



Report to Council

From the Office of Councillor Amy Lubik

Date: April 30, 2021

Subject: Request of Support for a Public Toilet at Moody Centre Skytrain

Purpose

To gain council support for investigation of a public toilet at the Moody Centre Station and liaise with TransLink or other partners propose full or joint funding.

Recommendation

THAT staff be directed to investigate the opportunity to partner with TransLink, the Province of BC, or other partners to install an accessible public toilet at Moody Centre Station, with preference for an easy-to-install and low-maintenance model (e.g. Portland Loo) as recommended in the report dated April 30, 2021 from the Office of Councillor Amy Lubik regarding Request of Support for a Public Toilet at Moody Centre Skytrain.

Background

Port Moody is a community that prides itself on sustainability, inclusivity and accessibility. In this vein we have done studies on active transportation and have been encouraging people to take transit to decrease our carbon footprints. At the same time, we have completed an age-friendly city plan to make sure all residents can enjoy the community to the fullest. Advocates have been asking for more public washrooms; however, the recent pandemic and closing of gas station bathrooms, stores and other places that community members generally rely on washrooms that are not “public.” In fact, In the early days of Ontario’s lockdown, [Toronto Mayor John Tory pleaded with shuttered businesses](https://www.thestar.com/news/canada/2020/05/21/covid-19-pandemic-highlights-need-for-more-public-toilets-experts-say.html)¹ to allow essential workers to use their bathrooms. Some communities, including Port Moody have also installed portable and temporary toilets. This highlights the need, and that need will not decrease after recovery.

¹ <https://www.thestar.com/news/canada/2020/05/21/covid-19-pandemic-highlights-need-for-more-public-toilets-experts-say.html>

To [borrow from Lezlie Lowe](#)², author of the book *Place To Go: How Public Toilets Fail Our Private Needs*, “[we] might not think often about public bathrooms. But that depends on who [we] are: there’s a spectrum of bathroom need out in the world. Access to clean and safe facilities is a crucial part of life—more so if you are caring for children, have an inflammatory bowel condition, or are unhoused... lack of public-bathroom access profoundly affects transgender people, caregivers, people of colour, people with Crohn’s, anyone who uses a mobility device, poor people, and women—a large majority of Canadians, in fact. Without a network of reliable public bathrooms, who uses the city and how they use it changes; those populations can be effectively excluded from the public sphere.”

Community advocates have been asking for more public toilets for years³.

Discussion

“Bathrooms are having a moment. Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, we’ve been on alert to stay safe by staying clean, and hand-washing memes have abounded. People are hoarding hand sanitizer and municipalities are pleading with citizens to stop flushing disposable wipes. Yet Canadians have also seen the widespread closure of publicly accessible bathrooms across the country, a by-product of shuttered libraries, malls, cafés, and outdoor trails. This is a problem. The question now isn’t simply when and how our public bathrooms will reopen. It’s whether the pandemic will be the tipping point that teaches people the truth about public bathrooms: far from being unhygienic, unsafe, or simply unimportant, with the correct distancing and cleaning measures, these facilities are a crucial part of any effective plan for preventing disease and easing inequity... For decades, municipal planning departments have largely ignored public bathrooms or treated them as afterthoughts, leaving their installation and upkeep to various local water, parks, and development officials. Yet, when planned and outfitted well, public-bathroom networks benefit cities in a way that’s similar to transit grids: they boost use. It’s the same reason malls have spiffy bathrooms: because they encourage people to stay longer and shop longer. Some small towns in British Columbia have added roadside bathrooms in an effort to become more desirable as road-trip stops. And the benefit of free, reliable public toilets goes beyond the fact that shoppers can spend an extra couple of hours on a downtown street. They also allow commuters to comfortably get to work and back. Public toilets support public health: they help toddlers potty train; they provide opportunities for everyone to wash their hands regularly; and they help reduce public defecation, which can lead to serious health concerns (such as the ongoing outbreak of hepatitis A in San Diego, which is primarily among the homeless population).⁴”

Though many sources presented here have been written in the context of the pandemic, the need for public toilets is not new, we are just seeing an amplification during the pandemic and reminder of our priorities for accessibility. In the 2020 the Port Moody Age-Friendly City Strategy one of the recommendations was to investigate the lack of public washrooms. This need to make transit equitably accessible for everyone from age 8 to 80 also dovetails with the

² <https://thewalrus.ca/why-are-canadas-public-bathrooms-so-inadequate/>

³ <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/public-washrooms-metro-vancouver-1.5484756>

⁴ <https://thewalrus.ca/why-are-canadas-public-bathrooms-so-inadequate/>

city priority to allow as many people as possible to get out of their cars and use transit to lower our carbon footprint.

At the end of 2018 an article was published in the Times Columnist stating:

“The [TransLink board members] voted to move forward with a plan to “increase the availability of customer washrooms along the regional transit system.”

It’s a hot issue for transit riders.

In Burnaby, a recent report on their master transportation plan stated the number one request was access to washrooms⁵.

In a TransLink survey in 2020, increasing the availability of washrooms on the transit system was listed as the second-biggest priority for users overall and with 53 per cent listing that as their top issue, below increasing service to minimize overcrowding and pass-ups⁶.

Survey respondents said they are more likely to be satisfied with their transit experience if they have access to washrooms, at 74 per cent. Fifty per cent of the respondents said they have had to adjust their behaviour on transit due to lack of washrooms...

The same report stated that customer washrooms along the network should be provided in a manner that makes facilities available to the most number of persons at key points along their transit journey, while balancing the need for coverage and finite budget resources. The following criteria have been identified to assist in determining locations where access to washrooms should be prioritized, regardless of who provides these facilities:

1) Major transfer or connection point for a high number of transit passengers; 2) High levels of passengers experiencing long elapsed journey times on the transit network; and, 3) Contributes to developing a network of relatively evenly spaced washrooms in terms of travel time on the system.

Being a Major transfer point for many Tri-Cities Commuters, particularly during peak times, being at a point in the Skytrain line that has no public facilities available close to the end of the line, Moody Centre station seems to fit these criteria. Though it would preferable to negotiate with TransLink to completely fund this project, as it would likely increase ridership, there may be an opportunity for city to support funding, as this project would be very much in line with city priorities as it would support local businesses and their patrons. At the same time, the City of Vancouver has recently used provincial grant funding to purchase and install such a facility in a community park; this is also an avenue that Port Moody could explore. The cost of this project

⁵ <https://www.burnabynow.com/local-news/burnaby-residents-really-want-toilets-at-transit-stations-3141292>

⁶ <https://www.timescolonist.com/news/b-c/washrooms-to-be-added-to-metro-vancouver-transit-stations-a-top-rider-request-1.23522036>

was somewhat negatively viewed; however, much of the cost was due to the facility being located far from hook ups.

As cost and cleaning are an issue, Port Moody could consider suggesting Portland Loo for a solution or another easy to install option as a possible solution to this issue, which was specifically developed by the City of Portland, OR, to fill this gap in their services. This was suggested to Port Moody by a recipient of our Accessibility Award. From the website: *Portland's famous stand-alone bathroom, The Portland Loo, was developed by Madden Fabrication in conjunction with the City of Portland. Free and accessible around the clock, the Loos are designed specifically to prevent problems that are commonly experienced with public toilets. The sleek and modern kiosk discourages crime with graffiti-proof wall panels and open grating. And, they're easy to clean, with commonly used components that are easy to replace or upgrade. First installed over 10 years ago, The Portland Loo has proven to be a durable and inexpensive solution to keep your city clean and crime-free*⁷.

Though there would be many considerations needed for a public toilet in Moody Centre Station, including accessibility options and the need for luggage space for airport commuters, as this equity issue is aligned with the age-friendly city strategy, the climate action plan, and general health city principals, and as there are potentials to investigate partnerships, Port Moody should move towards investigation of potential partnerships.

Other Option(s)

1. THAT the report dated April 30, 2021 from the Office of Councillor Amy Lubik regarding Request of Support for a Public Toilet at Moody Centre Skytrain be referred to the Transportation Committee.
2. THAT the report dated April 30, 2021 from the Office of Councillor Amy Lubik regarding Request of Support for a Public Toilet at Moody Centre Skytrain be received for information.

Financial Implications

Uncertain; however, potential costs could include:

If TransLink is able to be negotiated with, it is possible that they may take up this cost, as it is part of their strategic plan. Without TransLink or provincial support the base cost may be \$100,000 depending on how complicated hookup may be.

Council Strategic Plan Objectives

This meets with council objectives of becoming an age-friendly city, to increase accessibility.

This facility would support Council's objectives in the Official Community Plan to mitigate climate change by encouraging use of public transit and bicycling.

⁷ <https://portlandloo.com/>

Healthy City: Ensure plans and programs take into account the diverse needs of residents and factors related to age and other demographics such as income, languages, housing types, and abilities.

Environment: Broaden the City's sustainability programs and allows more use of public transit. It enhances the civic realm by discouraging public urination and defecation.

Resilience: we respond to challenges, adapt to change, and help others. Supports public health standards.

Compassion: we believe in kindness, caring, and helping others. As about one-quarter of women of child-bearing age are menstruating at any given time, then a convenient public washroom at a mass transit station is an amenity for equity.

Service: Strengthen relationships with other levels of government, First Nations, community groups, and partners.