



Massey Tunnel Changes Needed Now!

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Chamber supports improvements to lessen congestion through a vital road link!

The Richmond Chamber of Commerce is delighted that one of the last, and possibly most vital links, in the Lower Mainland's road transportation network is finally getting some recognition, and hopefully, help.

Last week it was revealed the Gateway Program—a non-political organization, tasked by the province to examine and provide suggestions for solving our near-gridlock road conditions—revealed it had commissioned a study that suggested twinning the George Massey Tunnel.

With \$3 billion already earmarked for significant improvements to other bottlenecks—projects such as twinning the Port Mann Bridge and creating the North and South Fraser Perimeter Roads—the Massey Tunnel seemed to have always been overlooked. But now, with Gateway officials recognizing the 47-year-old link is carrying increasingly larger volumes of traffic from communities far east of Richmond to our city and beyond, at least there is hope the daily waits for commuters and commercial goods will be given some relief.

While Gateway and B.C.'s Transportation Minister have said not to expect any changes soon—possibly after the other major projects mentioned above are completed in the next 10 to 12 years—now is the time to impress the importance of promoting the merits of tunnel improvements to the powers that be.

For a start, commuters require a better, more efficient route through this section of the Lower Mainland.

The tremendous residential growth in communities, such as Surrey and Langley, have put greater stresses on our highway infrastructure. The wasted time and fuel spent in lengthy line ups, especially in the traditional morning and afternoon peak periods could quickly give way to all-day traffic congestion if nothing is done to improve the situation.

A reduction in wait times would also benefit the environment as idling engines, and stop and go traffic would give way to more streamlined, fuel-efficient flows.

Our commercial sector also needs relief from the tie-ups, today and in the busy future. With the Deltaport container facility near Tsawwassen and Ladner scheduled to undergo substantial expansion over the coming years to meet rising trade with Asia, the roads out

of South Delta could see double the truck traffic—with a good share of it heading into Richmond through the Massey Tunnel.

That expected increase alone should be enough for Gateway officials to recognize changes, in addition to the South Fraser Perimeter Road which is expected to handle a portion of truck traffic, are needed here.

Plus, the Highway 99 route through the tunnel is an essential corridor for two extremely important destinations—Vancouver International Airport (YVR) and the Canada-U.S. border.

Reduced road congestion to and from those two points is a vital goal, one that would benefit the many businesses in Richmond, and beyond—from small privately owned firms to high-tech giants.

It would improve efficiencies, allow enterprises to extend their reach, and make the region more attractive for investment.

In short, changes to improve the Massey Tunnel are long overdue, essential to the long-term goal of moving people and goods more effectively, and would greatly improve the quality of life and lessen the burden on the environment.

Let's just hope the government finds a way of addressing the route sooner rather than later.