

# Road issues dominate hearings

by Sharon Carmichael

Powell River may want a better ferry system, but what the Comox Valley wants is roads, roads and more roads.

That's the impression chairman Gillian Trumper took away from hearings held by the provincial transport task force here this week.

The task force was in Courtenay on Tuesday to hear submissions that will influence a regional transportation plan being presented to Minister of State Terry Huberts at the end of June.

"This is a new process - an opportunity for the grassroots to make recommendations," said Trumper. "All of us who have given our time to be on the task force believe the process is really good. Normally we get it from above, this is coming from us."

Unfortunately the task force failed to draw input from private individuals, said Trumper, adding that most submissions were from government bodies.

"We would like to have seen more input from people who



Ron Webber

use the road system," she noted.

The task force heard a strong pitch for a new 'circle route' highway that would link Cumberland and Lake Cowichan via Port Alberni.

"We are asking the government to recognize the need for the link and to do something



Walt Lengerke

about it," said Cumberland Mayor Bill Moncrief, who presented a submission backed up by a consultant's study.

Economic Development Commissioner Walt Lengerke told the task force that the benefits of the link would exceed the costs.

"Some 52 per cent of Van-

couver Island population will be directly served by such a route," he said. "As a bonus, this road link might well be the solution to our Island Highway problem. Build this one and upgrade the existing Island Highway and we will probably have greater benefits at less cost."

Courtenay alderman Ron Webber also supported the circle route, but his main theme was for quicker construction of the Inland Highway.

"The existing Island Highway between Nanaimo and Campbell River is grossly inadequate for the traffic volumes it purports to handle," he said.

In addition to road transport, Webber asked for improvements to passenger and freight rail service. He suggested scheduling improvements could lead to greater utilization and ridership.

"If Vancouver Island is to have any kind of industrial future, it is imperative that adequate rail service be maintained to those industries, both large and small, whose existence is dependent on the railroad," he

said.

On marine transportation, Webber stressed the need for barge facilities, improved marina facilities and later sailings for the ferries between Nanaimo and Vancouver.

Webber also made a push for a civilian air terminal at CFB.

Lengerke echoed Webber's concerns and took the air terminal idea one step further, suggesting the province should contribute \$200,000 to help develop proposals for a scheduled air passenger and freight service between Victoria and other significant Island communities.

Trumper expects the recommendations of the task force will have some input into next year's provincial budget.

"I am sure our recommendations will be implemented if they are reasonable and sensible," she said.

Most of the task force members are local politicians who are not likely to sit back quietly, she added. "If our recommendations aren't implemented in the long run, I am sure there will be a lot of noise."

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