



**To:** Public Works and Transportation Committee

**Date:** September 26, 2016

**From:** John Irving, P.Eng. MPA  
Director, Engineering

**File:** 10-6125-07-02/2016-  
Vol 01

**Re:** Letter of Support for Tracking Vehicle Kilometres Travelled Data

### Staff Recommendation

That a letter be sent to the BC Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure indicating the City's support for the collection of annual vehicle kilometres travelled data by the Insurance Corporation of British Columbia as identified in the report titled "Letter of Support for Tracking Vehicle Kilometres Travelled Data" from the Director, Engineering, dated September 26, 2016.

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REPORT CONCURRENCE		
<b>ROUTED TO:</b>  Transportation	<b>CONCURRENCE</b>  <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<b>CONCURRENCE OF GENERAL MANAGER</b>  
<b>REVIEWED BY STAFF REPORT / AGENDA REVIEW SUBCOMMITTEE</b>	<b>INITIALS:</b>  DW	<b>APPROVED BY CAO</b>  

## Staff Report

### Origin

This report describes a new initiative by provincial government staff to obtain more accurate information on the actual kilometers travelled by all vehicles registered within British Columbia. This data on aggregated vehicle kilometres travelled (VKT) will be used to improve transportation, land-use and sustainability planning within the City of Richmond.

This report supports Council's 2014-2018 Term Goal #3 A Well-Planned Community:

*Adhere to effective planning and growth management practices to maintain and enhance the livability, sustainability and desirability of our City and its neighbourhoods, and to ensure the results match the intentions of our policies and bylaws.*

3.1. *Growth and development that reflects the OCP, and related policies and bylaws.*

3.3. *Effective transportation and mobility networks.*

This report supports Council's 2014-2018 Term Goal #4 Leadership in Sustainability:

*Continue advancement of the City's sustainability framework and initiatives to improve the short and long term livability of our City, and that maintain Richmond's position as a leader in sustainable programs, practices and innovations.*

4.1. *Continued implementation of the sustainability framework.*

This report supports Council's 2014-2018 Term Goal #5 Partnerships and Collaboration:

*Continue development and utilization of collaborative approaches and partnerships with intergovernmental and other agencies to help meet the needs of the Richmond community.*

5.2. *Strengthened strategic partnerships that help advance City priorities.*

### Background

In 2010, Council adopted targets in Richmond's Official Community Plan (OCP) to reduce community greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions 33% below 2007 levels by 2020, and 80% below 2007 levels by 2050. The OCP also includes a target to reduce energy use 10% by 2020 below 2007 levels. Council approved the Community Energy and Emission Plan (CEEP) in January 2014 which sets out an array of strategies and actions for the City to take to reduce community energy use and GHG emissions. The City has implemented many initiatives including the award-winning Alexandra and Oval Village district energy utilities, better-than-code energy efficiency requirements for new construction, the "EnergySave Richmond" suite of programs for existing buildings, pedestrian environment improvements and increased solid waste diversion.

Staff reported out in September 2016 that the City's overall GHG emissions in 2012 (the last year for which complete data is available) were 6.1% below 2007 emissions totals, after factoring in a needed adjustment to the province's transportation emissions estimate.

## **Analysis**

The City depends on accurate data in order to identify effective and economic policy, program and infrastructure investment options. Staff make use of many data sources including census information, population forecasts, traffic counts and aggregated electricity and natural gas consumption data. However, there are a number of areas in which policy analysis and decision-making are significantly hampered by a lack of available information.

One of the most significant data gaps for City staff is accurate information on the overall use of private automobiles and commercial vehicle fleets situated in Richmond. While data on the total number of vehicles is available, there is no accurate data on how much these vehicles have been driven (and what tonnage of emissions they have emitted) in a given year. In recent years, estimates of total VKT have been obtained by multiplying the total counts for various classes and ages of vehicle by region-wide average VKT figures derived from vehicles taking the AirCare test. Unfortunately, this approach is not sensitive to community-specific shifts by residents with regard to using cars, taking transit or using active transport modes like walking and cycling.

The limitations of VKT data to date are illustrated with the opening of the Canada Line in Richmond in 2009. TransLink's Richmond-Vancouver ridership numbers tripled between 2008 and 2010, and a "trip diary" survey (conducted once every three years) suggested both a large increase in transit use and an absolute decline in vehicle trips between Richmond and Vancouver between 2008 and 2011. However, the methodology used by the Province to calculate VKT for Richmond applied regionally-derived factors which indicated increased total VKT. The result suggests, incorrectly, that the \$1.4 billion Canada Line investment and the use of compact development within the Central Area of the city have had no effect on local transportation choices.

With the end of the AirCare program on December 31, 2014, the situation has worsened, since even regionally-averaged VKT figures cannot be produced for the year 2015 or after. If this issue is not addressed, it shall greatly impede the ability of local governments to adequately assess transportation and GHG emissions trends.

Annually-updated VKT data would be of great value to a range of City activities. As noted above, this data would provide accurate information for the first time on the sector responsible for an estimated 59% of the city's total GHG emissions. Land use planning staff note that VKT data on a neighbourhood basis would enable the City to see how driving habits are affected by land use change (e.g. neighbourhood densification and/or introduction of new housing types), by transportation improvements, and by other factors. In addition, transportation planning staff note that VKT information is a prerequisite for a region-wide mobility pricing initiative, as advocated by the Metro Vancouver Mayors' Council on Regional Transportation.

In response, Provincial staff now propose that the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure direct the Insurance Corporation of British Columbia (ICBC) to collect odometer data when

annually renewing vehicle insurance coverage; an approach previously endorsed by UBCM members in 2010<sup>1</sup>. Provided on a suitably disaggregated basis to local governments in order to prevent any disclosure of information about specific vehicle owners, this data would provide local governments with accurate locally-based data for the first time. The data would allow staff to discern the effect of locally-based new transportation infrastructure, land-use changes or emission reduction initiatives on a year-to-year basis, providing the City with the essential feedback required to further optimize policies, programs and infrastructure investments.

In responding to the 2010 UBCM resolution, Provincial Government staff at Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General raised four concerns about ICBC collecting VKT data:

1. Customer perceptions regarding invasion of privacy

This concern can be addressed by ensuring that data provided to local governments is suitably aggregated so as to prevent any disclosure of information about specific vehicle owners, as is already done with census information. Aggregated VKT data by area would provide local governments with accurate locally-based data for the first time, allowing staff to discern the local effects of new public transportation services, walkability or cycling infrastructure, land-use changes, planning policies for “complete communities” as well as emission reduction initiatives on a year-to-year basis, providing the city with the essential feedback required to further optimize policies, programs and infrastructure investments.

2. Present cost of the technology;
3. Administrative challenges to record and track mileage for over three million customers individually;

These two concerns appear to assume that ICBC staff or technology would be required to obtain odometer readings. This could be resolved simply by recommending that drivers self-report the VKT data, (emphasizing that this information has no impact on drivers’ insurance rates).

4. Difficulty of verifying odometer data / potential risk of fraud.<sup>2</sup>

Given that the odometer data would not affect any costs levied on the vehicle owner, the risk of fraud appears to be minimal. Staff note that trusted data sources like the Canada Census also rely on self-reported information. Moreover, as recent discussions over the Canada Census have made clear, having recent, locally-specific data with a given percentage of error is greatly preferable to having no information at all.

### **Financial Impact**

Provincial staff note that the implementation of VKT data collection by ICBC will likely entail implementation and ongoing costs.<sup>3</sup> Any additional costs would need to be borne by ICBC, the Province, data recipients (including local governments) or a combination of these

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<sup>1</sup> 2010 UBCM Resolution B83: ICBC Aggregate Data

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.ubcm.ca/assets/Resolutions~and~Policy/Resolutions/2010%20Provincial%20Responses.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> For purposes of comparison, a 1% overestimate in the City’s transportation sector emissions estimate is equivalent to \$140,000 per year in additional offset costs.

sources. Provincial staff note that they will have a clearer understanding of the costs involved once the formal submission has been made to ICBC. Were any reasonable fee assessed to the City, staff believe the benefits obtained from annual VKT data with regard to transportation, land use and GHG emission reduction efforts would be of significant net value to the City.

**Conclusion**

Having aggregated data on total annual vehicle kilometers travelled by all vehicles within a given area would inform and improve the City's analysis and decision-making on a wide range of city policy, planning and infrastructure investment decisions. Staff recommend that the application by the Climate Action Secretariat to the Ministry of Transportation and Investment, requesting that ICBC be directed to collect odometer readings annually from drivers renewing their vehicle insurance, be supported by advising the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure in writing.



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