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## City to embark on new long-term transportation plan

By Nanaimo News Bulletin

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Nanaimo will be a much different place in 25 years.

Not only will it look different, but how people move within the city will also change.

Because of this expectation, the city is embarking on a one-year journey to establish a transportation master plan, a project that will guide transportation decision-making for the city for the next quarter century and will recommend improvements for all modes of transportation.

Already, the city has hosted a number of online surveys to identify various travel patterns across the city, and responses from those surveys will help serve the plan moving forward, said Coun. George Anderson, who sits on the city's transportation advisory committee.

In 2008, the transportation master plan was identified as a priority in the official community plan. It was also considered a priority in the recently approved corporate strategic plan for 2012-2015.

To assist it with creating the plan, the city has hired Urban Systems, a B.C.-based company that has helped other B.C. cities meet their future transportation goals.

"Urban Systems is a reputable company that has worked on several projects such as the Sea to Sky Highway, the UBC campus transit plan and the metro Vancouver cycling network," said Anderson. "Urban Systems will be working with the transportation advisory committee and staff to deliver the plan over the next year."

The plan is being developed in conjunction with the Transit Future Plan that is being prepared in a parallel process by the Regional District of Nanaimo and B.C. Transit.

John Steiner, spokesman for Urban Systems, said extensive community consultation and existing city policy will determine the outcome of the transportation plan (see sidebar).

"Making sure the city has a plan that is implementable and affordable is a key part of the process," said Steiner.

The process officially began Monday, and will include six phases concluding next fall. The initial phase will take into stock work already completed by staff, the transportation advisory committee and results from the online survey.

"One of the key items we'll address is mode of travel, both within the city and to and from the city," said Steiner.

"We'll establish some targets to make sure they're in alignment with Nanaimo's vision and goals and that they're consistent with mode changes ... from driving to perhaps other modes of transportation that are more desirable in cases like transit, walking and cycling."

Nanaimo Mayor John Ruttan said that as the city grows – Nanaimo's population is expected to reach 100,000 people within the next few years – issues like transportation become more complex.

"The transportation master plan ensures that the city's transportation system meets our needs over the next five, 10 and 20 years and works toward the city's goal of being a more sustainable community," said Ruttan. "Our transportation issues will become more complex and more important."

According to Statistics Canada, 78 per cent of Nanaimo residents transport themselves with an automobile, two per cent cycle, seven per cent walk and three per cent take public transit.

For more information on the transportation master plan or to complete the survey, visit [www.nanaimo.ca/goto/transportationplan](http://www.nanaimo.ca/goto/transportationplan).

### Public consultation tool helps process

The city will be implementing a new tool to help facilitate public consultation during the planning process of the transportation master plan, as well as more traditional methods of engaging residents.

PlaceSpeak ([www.placespeak.com](http://www.placespeak.com)) is an online community consultation platform that allows residents to voice their opinions and receive information on topics that are important to them using geosocial technology.

"Public meetings can be held at very awkward times and not everyone can make it," said Colleen Hardwick, PlaceSpeak founder, in a YouTube interview. "Just on the accessibility, 24/7 of being able to come online and see a consultation has great benefit in and of itself."

Former B.C. premier Mike Harcourt also endorses PlaceSpeak.

"PlaceSpeak creates a whole new way of expanding public participation," he said. "It's really important in this quite cynical age of 'you can't do anything, you can't change anything, they're just going to make up their mind anyways'. I hope it will break down a lot of that very negative dynamic we've built up in our democracy."

It's the first project the city will use PlaceSpeak to gauge public opinion on a project.

"We're learning as we go a little bit with this tool," said Gordon Foy, the city's transportation engineer. "The more engaged we can get our residents the more buy-in there will be of the plan and the more buy-in the better chance we have of being successful."

A more conventional open house will take place on Oct. 30 in the multi-purpose room at Wellington Secondary School, and online surveys will be collected until Nov. 16 at [www.nanaimo.ca/goto/transportationplan](http://www.nanaimo.ca/goto/transportationplan).

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