

SkyTrain route debate

Businesses and homes pay the price

By DAN HILBORN

Burnaby NOW reporter

The Edmonds-Cariboo SkyTrain proposal will radically alter life in south Burnaby.

And plans released by BC Transit last week show it will either be businesses or homes that pay the price for rapid transit to Coquitlam.

One alignment calls for the removal of 57 homes between the existing SkyTrain line and Robert Burnaby Park. Another option will force the temporary relocation of almost every business on the south side of Edmonds Street, and still remove 18 homes. A third proposal totally avoids property acquisitions, but brings the SkyTrain line within sight of new homes in the Buckingham Heights neighborhood.

And while the East Burnaby Residents Association is biding its time until a final decision is made between the Edmonds and New Westminster route proposals, Burnaby-Edmonds NDP candidate Fred Randall said the time to protest is now.

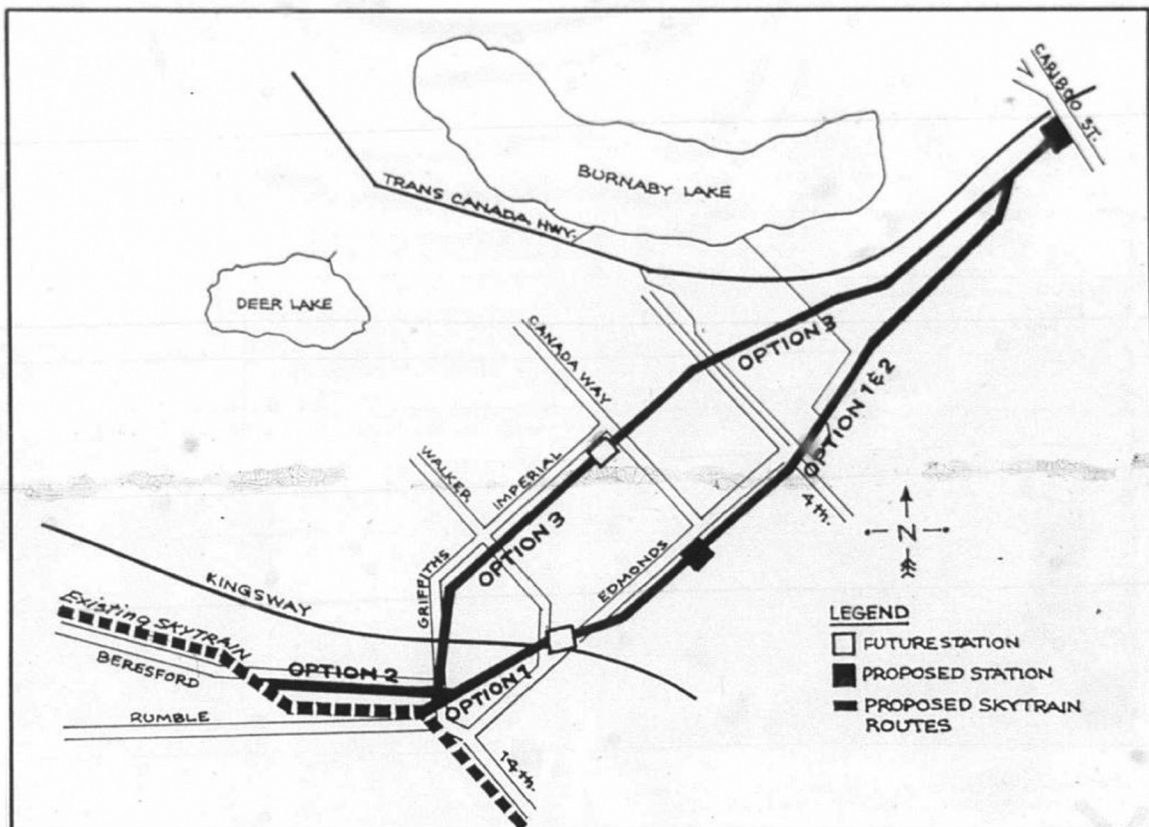
"If BC Transit is holding public meetings now, they (residents) should definitely be out in force making their views known," said the former alderman.

According to Randall, if EBRA waits until the decision between New West and Edmonds is made, then all the protests in the world will amount to nothing.

But concerned residents were not convinced when told of the BC Transit plans last Friday.

"I really have no comment at this point in time," said EBRA executive member Ethel Widmer. "It sounds pretty devastating, but it just seems that nothing official has happened."

Widmer said residents have to accept comments from BC Transit president Mike O'Connor that the public meetings will play a large role in choosing between Edmonds and New West-



minster.

O'Connor made his statements despite his own repeated references to the Edmonds line at a recent Burnaby Chamber of Commerce luncheon, and leaked BC Transit memo from consultant Tom Parkinson which said the Coquitlam SkyTrain advisory committee had already made up its mind.

In the wake of the leaked memo, the BC Transit Coquitlam SkyTrain transit advisory committee received Parkinson's resignation, lost its New Westminster representative Ald. Mal

Hughes, and received a call for the immediate firing of all its political appointees from NDP MLA Anita Hagen.

A Coquitlam SkyTrain information centre has been opened at Lougheed Mall, and public open houses will be held in a variety of locations over the next week.

Meetings will be at Brentwood Mall on May 4 and 5, Edmonds Community Centre May 7 and 8, plus the Edmonds SkyTrain Station on May 9.

Edmonds financial estimates queried

SkyTrain cost estimates have been juggled to favor the Edmonds route, Burnaby Ald. Doug Drummond said Monday.

Figures given in the final draft of the Coquitlam Advisory Rapid Transit Committee report are different from those presented to committee members just prior to the public release of the document, Drummond said.

In fact, BC Transit used a completely different type of accounting system that favored the Edmonds route, he said.

In the public document, the Edmonds proposal is shown to cost 82 cents per passenger while the Lougheed Highway route is \$2.60.

But committee members were given an earlier draft report which showed

the Lougheed Highway option costing \$4.68 per passenger and Edmonds costing \$4.29.

The lower figures, released to the public, show only the costs to the Vancouver Regional Transit Commission, Drummond said.

"I guess they decided the costs were too close. But they're comparing a line that's twice as long with 10 stations (Lougheed) against a line that's half as long with only three stations (Edmonds)," Drummond said.

"In fact, the line that's twice as long is faster than the other option."

After hearing complaints that 10 stations is too many for the Lougheed line, BC Transit lowered the costs of the published figures from \$2.60 to \$2.23 per passenger, Drummond said.

Acquisition of property a complicated process

The list of potential property acquisitions under the three Edmonds-Cariboo SkyTrain route proposals is lengthy and complicated.

The first option would require the relocation of virtually every business on the south side of Edmonds Street at BC Transit's expense. Going underground would raise the price by \$60 million.

Under the plan, construction would be phased-in and property owners will be given the chance to relocate within blocks of their original location as the guideway is completed.

The second option follows the property line between Edmonds and 19th Avenue, and requires the purchase of 39 homes before reaching Sixth Street. It would allow for a linear park connecting Byrne Creek Ravine, Powerhouse and a proposed park at the corner of Canada Way and Edmonds.

Either of the two options will require the acquisition of another 16 homes and blocking views at five or eight residences on Edmonds between Sixth Street and the southern end of Robert Burnaby Park. The document does not state which side of the street the guideway will follow.

The third option along a northbound BC Hydro

right of way requires no property acquisitions, but comes closer to a neighborhood of new homes around Imperial Street than to the proposed Edmonds Town Centre.

No matter which of three proposals is chosen, two homes and a small industrial property near Powerhouse Park must be purchased. The line will then come within 25 metres of two existing apartment complexes and follow the BC Hydro right of way to Kingsway and Edmonds.

Although a Kingsway Station co-developed with private business is described in the written report, the accompanying maps show the first stop at Canada Way Station.

The 6.7 kilometre Edmonds-Cariboo line will cost an estimated \$245 million, carry about 10.6 million passengers annually and take 26 minutes from Lougheed Mall to downtown Vancouver.

If Edmonds is chosen, the alignment will traverse Robert Burnaby Park, wind its way along the Stormont right-of-way to a 1,000-2,000 space park and ride SkyTrain Station near Cariboo Road, and follow the #1 Highway and Government Road to Lougheed Mall.

Memo investigated

An internal BC Transit investigation is underway to find out how a confidential memo got into the hands of Burnaby Now two weeks ago.

And while Burnaby RCMP are aware of the internal investigation, they have not been requested to assist, said St. Sgt. Mike Eastham.

Transit spokesperson Diane Gendron requested and received an exact copy of the memo delivered to Burnaby Now by Burnaby-Edmonds Liberal candidate Carlos Brito.

The memo, written by transit consultant Tom Parkinson, said members of the Coquitlam SkyTrain Advisory Committee chose the Edmonds route for taking ALRT to Lougheed Mall before a series of

public meetings began.

In the wake of the confidential memo's release, Parkinson was asked to resign as administrator for the Coquitlam SkyTrain project, but remains with BC Transit working in other capacities. Ald. Mal Hughes of New Westminster resigned from the committee, and Ald. Doug Drummond of Burnaby is considering leaving the committee. NDP MLA Anita Hagen called on Premier Rita Johnston to remove all political appointees from the advisory committee.

While the Lougheed Highway Sky Train proposal would have carried more passengers and sparked more development, the Edmonds route will likely go ahead, Brito said.