

2010 organizers unveil massive Winter Olympic transportation plans

BY DAMIAN INWOOD, THE PROVINCE MARCH 11, 2009 9:04 PM



Olympic organizers are urging drivers out of their cars and closing key routes such as the Georgia Viaduct around GM Place and B.C. Place, pictured, during the 2010 Games.

Photograph by: Arlen Redekop file, The Province

Parking bans on 650 blocks of Vancouver streets, street closures and a checkpoint on the Sea-to-Sky Highway are all part of the \$157-million Vancouver 2010 transportation plan.

That's the bad news.

On the good-news side: People will have access to their homes and businesses despite venue security zones and there'll be no Olympic-only lanes clogging the Lions Gate Bridge or the Ironworkers Memorial Second Narrows Bridge.

As well, construction and filming will be banned on downtown streets and transit buses will be allowed to travel in the "Olympic-traffic-only" lanes.

Vancouver 2010 unveiled its plans to ease traffic gridlock during the Winter Olympics.

But officials warn that unless people change their driving habits, roads will be over capacity for most of the working day.

Here are the highlights:

- Street closures include the Georgia and Dunsmuir viaducts around B.C. Place plus Expo and Pacific boulevards; Quebec Street will be closed between Terminal and Second Avenue; Canada Place and Waterfront Road will be closed around the Vancouver Convention Centre; Midlothian Street near Nat Bailey Stadium will be closed between Dinmont Street and Ontario Street; Renfrew Street will be closed

between Hastings Street and McGill Street.

- Transit trips will increase 30 per cent from 730,000 to 960,000 each day. A 24-hour transit operations centre will dispatch buses to "decongest" any problem areas.
- Free transit for any Olympic ticketholders on the day of the event. A limited-edition, two-zone "souvenir transit pass" will be issued at a competitively priced rate.
- B.C. Place, home for the Olympic opening, closing and medals ceremonies and GM Place, home of Olympic hockey, will be two of the most heavily controlled areas. The outside area will need to contain up to 12 mobile TV studios, Plaza of Nations dressing rooms for thousands of performers at the opening and closing ceremonies and eight extra hockey team dressing rooms. It will also need to have room for crowds to line up and go through security searches before entering.
- The Main Press Centre at Canada Place and the International Broadcast Centre at the new Trade and Convention Centre are also high-volume areas. Surrounded on three sides by water, they have crammed roads which must handle 600 daily bus trips for 10,000 media.
- Daily Olympic attendance of up to 250,000 per day will exceed the average daily attendance at Expo '86 including: 6,100 athletes and officials, 55,000 work force, up to 193,000 spectators a day in Vancouver and Whistler and 60,000 at celebration sites.
- Transit buses will be allowed in Olympic lanes 24/7. Olympic lanes will run for 170 blocks. They are on Georgia Street between Richards Street and Stanley Park Causeway; Burrard Street from Burrard Bridge to Cordova Street; Howe Street from Cordova to the Granville Bridge; Seymour Street from the Granville Bridge to Cordova; Hastings Street from Richards to Boundary Road; Broadway from Arbutus Street to Commercial Drive; Pender Street from Beatty Street to Howe Street and Cambie Street from Cambie Bridge to 59th Avenue.
- There will be changes to truck routes and noise bylaws to allow trucks to deliver goods at night.
- Canada Line will handle 100,000 extra SkyTrain trips each day. A third SeaBus will also be introduced. SkyTrain will add 48 cars and 200 extra buses will be added to the transit fleet.
- The West Coast Express service will increase by 80 per cent with six extra trips on weekdays, nine new trips on Saturdays and seven new trips on Sundays.
- SkyTrain will run from 5 a.m. to 2:15 a.m. and the number of overnight buses will be increased. As well, 30 new HandyDART buses will be added to the fleet.
- A new Vancouver 2010 streetcar will run between the Olympic Village Canada Line station and Granville Island. An extra 40,000 visitors are projected each day at Granville Island. The streetcar will run every six to 10 minutes on a two-kilometre track from Jan. 21 to Mar. 21, 2010.
- Temporary bike routes and increased bike parking will be introduced. Pedestrian-only corridors on Hamilton, Mainland and Robson Streets, Granville Mall, Granville Street and Beatty Street will include entertainment and celebration activities.

- Lions Gate Bridge: there will be no Olympic lanes on the bridge but for northbound traffic, West Georgia Olympic lanes for Olympic vehicles and transit buses will feed onto the Stanley Park causeway. Traffic signals up Taylor Way will be prioritized. Southbound Olympic vehicles and buses will use existing bus lanes to avoid congestion on Marine Drive and there will be an Olympic lane on Highway 1 and a priority eastbound off-ramp lane onto Capilano Road.
- Ironworkers Memorial Second Narrows Bridge will also have no Olympic-only lane but an Olympic lane on Hastings Street and a new temporary Olympic lane will be put in along Cassiar Street onto Highway 1, northbound.
- An Alice Lake checkpoint will be set up on the Sea-to-Sky Highway, 13 km north of Squamish. People will have to show their driver's licence showing a Whistler-area address or a hotel check-in confirmation. The checkpoint will run from 7 a.m. to 4 p.m. After that, people will be able to drive to Whistler but no parking will be available unless they have a pre-arranged parking spot.
- Bus loops will be set up in parking lots at BCIT, Langara, Capilano University, SFU, plus Richmond, Surrey, Delta and UBC. E-mails will go out to ticket buyers telling them about buses they need to book to get to Whistler or Cypress Mountain. Another bus loop is under negotiation near the Lonsdale Quay SeaBus terminal.
- If the Sea-to-Sky Highway is closed due to a rockslide or accident, the B.C. Ferry terminals at Porteau Cove and Darrell Bay will be re-activated for bus and pedestrian traffic.
- Vancouver 2010 is launching a "know before you go" campaign so that people can find out the easiest way to get to an Olympic venue. Organizers are urging people to reduce the amount of "background" traffic by getting out of their cars, taking transit, walking, biking, car-pooling, working flexible hours or working from home.

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