

## Open Letter to the City of Victoria

We want to tell you about a story of a neglected blue bridge, a community that has lost its vision, a pot of gold and a train sitting idle. It's a story about poor communications and quick poker style decision-making gone wrong.

On June 17, Victoria City Council decided to play poker with the Blue Bridge rail tracks. It announced to the players 'no bridge rails unless others pay the cost' and 'oh by the way, we need your answer by August 12'.

At that time, the provincial government and the Island Corridor Foundation (ICF) were still working on a business plan for rail on Vancouver Island. So this rail decision was made without the knowledge whether or not a train would be available. No communications?

At that time, the BC Transit's study on area transit was chugging along, but was months away from completion. The CRD, the Greater Victoria Chamber of Commerce and the Downtown Business Association didn't show any desire to get involved. No communications?

What is the hurry! The pot of gold will still be there. Sit down with all the players, talk to one another, agree on the importance of commuter rail from Langford to downtown Victoria and make appropriate decisions to support it or not. Add a couple of months to the decision-making process for blue bridge rail to mid October to make time to consult openly with all CRD communities.

Transportation choice is the key to building a sustainable community with rail, streetcars, buses and humanized streets where walkers, seniors and cyclists feel safe.

The central components are rail and streetcars to move large numbers of people with as little pollution as possible. Rail moves commuters, business people and shoppers into the city centre quickly; streetcars and buses or even bicycles move them to local destinations.

Presently, there is no downtown transit hub suitable to make this integration happen. Douglas Street, the main transit route to downtown, has become congested with buses. Do we have to face a downtown crawl to get to the Bay Centre Mall?

It is time Victoria stops dithering on the bridge issue. First, postpone any further decisions on a Blue Bridge with rails until Council has had time to consult with ICF, affected communities and others. Second, determine if commuter rail on the E&N line into the downtown core of Victoria is a go. Third, allow time to develop creative financing. Finally, create a transit hub downtown where rail passengers can transfer quickly to local transit or their next connection for distant destinations by ferry or plane.

Detailed background information on this subject is available under the Transportation menu option on the web site [www.IslandTransformations.Org](http://www.IslandTransformations.Org)

Bill Draper  
for IslandTransformations.Org  
250 370 0121  
[draperwj@shaw.ca](mailto:draperwj@shaw.ca)

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