

DRAFT

City of Vancouver Seniors Advisory Committee

c/o City Clerk's Office
3rd Floor, City Hall
453 West 12th Ave
Vancouver, British Columbia
V5Y 1V4

July 17, 2017

Dear Mayor Robertson and Council,

Re: Installation of Accessible Public Washrooms at New Millennium Line Broadway Stations

At its June 17 meeting, the Seniors' Advisory Committee was briefed by staff from TransLink and the City's Engineering Department about progress on the Millennium Line Broadway SkyTrain extension. We found the presentation highly informative and staff were able to address many of our questions and concerns.

The Committee remains very concerned, however, that accessible public washrooms will likely not be installed at the new transit stations. According to TransLink staff, there is not enough money to build bathrooms that are both accessible and safe from a security standpoint.

While we understand the expense involved, we believe that it is imperative to install these crucial facilities. At its September 23rd, 2016 meeting, the Committee passed a motion calling on the City to consider inclusion of accessible public washrooms in all current and future planning projects. On November 2nd of that year, a similar motion was passed unanimously by Vancouver City Council. These are attached for your reference.

These motions were guided by research and public policy recommendations from national and international bodies concerned with healthy aging. For example, as cited by the federal government's National Seniors Council in its 2017 report, research suggests that lack of accessible public washrooms is a risk factor for social isolation. Seniors who are incontinent or have other health problems requiring convenient access to public washrooms may be discouraged from leaving their homes if they know that these facilities are unavailable to them as they travel. This concern was echoed several times by participants in our recent series of community consultations on social isolation and loneliness.

Furthermore, given that this extension will serve the Medical Precinct on West 10th Avenue, it is likely that many of the passengers traveling along this route will be seniors with various health problems that require easy access to public washrooms. The inclusion of these projects would go a long way towards helping seniors attend important medical appointments.

Given the City of Vancouver's goal to be more accessible and to alleviate isolation and loneliness among seniors, this is obviously a serious matter that deserves more careful review. Indeed, as the World Health Organization states in its Global Age-Friendly Cities Guide, the "availability of clean, conveniently located, well-signed, and handicap-accessible toilets is generally regarded as an important age-friendly feature of the built environment" (p. 17) and transit stations should be "accessible...with public toilets" (p. 26). As City Council voted unanimously for Vancouver to seek official certification by the World Health Organization as a Global Age-Friendly City, public washrooms in new SkyTrain stations must be given more consideration.

From a broader perspective, the availability of public toilets is consistent the view of many that access to sanitation is a basic human right that promotes health and dignity, as recognized by the United Nations General Assembly in July 2010. As a world-class city, Vancouver must do all it can to support this basic human right.

We implore you to ask the Mayor's Council of Translink to seriously reconsider the inclusion of public bathrooms in all new stations on the Broadway Line Extension and future SkyTrain extensions.

Yours very truly,

Colleen McGuinness,
Chair, Seniors' Advisory Committee