

TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE

*HIS WORSHIP, THE MAYOR
AND COUNCILLORS*

**SUBJECT: BARNET HASTINGS HOV LANES: DELEGATION FROM THE
HEIGHTS MERCHANTS ASSOCIATION**

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. THAT the Heights Merchants Association be advised that the proposal for the elimination of the HOV lane west of Willingdon is not supported based on the transit and traffic management considerations outlined in this report.
2. THAT a copy of this report be forwarded to Isobel Kolic, Executive Director, Heights Merchants Association; Hansel Wang, Manager, Engineering and Infrastructure Planning, TransLink; and Peter Klitz, Service Planner, Coast Mountain Bus Company.

REPORT

The Transportation Committee, at its meeting held on 2007 June 13, received and adopted the *attached* report responding to the proposal from the Heights Merchants Association to eliminate the Barnet Hastings High Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) Lanes.

Respectfully submitted,

Councillor N. Volkow
Chair

Councillor S. Dhaliwal
Vice Chair

Councillor L. Rankin
Member

Copied to: City Manager Director Engineering Director Planning & Building

TO: CHAIR AND MEMBERS
TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE

DATE: 2007 June 05

FROM: DIRECTOR PLANNING AND BUILDING

FILE: PL 90300 - 20
*Ref: Barnet/Hastings People
Moving Project*

**SUBJECT: BARNET HASTINGS HOV LANES: DELEGATION FROM
THE HEIGHTS MERCHANTS ASSOCIATION**

PURPOSE: To respond to the proposal from the Heights Merchants Association to eliminate the Barnet Hastings High Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) Lanes.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. **THAT** the Heights Merchants Association be advised that the proposal for the elimination of the HOV lane west of Willingdon is not supported based on the transit and traffic management considerations outlined in this report.
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REPORT

1.0 BACKGROUND

At its regular meeting of 2007 February 14, the Committee received a delegation from the Heights Merchants Association (HMA) regarding the Barnet Hastings High Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) Lane. The delegation stated that while the Heights Merchants support the High Occupancy Lanes "in general", the Association has a number of issues with the facility. The view expressed by the Association was that the HOV lane creates noise and pollution and encourages a "freeway mentality" on Hastings which makes it difficult to create a "village atmosphere" in the commercial area. The Association notes that residents are discouraged from using the stores during the 3:00-6:00 P.M. period when the eastbound curb lane on Hastings becomes a travel lane for high occupancy vehicles. The delegation noted that while the afternoon peak traffic period was the busiest time of the day for shopping, it has become the slowest period.

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From: *Director Planning and Building*
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To address these issues, the delegation proposed the elimination of the HOV lane and the conversion of the curb lanes on Hastings Street between Willingdon and Boundary to all day parking similar to the approach being used in the City of Vancouver on Main Street.

Arising from the discussion, the Transportation Committee referred the delegation's comments to staff for a report.

2.0 IMPLICATIONS OF THE PROPOSAL

2.1 Comparison to Main Street

Main Street in the City of Vancouver was cited by the delegation as an example of the type of street design envisioned for Hastings Street. Currently, Main Street is being upgraded under the Urban Transportation Showcase Program funded by the federal government, TransLink and the City of Vancouver. Street improvements are underway with the objective of providing "better sidewalks, streets and transit". This upgrading program is similar to the street improvements provided on Hastings Street in 1996 by the Barnet Hastings People Moving Project including street trees, new bus shelters and landscaped areas. However, the Hastings Street upgrading included a much broader range of improvements including new street furniture (bike racks, benches etc), decorative street lighting and pedestrian lighting.

Prior to the upgrading, parking was prohibited during peak periods on one side of Main Street from 33rd Avenue to Kingsway. Full time parking will be permitted in this segment reducing the number of travel lanes to four through the provision of curb bulges and bus bulges. As this segment of Main Street is not a significant commuter route in the City of Vancouver, limiting the number of travel lanes to four is practicable. The busiest hours for traffic on Main Street in the commercial area near 25th Avenue are 10:30-11:30 A.M. when there are 1,850 vehicles in both directions and 12:30-1:30 P.M. when there are 1,900 vehicles in both directions. At these traffic volumes, four lanes have been and are sufficient to accommodate vehicular traffic without incurring significant delay for general traffic or buses.

By comparison, Hastings Street is a major commuter route which carries 3,050 vehicles in both directions between 7:45 and 8:45 A.M. and 3,160 vehicles in both directions between 4:30 and 5:30 P.M. Reducing the number of travel lanes in the peak direction from three to two would significantly impact the level of traffic congestion and the efficiency of transit operations on Hastings. Similarly, in the busier segment of Main north of Kingsway, the City of Vancouver is continuing the peak period parking restrictions that were in place prior to the project reflecting the need to maintain road capacity to accommodate the higher traffic volumes in this segment of Main. Two-direction traffic volumes on this segment

of Main Street at 2nd Avenue are 2600 vehicles in the AM Peak hour and 2850 in the PM peak hour which are comparable to the traffic volumes on Hastings Street.

2.2 Major Bus Transit Corridor

The Burnaby segment of Hastings Street currently operates as one of the busiest transit corridors in the region. Between Willingdon Avenue and the Kootenay Loop located at Hastings and Kootenay, the High Occupancy Vehicle lane on Hastings is used by both regional and local bus services. A total of 70 buses operate in the westbound HOV lane between 6:30 and 9:00 A.M. and 64 buses in the eastbound HOV lane between 3:30 P.M. and 6:00 P.M. By comparison 32 buses operate in the peak direction on Main Street during the same 2 ½ hour period.

The buses operating on this section of Hastings in the HOV Lane and their peak period service frequencies are as follows:

- #123 New Westminster Station/Kootenay Loop - 15 minutes
- #129 Edmonds Station/Metrotown Station (via Hastings) - 15 minutes
- #130 Metrotown Capilano College North Vancouver - 5 minutes
- #135 SFU/Downtown Vancouver - 5 minutes peak
- #160 Port Coquitlam/Vancouver - 30 minutes
- #190 Vancouver Coquitlam Station - 30 minutes
- C1 Community Shuttle Hastings/Gilmore to Kootenay Loop - 30 minutes

Other buses which operate on Hastings but do not use the HOV lane are the N35 which provides 3 trips during the midday between SFU and downtown Vancouver.

All of these buses, except the #129, #135 and the C1, are major regional bus services serving the Northeast Sector, New Westminster, North Vancouver or the City of Vancouver. The #135 between SFU and Downtown Vancouver is to be upgraded in 2008 to a full B line service and the #130 is planned to become a B line service upon completion of the extension of the Willingdon HOV lanes between Highway 1 and Parker Street.

The Barnet Hastings People Moving Project was originally implemented to reduce delay and provide a benefit to high occupancy vehicles (especially buses) from the traffic congestion and delay which formerly characterized Hastings Street. The proposal to remove the HOV lanes to accommodate on-street parking would displace these vehicles from the peak direction HOV lane to the general purpose lanes and essentially restore the traffic conditions that existed on Hastings prior to the implementation of the HOV lanes in September 1996.

2.3 Traffic Congestion

The removal of the HOV lane on Hastings would result in a reduction in the traffic capacity on Hastings Street from two general purpose lanes and one HOV lane in the peak direction to two general purpose lanes in the peak direction. All of the vehicles currently using the HOV lane between Boundary and Willingdon would be shifted over to the two general purpose lanes, thus worsening traffic congestion and delay. To determine the potential volumes of traffic using the two general purpose lanes after the HOV lane was removed, the EMME2 traffic forecasting model was used.

In the A.M. peak period from 7:30-8:30 in 2006, approximately 2,200 vehicles use Hastings westbound with approximately 800 in each of the two general purpose lanes and 600 in the Hastings HOV lane. The model forecasts that eliminating the HOV lane could shift approximately 200 vehicles currently using the HOV lane to the general traffic lanes on Hastings while 400 vehicles would divert to other east west streets. As the two general purpose lanes on Hastings are operating close to capacity, the additional 200 vehicles in these lanes would increase traffic congestion and delay for all vehicles especially buses operating in the peak direction of travel.

2.4 Neighbourhood Impacts

As the closest parallel streets to Hastings, the majority of the approximately 400 vehicles in the HOV lane diverted from Hastings would be expected to use Pender and Albert Streets and to a lesser degree, Oxford and Eton. In June 2003, Council approved a neighbourhood traffic plan to address commuter traffic issues on Oxford and Eton Streets and recently, staff have been working with Albert Street residents to address issues involving traffic speed, volume and pedestrian safety. As the A.M. peak hour traffic volume on Albert Street in the westbound direction is approximately 1,400 vehicles, the addition of 200 vehicles per hour on Albert Street could setback efforts to address these local issues.

2.5 Parking

Prior to implementing the Hastings HOV lane in 1996, it was recognized that the provision of the HOV lane would involve the removal of up to 200 parking spaces from one side of Hastings Street between Willingdon and Boundary for the 5 hour period in the morning and evening when the HOV lane is in operation.

To compensate for the loss of on-street parking, the City of Burnaby purchased and developed 12 off-street parking lots within a half a block of Hastings Street providing a total of approximately 300 parking spaces. The Barnet Hastings

People Moving Project also supplemented this off-street parking with the provision of approximately 120 angled parking stalls on the north-south side streets. Both the off-street and on-street parking provided by the City and the Project in close proximity to Hastings Street was more than double the number of on-street parking spaces removed from Hastings.

2.6 Hastings Bus Lane Assessment

The #135 SFU/Downtown Vancouver operates a high capacity express bus service using 200 passenger articulated buses between the Burnaby Mountain and downtown campuses of Simon Fraser University. The service is very well patronized by SFU students/staff travelling between the two campuses and more recently by residents of the UniverCity residential/commercial development on Burnaby Mountain.

One of the projects in the recently-announced TransLink 2008 Transportation Plan is the upgrading of the #135 bus service to a full B-Line type service. A B-Line service on Hastings would provide more frequent, higher-capacity bus service with increased passenger amenities including large bus shelters, digital passenger information, ticket machines etc. To speed up the service, all-door loading of the articulated buses would be permitted, the number of bus stops would be reduced and additional bus priority measures could be implemented in the Hastings corridor.

Another bus service to be upgraded to B-Line status is the #130 operating between Metrotown and North Vancouver via Willingdon, Hastings and the Ironworkers Memorial Second Narrows Bridge. Willingdon Avenue from Moscrop to Parker Street is being developed to provide for a full time bus lane and, when combined with Hastings Street, would provide continuous bus priority for almost the entire length of the route.

One of the bus priority measures being considered on Hastings is changing the HOV lane from its current 2+ occupant operation to a higher occupancy rating ranging from 3+ occupants to an exclusive bus lane. TransLink will be engaging a consultant to conduct a review of the operation of the HOV lane and determine which type of operation is the most appropriate to reduce overall delays for buses in the corridor. Moving to a higher occupancy rating for the HOV lane would benefit the pedestrian environment on Hastings by reducing the number of vehicles operating in the curb lane on Hastings. The proposal of the HMA to remove the HOV lane on Hastings, however, would preclude these efforts to improve regional transit service.

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As the results of this review will have implications for general purpose traffic on Hastings and traffic on the other east-west streets parallel to Hastings, City staff will be closely monitoring this work.

2.7 People Moving Capacity

The future direction for the Burnaby segment of the Barnet Hastings HOV lane is towards increased transit use of the High Occupancy Vehicle lane and reduced use by carpools. The Burnaby Transportation Plan designates Hastings and the Barnet Highway as HOV lanes. The proposal by the delegation to convert the peak direction HOV lane to on-street parking is contradictory to this transportation objective.

As Hastings Street is also a component of the TransLink Major Roads Network (MRN), the approval of TransLink is required for any changes on an MRN road which would reduce the people-moving capacity of the road. Conversion of the HOV lane to parking use clearly would be a reduction in the people-moving capacity of Hastings Street. TransLink staff have advised that that this proposal is inconsistent with future transit plans and, as such, would not be supportable.

3.0 CONCLUSION

This report provides a review of the proposal by the delegation from the Heights Merchants Association to remove the peak period High Occupancy Vehicle Lane between Willingdon Avenue and Boundary Road on Hastings. The proposal includes a call to introduce curb bulges on Hastings to protect on-street parking on both sides of the street similar to the improvements underway on Main Street in the City of Vancouver. This would result the removal of the HOV lane and a loss of road capacity during peak periods.

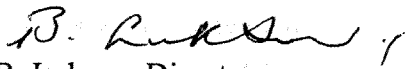
Unlike Main Street, Hastings Street is a major regional arterial and transit corridor carrying high volumes of commuter traffic and buses. Removal of the HOV lane on Hastings for parking would significantly increase traffic congestion and delay on the remaining four general purpose lanes. This would result in a diversion of commuter traffic to parallel local collector streets such as Pender and Albert and increased delay for buses and transit riders in the corridor.

To accommodate planned B-Line services between SFU and downtown Vancouver and between Metrotown and North Vancouver, the future direction for the HOV lane on Hastings Street is towards increased use by transit and decreased use by carpools.

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The Barnet Hastings HOV lane, implemented in 1996, has increased transit ridership, reduced traffic congestion and delay on Hastings Street and assisted in addressing the issue of traffic infiltration through residential neighbourhoods in Burnaby Heights. The proposal by the delegation is not supported as removal of the HOV lane in favour of parking would result in the return of the difficult traffic conditions on Hastings that originally prompted the provision of the HOV lane.

It is therefore recommended that the Heights Merchants Association be advised that the proposal for elimination of the HOV lane west of Willingdon is not supported based on the transit and traffic management considerations outlined in this report.



B. Luksun, Director
PLANNING AND BUILDING

RG:jc

Copied to: City Manager
Director Engineering

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