

## Michael Taylor-Noonan

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**From:** notify@yahoogroups.com on behalf of taylornoonan [michael@taylornoonan.com]  
**Sent:** July 24, 2005 7:33 AM  
**To:** mike@taylornoonan.com  
**Subject:** Fwd: Surrey Leader - How Green Is That Bus?

<http://www.surreyleader.com>

New bus buy really 'green'?

By Jeff Nagel Black Press  
Jul 22 2005

Choice of natural gas over diesel for buses will actually pollute more, says report

TransLink will buy more expensive natural gas-fired buses, rather than modern diesels, despite staff warnings that the decision will actually pump more emissions into the atmosphere over the short term.

Calling it a choice for a greener future, directors led by Vancouver Mayor Larry Campbell shot down an internal recommendation to buy

107 diesel buses for an estimated \$41 million and instead chose compressed natural gas buses that cost 15 per cent more.

"It's time for us to take that leap and go forward into the future," Campbell said.

The decision means TransLink will be able to afford 91 natural gas buses for the same amount of money unless the board finds an extra

\$6 million.

TransLink staff had recommended buying the 40-foot diesel buses equipped with particulate traps that emit 98 per cent less particulate matter and 75 per cent less nitrogen oxides than existing TransLink diesel units.

Natural gas buses would emit only slightly less carbon dioxide and about 25 per cent less nitrogen oxides than diesels, and would actually release more methane, the board heard.

"Total greenhouse emissions are essentially the same because of the higher methane emissions," TransLink vice-president Sheri Plewes told the board. "All the technologies are becoming very clean."

Going with the new diesels, according to a staff report, would allow TransLink to retire older heavily polluting diesel buses faster.

The report shows buying 91 natural gas buses and continuing to use 16

older diesels will actually pump more than five times as much particulate matter and nearly 10 per cent more nitrogen oxides into the air than if TransLink had bought the 107 new and cleaner diesels.

"Total annual emissions are lowest for diesel (with diesel particulate traps)," it says.

"The number one way to reduce emissions from the bus fleet is to retire as many older diesel buses as possible," added TransLink spokesman Ken Hardie.

Campbell rejected the emissions rationale, saying it would be impossible to face constituents and say they fought for clean air.

"Diesel is diesel," the Vancouver mayor said. "I don't care if you put a trap on it or not. It's still an unclean fuel."

Port Moody mayor Joe Trasolini said the fuel will come from B.C. gas

fields.

"We have to take the leadership in this area," he said. Officials with Terasen Inc. and other firms connected to the natural gas proposal were jubilant after the decision.

"It's not clean diesel -it's cleaner diesel," said Gordon Barefoot, Terasen's vice president of finance. "It's like saying 'light cigarettes.' "

The natural gas bus proponents offered to front up to \$45,000 of the cost of each bus - amounting to a loan that would be repaid through higher fuel costs. TransLink staff were undecided on the idea's merits.

The buses are urgently needed - by an arrival date of next September - to meet the TransLink board's decision last month to accelerate its bus buying to ease congestion on the transit system. It's a stop-gap measure that accounts for about 10 per cent of the additional 1,000 buses TransLink plans to buy over the next eight years. TransLink chair Doug McCallum said the vote reflected the "perception" diesel is a dirtier choice, but said the most important thing is to quickly proceed with the purchases. "I am concerned we are going to pay a premium for natural gas," he said. In the end all directors voted in favour of going with natural gas, and the board rejected a motion to defer the decision. North Vancouver's Barbara Sharp and Maple Ridge's Kathy Morse wanted the delay to study the natural gas option more closely, saying they don't want to see property taxes go up as a result of higher costs. Staff also cautioned the natural gas buses aren't as reliable or maintainable as diesel. But Campbell said the technology is not new - TransLink already has 50 natural gas buses it bought around 1997. That first experience with the fuel wasn't a good one, however. TransLink officials say they have retrofitted 25 of them back to diesel, due to problems manufacturers assure won't crop up again in the new purchase. "They were notoriously unreliable and very expensive to operate," Hardie said. Another added cost TransLink will face is an estimated \$9 million to build new fuelling stations. Right now natural gas buses can only be fuelled in Coquitlam. The decision to go with gas also means TransLink staff will now be negotiating with just one natural gas bus proponent. At least two diesel manufacturers had been expected to bid for the region's business. The natural gas buses won't be able to use biodiesel, an increasingly available alternative fuel that diesels can run. Also rejected were electric-diesel hybrids that were more expensive yet - the money would have bought just 67.

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