is identified within the station area. The proposed design for the New Metrotown Transit Exchange would occupy the area under the station and front on Central Boulevard and Beresford extending for about a block between McKay and Sussex. It would provide four regular bus stopping areas on Central Boulevard and four larger bus bays on the Beresford side. Transit-only lanes would be constructed between Central Boulevard and Beresford southbound at the east end of the transit exchange and northbound at the west end of the transit exchange to McKay.

Figure 11 Proposed Transit Exchange

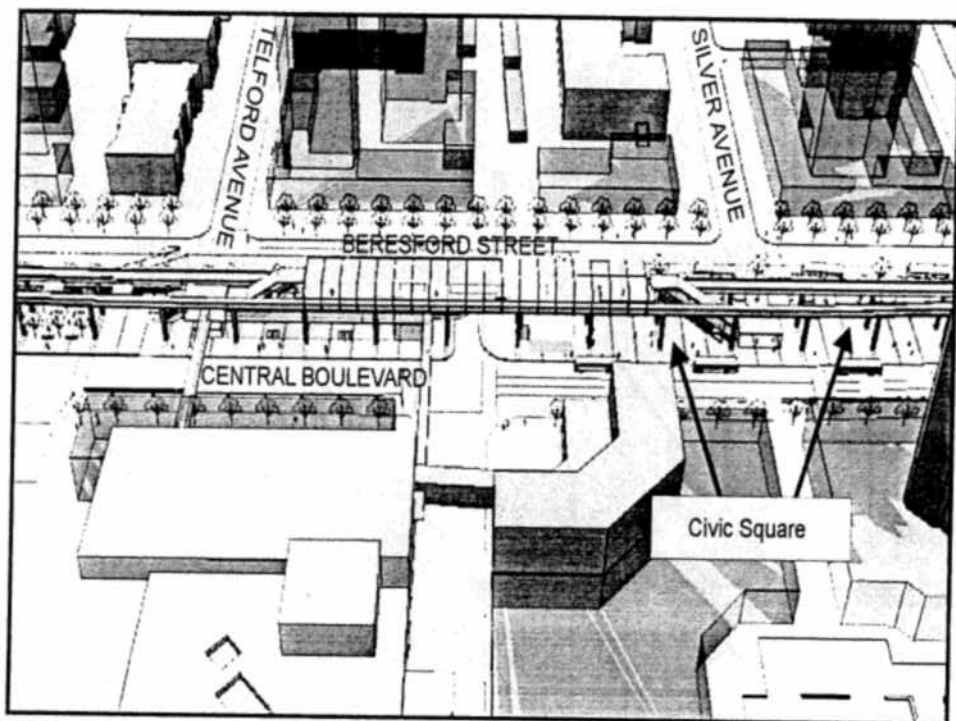


As only 15% of bus passengers using the existing Metrotown Transit Exchange transfer from one bus to another while about 73% are transferring between buses and SkyTrain, the new exchange will significantly improve access and convenience for transit-users. Currently, the location of the transit exchange across Central Boulevard from the SkyTrain station requires transferring riders to cross Central Boulevard at grade or via the passarelle. A conceptual layout for the transit exchange with an integrated public Civic Square is shown in *Figure 12*.

The existing transit exchange will be retained and all bus lines serving Metrotown station and Metropolis/Station Square would terminate and continue to pick up and discharge passengers here. This facility would also serve “lay over” buses providing driver breaks and allowing drivers to catch up with their schedules.

- **Civic Square:** The new transit exchange under Metrotown Station is envisioned as a high amenity, public square or urban plaza (**Figure 12**) incorporating the new transit exchange abutting the plaza and the BC Parkway. Retail uses may be included to help animate the space along a bike station, hard and soft landscaping features, and other public amenities to serve the multiple purposes of a transit exchange, public plaza, and linear parkway feature with a vibrant, urban character. A Spirit Square application to fund design of this Civic Square was approved by Council on 2007, March 05.

Figure 12 Proposed Civic Square



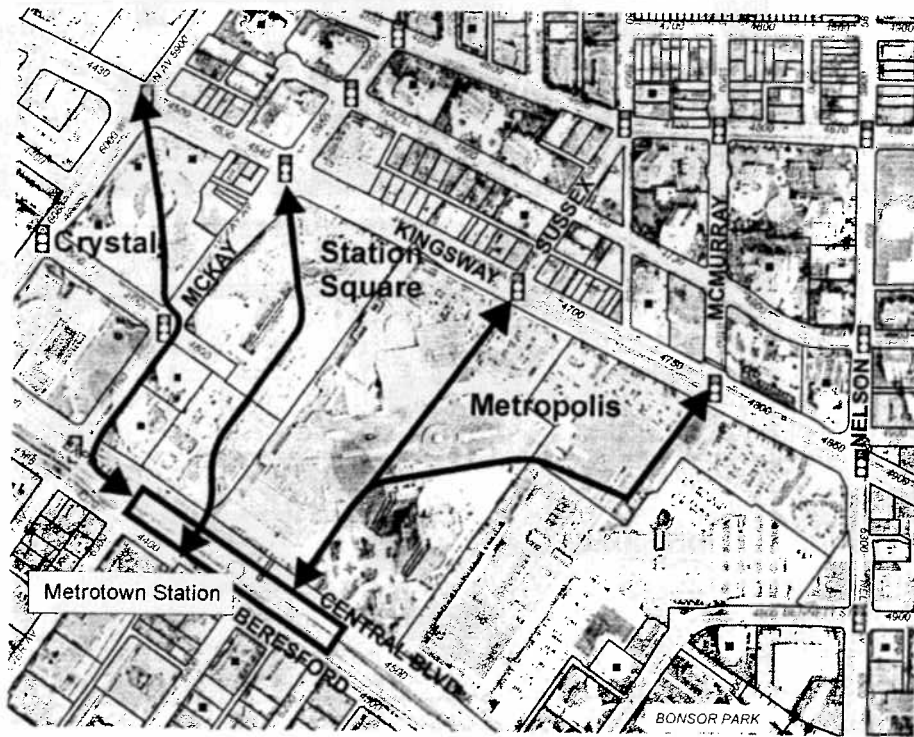
3.2.2 Station Access Concepts

The study outlines a number of other ideas to improve access by transit, bike and pedestrians to Metrotown Station including the following:

- **Enhancing the function of McKay Avenue** an important north-south route for transit and pedestrian access to and from the station through more pedestrian-oriented street design and transit bus corridor improvements.
- **Continuing to create a more pedestrian-oriented environment on Kingsway** by creating street fronting with pedestrian scale landscaping, lighting and other improvements.

- **Improving pedestrian crossings on Kingsway** to increase the station's catchment area to the north.
- **Improving pedestrian routes through Metropolis and Station Square** through clearer wayfinding signage and creating new and enhanced access through redevelopment opportunities and other initiatives, such as establishing the connection through the Sears development from the new McMurray (*Figure 13*) pedestrian overpass.

Figure 13 Pedestrian Routes to/from the Station



- **Improving Station Wayfinding Signage** – Improved wayfinding signage is needed at the Metrotown Station platform and station house to orient people to Metropolis, the Metrotowers and the Maywood area. Clearer wayfinding signage should be provided in Metropolis between the station and the McMurray pedestrian overpass to identify the access to the station from Kingsway and the Grange residential areas.

Figure 14 Pedestrian Wayfinding Through Metropolis



- **Upgrade the BC Parkway:** The study also supports the planned improvement to the BC Parkway by the City and TransLink to serve its designated function as a major regional pedestrian/cycling corridor. Key improvements would include separated and wider pedestrian and bike paths, lighting and connections across the Parkway to the Maywood area. Other elements which could be added to animate the Parkway and give it a more distinctive character include kiosks, recreation areas, interactive art, bike storage and small retail. Improved wayfinding systems (See Figure 15) directing cyclists to key destinations and offering distance information would further enhance the Parkway.

Figure 15 Bike Wayfinding Signage Example



4.0 NEXT STEPS

The Metrotown Transit Village Study identifies a concept for improvement of the Metrotown Station, Transit Exchange function, and other station access issues. The next steps will involve developing these ideas further in conjunction with TransLink and other stakeholders. The concept for Metrotown Station would be the subject of a specific rezoning proposal to the City by TransLink. This process will further define the overall concept and address any arising issues in relation to the Station and transit exchange concept. The other station access proposals would be the subject of further staff review and advanced for Council consideration as specific projects are developed.

The most likely proposals to be advanced in the short term are the concept for Metrotown station including the transit exchange and the BC Parkway improvements.

4.1 Concept for Metrotown Station

Funding has been allocated in the TransLink 2008 Transportation Plan for major renovations to three of the busiest stations on the Expo Line including Broadway/Commercial, Metrotown and Surrey Central. The cost to TransLink of the Metrotown Station improvements has been estimated at approximately \$25 M. This is included in the TransLink 2008 Financial Plan. Design could begin this fall with construction to follow in 2008. The changes to the station, the civic square and the transit exchange will be advanced through a rezoning application by TransLink.

The concept for the Metrotown Station is an integrated plan including the station improvements and a new transit exchange designed around a public Civic Square as well as upgraded major connections such as the passarelle to Metropolis and the enhanced BC Parkway. Council is requested to approve in principle this conceptual approach on the understanding that further reports will be forwarded for Council consideration as more detailed work is undertaken.

The concept will be implemented through the capital funding available from the TransLink 2008 Transportation Plan with some cost sharing from other sources including the Provincial Spirit Squares Program, the City of Burnaby and adjacent development.

4.2 BC Parkway Improvements

When financing was approved by Council for the Metrotown Transit Village Planning Study, future funding of \$350,000 was identified in the City's Capital Program for implementation of specific Transit Village proposals subject to Council approval through a future report.

Matching funding of \$350,000 has also been allocated by TransLink for initial short-term capital improvements arising from the Transit Village Planning Study for a total of funding commitment of \$700,000. The priority project for this funding is the enhancement of the BC Parkway, as identified by City and TransLink staff in undertaking the Transit Village Study. This specific project will be the subject of a further report to Council to outline the design process, to provide key improvement objectives and to seek expenditure authorization based on a cost shared

