

VANOC calls for help with transportation

To move 1.6 million involved

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Published: Sunday, June 10, 2007

Vancouver and Whistler transportation systems will be stretched to the limit dealing with the 1.6 million athletes, trainers, officials, media, sponsors, staff and spectators attending the 2010 Olympic Games.

And the Vancouver organizing committee (VANOC) is looking for expert help to provide a "seamless" \$124-million plan that "minimizes disruption" to residents.

VANOC has issued a call for a special-events transportation management firm to work with TransLink and B.C. Transit to develop a plan for 2010.

The plan will include arranging for the supply of 1,800 motor coaches, plus an undetermined number of transit and school buses to supplement existing transit vehicles.

It must also provide a "complete, reliable and on-time bus system" to serve Greater Vancouver, the Sea-to-Sky corridor and Whistler.

The transit challenge is common to all Games.

"We did a very good job telling people how bad it was going to be," chuckled Carlos Braceras, deputy director of the Utah Department of

Transportation, which organized plans for the 2002 Salt Lake City Olympics. "We scared the hell out of them and when the Games came, it was better than we said it would be."

Salt Lake City borrowed more than 900 buses from all over the U.S., Braceras said.

The state worked with private consultants, law-enforcement agencies and federal, state and local transportation agencies to ensure things ran smoothly, he said.

"We had a war room where we had representatives of all these different agencies working together during the Games," Braceras said. "Our goal was to make transportation a non-story."

He said Salt Lake organizers also worked with local companies to reduce the amount of their travel, with delivery firms and long-haul trucking companies changing their deliveries to the middle of the night. Terry Wright, VANOC's executive vice-president for service operations, said the overall transportation plan is one of the most important factors in a successful Olympics.

TransLink spokesman Ken Hardie said that by 2010, the number of transit buses will increase from 1,400 to 1,600 and the number of

SkyTrain cars on the Expo and Millennium lines will increase from 210 to 244. A third SeaBus will be put into service in 2009 and the new Vancouver-Richmond Canada Line will open.

Hardie said the 1,800 extra buses will operate outside the regular transit system, mostly ferrying athletes, spectators, volunteers and officials to Whistler venues.