

VANCOUVER: STABILIZING THE GATEWAY INFRASTRUCTURE COALITION¹

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Introduction

This short paper reports on the Vancouver case study in an ongoing comparative research project on four Canadian cities (Halifax, Montreal, Toronto and Vancouver). The goal of the research is to highlight how transportation planning and funding are influenced differently by local political, economic and social stakeholders in all four locations in order to better understand how societal debates and related tensions towards transportation projects for commercial purposes differ from one location to another within Canada.

Vancouver's case is distinctive because of the long-standing and activist role of the transport industry in infrastructure advocacy and planning. Although this legacy can be traced all the way back to the role of the Canadian Pacific Railway in the creation of the City of Vancouver, since at least the early 1990s, a coalition based in the Vancouver region has succeeded in securing substantial federal and provincial government support and resources for trade-enabling Gateway infrastructure development.

This short paper raises three inter-related questions about this remarkably stable coalition. First, how was the coalition able to exist stably for what is now approaching three decades, despite the ever-present threat of the coalition or regime breaking down internally? Second, what is the relationship between the coalition and the interests it represents, and the actually or potentially competing centres of power in the region, with regards to decision-making and resource-allocation processes? In particular, what is the relationship between the Gateway infrastructure coalition and the municipal governments of greater Vancouver? And third, in what ways have these internal and external coalition dynamics influenced the nature of the infrastructure investments that have been proposed and implemented? We start with some literature.

Literature

Economic actors are not always able to overcome their differences and achieve collective action solutions, especially not when it comes to major transportation infrastructure plans and investments. So, it is worth understanding how and when this happens. Scholarly work by Logan and Molotch (1987), Stone and Sanders (1987), Mossberger and Stoker (2001) and others, has explored the existence of relatively stable coalitions or regimes of urban actors with shared economic interests. There are many debates between these scholars, including for example, a debate between Cobban (2003a and 2003b) and Leo (2003) about whether these ideas could be imported into the Canadian context, given the relatively weak constitutional position of municipal government. A more recent and relevant addition to the literature is Wachsmuth's (2017) idea of "infrastructure alliances". Without going any further into this literature, here are Dowding et al's criteria for defining the presence of a regime: "1) a distinctive policy agenda, which is 2) relatively long-lived and 3) sustained by coalitions of interests or personnel not formally or fully specified in institutional structures . . . and often 4) crossing sectoral or institutional boundaries." (1999: 516). This definition serves us well for organizing a series of observations about the Vancouver case.

Observations

Table 1 traces the evolution of the Vancouver-region gateway coalition over the past 30 years. Although this timeline begins in 1991, it is important to note that the Round Table on the Greater Vancouver Gateway emerged directly from the difficulties of the previous decade. The 1980s included a major port labour disruption and was also when the region's real estate industry first learned how to redevelop core

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and industrial lands for residential purposes. Despite many successes, it has never been certain that Vancouver's gateway coalition would/will prevail, nor indeed that it has always gotten what it wants.

In 1994, the Round Table was replaced by the Greater Vancouver Gateway Council (GVGC) which has been the leading membership organization in the coalition since then (see Table 2). Not all urban growth regimes have such formal institutional structures; indeed, the increasing formalization and institutionalization of the gateway infrastructure coalition through the GVGC and related organizations is a distinctive feature of the Vancouver case. For example, governance reforms at TransLink (the regional transportation agency which has both operational and planning authority) in 2007 formalized the role of the GVGC in Board member screening.

Table 3 shows the influence of various gateway coalition members in the appointment process of the three main public authorities responsible for gateway infrastructure; the Port, Airport and TransLink. Although there are important differences between them, in each case, governance reforms since 1990 have tended to strengthen the voice of regional business, including gateway infrastructure coalition members, while reducing or constraining the voice of elected local government officials. *This raises an important question about whether the existing forums afford sufficient opportunities for mutual learning and alignment of the interests of gateway proponents, municipal governments and civil society?*

Table 2 shows the membership of the key gateway coalition organizations. It is noteworthy that the GVGC itself has had stable membership around a core group of public and private transport industry actors. However, a wider set of actors in a variety of sectors has become involved in the newer organizations (including the Asia Pacific Gateway Skills Table, Gateway Transportation Collaboration Forum, and the Greater Vancouver Urban Freight Council). This probably reflects the increasing complexity of the issues being handled (i.e. moving beyond port infrastructure and into labour market, land use and urban freight issues). It also reflects an increasing recognition within the gateway coalition in the early 2010's of local opposition to some gateway infrastructure projects in the previous decade and the need to engage local stakeholders in planning processes (APGST, 2012). *This raises an important question about whether the Vancouver gateway infrastructure coalition can sustain its strong internal coherence when additional actors are engaged in coalitional processes?*

Table 1 shows that the Vancouver gateway infrastructure coalition has pursued a distinctive and long-lived policy agenda built through advocacy, studies, consensus-building and securing funding. Although infrastructure funding announcements by Federal (and to a lesser extent, Provincial) governments are never a perfect mirror of prior proposals, there are, for example, direct connections between the Major Commercial Transportation Study (2001) and the Asia Pacific Gateway and Corridor Initiative (funded from 2006), and the Gateway 2030 Vision (2007) and Greater Vancouver 2030 (funded from 2018).

A final observation concerns the relationship between the gateway coalition and successive elected governments. The righthand column of Table 1 shows changes in Federal, Provincial and Municipal (City of Vancouver) government. We have already noted the limited role of municipal government in gateway-related planning processes, and it is fair to say that every municipal government in the Vancouver area has aggressively pursued a similar livability and real estate-based development agenda over the past 30 years. More noteworthy, Table 1 shows that the gateway coalition has successfully negotiated successive changes in Provincial and Federal government. However, before accepting the notion that infrastructure coalitions are unaffected by electoral politics and noting that Federal Liberals are present in both the Provincial Liberal and NDP governments; consider that since 1993 the Vancouver gateway infrastructure coalition has not faced a left-right mismatch between provincial and federal governments. *This raises an important question about whether Canadian gateway infrastructure coalitions can survive when there are major policy differences between federal and provincial governments?*

Table 1: Gateway Coalition Timeline (selected events, reports, announcements and elections)

Year	Coalition news	Related news	Government elections
1991	Round Table on the Greater Vancouver Gateway formed		Canada: Conservative BC: NDP
1992	Vancouver Airport Authority (YVR) created	Deltaport container terminal announced	
1993	International Maritime Centre opens		Vancouver: NPA Federal: Liberal
1994	Great Vancouver Gateway Council (GVGC) formed		
1995		National Marine Policy	
1996	“Transportation, Trade & Tourism” submission to parliament (GVGC)		BC: NDP Vancouver: NPA
1997		Deltaport container terminal opens	Federal: Liberal
1998	Creation of 3 Vancouver-area Canada Port Authorities (CPAs)	Canada Marine Act (CMA)	
1999	TransLink formed	Trucker disruption	Vancouver: NPA
2000		Deltaport expansion	Federal: Liberal
2001	Major Commercial Transportation Study (GVGC) Phase 1 report		BC: Liberal
2002			Vancouver: COPE
2003	MCTS Economic Impact Analysis (GVGC)	“Opening Up BC” program announced (BC)	
2004	MCTS Lower Mainland Rail Infrastructure Study (GVGC)		Federal: Liberal minority
2005		Trucker disruption	Vancouver: NPA
2006		Asia-Pacific Gateway and Corridor Initiative funding announced	Canada: Conservative minority (MP Emerson switches Conservative)
2007	TransLink governance reform Gateway 2030 Vision (GVGC)	National Policy Framework for Strategic Gateways and Corridors announced	
2008	Amalgamation of 3 CPAs to Vancouver Fraser Port Authority (VFPA)	North Shore Trade Area study	Canada: Conservative Vancouver: Vision
2009	AP Gateway Skills Table (APGST) begins	South Shore Trade Area study	BC: Liberal
2010		Deltaport expansion	
2011		Regional Growth Strategy (GVRD)	Canada: Conservative Vancouver: Vision
2012	Enhancing planning capacity (APGST)		
2013	Regional Goods Movement Strategy (TransLink)		BC: Liberal
2014	Gateway Transportation Collaboration Forum (GTCF) formed	New Canada Building Fund Trucker disruption	Vancouver: Vision
2015	Port 2050 Scenarios (VFPA)		Canada: Liberal
2016	Greater Vancouver Gateway 2030 (GTCF)		
2017	Greater Vancouver Urban Freight Council (GVUFC) launched		BC: NDP minority
2018		Funding announced for Greater Vancouver 2030	Vancouver: NPA plurality

Table 2: Gateway Coalition Organizational Memberships and Board Composition

Organization	Members	
Round Table on the Greater Vancouver Gateway (1991-1993)	BC Maritime Employers Association BC Wharf Operators Association CN Rail CP Rail	Chamber of Shipping of BC Fraser River Harbour Commission ILWU Canada Vancouver Port Corporation
GVGC (1994-present)	YVR VFPA CN Rail CP Rail BNSF Rail Southern Railway of BC BC Trucking Association	BC Marine Terminal Operators Association Vancouver Terminal Elevator Operators TransLink UBC Sauder Shipping Federation of Canada BC Maritime Employers Association
AP Gateway Skills Table (ca 2009-2017)	BC Construction Association Chamber of Shipping of BC BC Road Builders and Heavy Construction Association Association of Professional Engineers and Geoscientists of BC BC Chamber of Commerce ILWU Canada BC Trades Training Consortium TransLink Independent Contractions and Business Association	Prince Rupert Port Authority Applied Science Technologists and Technicians of BC Initiatives Prince George Business Council of BC International Union of Operating Engineers BC Building Trades BC Maritime Employers Association Western Transport Advisory Council Greater Vancouver Gateway Council Port of Vancouver BC Trucking Association
Gateway Transportation Collaborative (2014-present)	Transport Canada BC Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure	Vancouver Fraser Port Authority TransLink Greater Vancouver Gateway Council
Greater Vancouver Urban Freight Council (2017-present)	BC Business Council BC Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure BC Trucking Association Boards of Trade Business Improvement Areas (BIABC) Greater Vancouver Gateway Council Insurance Corporation of BC Metro Vancouver	Metro Vancouver Alliance NAIOP Vancouver Chapter Municipal CAOs Port of Vancouver Retail Council of Canada TransLink Transport Canada, Pacific Region YVR

Table 3: Board Composition of gateway-related public authorities

Authority	Number of board members	Appointing bodies
Vancouver Fraser Port Authority (Port of Vancouver)	Eleven	1-4: one each from Vancouver Region, BC Province, Western Provinces and Federal Government. 5-11: seven appointed by Federal Government from port user nominees.
South Coast British Columbia Transportation Authority (TransLink)	Eleven	1-2: Chair and Vice-Chair of the Mayor's Council. 3-11: nine appointed by Mayor's Council from nominees of a screening panel of five representing BC Minister of Transport, Organization of Chartered Professional Accountants of BC, Vancouver Board of Trade and Greater Vancouver Gateway Council.
Vancouver Airport Authority (YVR)	Fourteen	1: President and CEO. 2-10: one each nominated by Association of Professional Engineers and Geoscientists of BC, Chartered Professional Accountants of BC, City of Richmond, City of Vancouver, Government of Canada, Greater Vancouver Board of Trade, Law Society of British Columbia, Metro Vancouver. 11-14: four appointed by the Board.

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