

Saanich councillors asked to lobby feds and province for LRT funds

By [Kyle Slavin - Saanich News](#) July 18, 2011

A lesson learned by councillors at a federal conference earlier this year is finally getting legs in Greater Victoria as municipal governments look for ways to fund light-rail transit.

Saanich Coun. Dean Murdock is expected to put forward a motion to council tonight to send a letter to the provincial and federal ministers of transportation, as well as our local MLAs and MPs, requesting financial support.

"What we need to do is express quite clearly that this is broadly supported," Murdock said. "And I'm hopeful that we'll see other councils put forward a similar letter of support."

Following the Federation of Canadian Municipalities conference in Halifax in June, Victoria Coun. John Luton said cities that secured transportation funding said getting the money can require extensive lobbying.

"The decisions about funding allocations are ultimately made by cabinet and ministers who are elected to office. So you have to lobby hard for your project," Luton said. "We need to be pushing our local MPs to put this on their radar screens."

Murdock said \$1 billion was set aside by the province in 2008 as part of the Provincial Transit Plan (PTP) to help finance alternative forms of transportation in the Capital Region. As far as he's aware, none of that money has been used yet.

"The fund was designed to try and create public transit infrastructure that would allow for

creation of transportation alternatives," Murdock said. "We've got a great project that meets all the criteria of that funding."

Kate Trotter, a spokesperson with the provincial Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure, said it's premature to discuss LRT funding until a business plan is received.

"The province will be examining the option and business case from B.C. Transit prior to making any commitments to a particular transit solution," Trotter said in an email. "PTP funds will be dependent on the outcome of the Victoria Rapid Transit Study."

Federally, Murdock hopes to see funding similar to what other cities received for recent upgrades to their transit infrastructure.

"I don't see any reason why Ottawa wouldn't be prepared to invest in our region," he said, adding he's spoken with Victoria MP Denise Savoie and Esquimalt-Juan de Fuca MP Randall Garrison, both members of the opposition NDP party.

Infrastructure Canada also wouldn't comment on potential funding until a specific proposal was submitted.

Both the provincial and federal ministers of transportation denied requests for interviews.

Murdock is optimistic councillors in other municipalities will also put forward recommendations to secure rail funding from senior levels of government, citing recent conversations with Luton and View Royal councillor John Rogers.

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