

I SAY ...

# Transportation: the lost DNV Committee

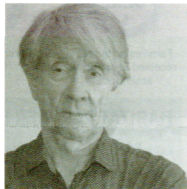
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The single biggest issue for many District of North Vancouver residents is traffic. Any discussion about local politics quickly turns to complaints about the two overcrowded bridges, the inevitable impact of increased population density, and the near legendary “gridlock” on Lynn Valley Road.

As we speak the District and Province are spending millions of dollars to build new traffic interchanges at the bottom of the Cut, Translink is planning to add a new B-Line bus from Phibbs Exchange to Dundarave, and traffic patterns, bike lanes, and sidewalks are being changed around each of the new “Town Centres.” But if transportation is such a critical subject, why has the District disbanded their Transportation Consultation Committee? The one committee that allowed ordinary residents to work directly with District transportation planners?

The TCC, as it is more commonly known, is still listed on the District web site, with an online form that you can use to apply to join it. But even though the Committee exists on paper, it hasn't actually met since April of 2017. The result is that the District has lost the one group that allowed the public to offer advice and input into transportation planning discussions.

The TCC mandate was an important



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one, “to provide comment to staff on regional and municipal transportation initiatives (and) assist staff in promoting, developing and improving an environmentally friendly, energy efficient, socially equitable, safe, and low impact transportation network.” The Committee included members with special interests in cycling, walking, transit, and of course driving. Over the course of its

life the TCC discussed everything from the Phibbs Exchange redesign, to the choice of pavers for sidewalks in Lynn Valley, to the use of speed bumps on Sunset Drive. A special interest of several members were efforts to get local students walking and biking to school, and finding ways to make that not just a safe choice, but the preferred one too.

Even though the TCC members were ready to provide input on the big projects, their greatest value was often in identifying problems that were obvious to the people using roads, sidewalks, and bike lanes, but missed by property developers or the planners at the District. It was the TCC that identified the dangerous cycling infrastructure around Seyllynn, that questioned why the District continues to place telephone poles in the middle of sidewalks, and in their last year pointed out ways that the District's supposedly accessible transportation network often doesn't work at all well for people with disabilities.

During 2015 and 2016 when Queens Avenue, Capilano Road, and most of Edgemont Village were all under construction, the TCC reminded staff that month of construction delays and detours weren't just a nuisance, they had a real impact on the people who live and work here, and were hurting local businesses in ways that planners didn't understand.

The TCC had the potential to save developers and the District significant money if the committee's opinions had been sought before plans were finalized. Time and again TCC members travelled newly built bike lanes and sidewalks only to find significant safety hazards that no-one had anticipated, or reported the ways that things that looked good on paper actually made travel more difficult. At the same time that the District stopped holding meetings for this citizen based advisory group, they created the North Shore Staff Transportation Committee, a super-committee that allowed transportation staff from the District, the City, and West Van to meet regularly and coordinate their many projects.

This committee is only for staff. There is no mechanism for including ordinary citizens in the planning of our transportation infrastructure - a weakness pointed out at the time by West Vancouver Councillor Mary-Ann Booth, who was quoted as saying, “We also hear from our residents a lot about problems but they also come up with some pretty good solutions. Where is that link? Where is that opportunity?” Since then the District has also joined the Integrated North Shore Transportation Planning Project along with MLA Bowinn Ma, MP Jonathan Wilkinson, the North Shore Mayors, the Ministry of Transportation, and Translink. Once again, the public is not invited.

This week the District finally released a statement saying that their participation in high level committees “... precludes the need for the District Transportation Committee at this time.” For now it appears that decisions about transportation in the District will continue to be made by staff and politicians alone, with little or no input from the residents who will have to live with the consequences.

*Barry Rueger is past Chair of the Transportation Consultation Committee*