

## **Place Names**

*John Day*

*March, 2005*

Okay, here goes. A lot of the quirky names of routes and places came from the fertile and imaginative mind of Brian Sullivan, who was the Assistant Director of the Bureau of Transit Services during the NDP administration. Some others of us may have been a little bit guilty of encouraging him or perhaps even planting the seed of an idea LOL. Carving out new territory meant that in some cases no logical names could be found and so names were made up. And if you're making up names, you are entitled to have some fun while you're at it. Here is a partial list:

Phibbs Exchange - built in the middle of nowhere with no identifiable community name. Named for first reeve of North Van after library research by our secretary. Wendy - can't remember last name.

Lonsdale Quay. Back then, nobody in this country knew what a Quay was. Now it's all over the place. We had to teach people to pronounce it "Key" not "Kway". Much more imaginative than "Ferry Dock" though.

"Valley to Sea". The branding did describe the route's general orientation but it was a tip of the hat to the "Edwards Lake to Sea System" which was an intercity carrier in the US, and which had recently been written up in Motor Coach Age.

"Midway Connector" - in addition to New West being midway to everywhere, the routing along Marine Drive was also midway, neither north nor south.

"FastBus" was a direct translation from Hamburg's SchnellBus. Hamburg had a very early example of a centralized planning and marketing agency (i.e. "Translink") coordinating a number of operating companies (i.e. CMBC, SeaBus, Skytrain etc).

"Bus" was a direct lift from Oahu's "The Bus". Colour photos were given to the ad agency that developed the paint schemes for "Bus", "FastBus" and "Town & Country Bus" (remember that one?). Even the logo was sort of similar. This one came from Vic Parker who was the director of the Bureau (and first one to be fired when the Socreds took back power in the next election).

The Golden Triangle was a term used by city planners to denote the Georgia/Burrard/Pender triangle. The destination was put on the E800's because a route was proposed to run north on Granville, west on Pender (note the presence of switches there to this day) and to some indeterminate destination near Cardero. The southern terminus would have been over the Granville Bridge, either at 10th and Granville, King Edward and Granville (the 901's had "to King Edward" on their signs) or Broadway and Kingsway.

The purpose of the route was to alleviate passups, particularly eastbound in the morning, on the Stanley Park, to provide extra

capacity to Granville and Broadway (and, if extended to King Ed), to allow a headway reduction on the main Granville route which was underserved north of 16th and overserved south of there. There was no practical way of turning at 16th so a loop was proposed in the median at King Edward.

"Granville Waterfront Station". Seems descriptive enough. But GWS was also a term used with a wink of the eye and a nod of the head among the recently graduated transit professionals who were starting to change the generally negative attitude towards transit throughout North America, right about the time of the "energy crisis". These gentlemen called themselves the "International Transport Conspiracy" (ITC) and one of their members coined the term "Stench" to describe something which had a great deal of appeal despite it being of great age (sort of like a fine wine or cheese). A Fageol Twin Coach or Brill trolley coach was "stenchy"; a GM Fishbowl was not back then though it might be today. Certainly an RTS is not stenchy and never will be. All of San Francisco is/was "stenchy". Brewster's operations at Banff using ancient glasstopped MCI's was stenchy as were the double decker operations in Victoria and Davis. And the greatest stench of all was when you combined the basic principles of the ITC (each mode used according to its strengths, emphasis on electric traction where possible, easy interchange between routes and modes, generally easy public access and - usually - a self service fare system) with heritage architecture or some other nod to the good work done by previous generations. On finding such a facility or piece of equipment, members of the ITC were permitted to say "Gad, What Stench!". Abbreviated to GWS. Hence Granville Waterfront Station.

The Gospel Truth.

Today, members of the ITC have managed to worm their way into reasonably high management posts in many properties. Look around the continent at the really good systems that you admire. Chances are there's a member of the ITC in charge :)

"SeaBus" came from, supposedly, a public contest but in fact it was already being referred to as that internally. Where did that come from? In addition to it being a logical outgrowth of the "Bus" branding, it was also a bit of a ripoff of CP Air's "SkyBus" service which featured easy-on, no reservation service to Toronto. Charles Spratt, first manager of SeaBus, had been the marketing guy at CP Air that developed SkyBus. Hmm. There was an interesting crossover back to CP Air from this in that they had signs at the airport that were exact duplicates of the urban bus stop (flag type) signs used at the time, except instead of saying "BUS" they said, of course, SkyBus. I believe at the other end of the route, the signs used in Toronto airport emulated the TTC's bus stop signs.

And from there it wasn't much of a leap to SkyTrain, also supposedly named in a public contest but the outcome of that was virtually fixed before the contest was even thought of :)

