

To: South Coast British Columbia Transportation Authority Police Board  
(Police Board)

From: Chief Officer Dave Jones  
South Coast British Columbia Transportation Authority Police Service  
(Transit Police)

Date: December 2, 2021

**Subject: Strategic Planning Process Recommendations  
[Board Report No. 2021-53]**

---

#### **PURPOSE**

To help inform the Police Board during the next strategic planning process.

---

#### **BACKGROUND/DISCUSSION**

In Q4 2019, the Police Board began discussions on the development of a new Strategic Plan (“Plan”), in anticipation of the existing Plan expiring on December 31, 2020. A development timeline was proposed by Transit Police Strategic Services Section that would see the new Plan completed by Q4 2020 and issued to the public in Q1 2021. Unfortunately, the COVID-19 pandemic caused delays to this timeline and the new Plan was not completed until Q4 2021.

On November 23, 2021, a small group met to review the process and differences from past processes, lessons learned, and to identify possible recommendations for the Police Board when the Strategic Plan comes up for renewal in 2026. Group members included:

- George Madden, Police Board
- Shan Parmar, Police Board
- Stephen Crosby, Strategic Services Section/Transit Police
- Beth Nielsen, Strategic Services Section/Transit Police

While the COVID pandemic could not have been anticipated, there are important lessons to be learned from the process followed over 2020/2021. Some of the recommendations listed below are directly related to the pandemic, while other recommendations would apply irrespective of COVID-19.

- **Recommendation 1:** Establish a Strategic Planning Committee, including those Police Board members that desire more involvement in the process.

Two Police Board members' observations were that the strategic plan development timeline was longer than what members had experienced with other organizations and that it required more Police Board involvement versus delegating some of the work to staff. To better leverage Police Board members' time, it was recommended that a Strategic Planning Committee be established when the Plan is up for renewal. The Committee would serve several functions:

- Work with the Transit Police Executive and Strategic Services Section on the Plan development process and timeline, determining which stages required the full Police Board's review and input.
- Act as a working group between strategic planning sessions for any further Plan development work, such as wordsmithing.

The Police Board members suggested that, ideally, development of the Plan should be kept under 12 months.

- **Recommendation 2:** Determine the scope of work for consulting firms (if any is to be retained) and select a session facilitator earlier, prior to the final year of the existing Strategic Plan.

In February 2020, the selected facilitator met for one-on-one interviews with Police Board members, the Chief Officer and one TSML Director, to clarify expectations about what would be discussed during the upcoming strategic planning sessions. The results of these interviews were provided in March 2020 in the form of a Themed Interview Report. Due to the late timing of this process, it ended up occurring concurrent to environmental scanning, which was quickly followed by the onset of COVID-19. Further, time spent reviewing the report was limited to 30 minutes when the Police Board reconvened in October.

- **Recommendation 3:** Schedule regular check-in meetings between the facilitator, Manager of Strategic Services Section, the Board Chair (or designate) and Chief Officer to ensure clarity on the strategic planning process, completion of phases/tasks and timelines.

COVID-19 significantly impacted the strategic plan development timeline and the format of facilitated Strategic Planning sessions. The sessions were initially scheduled to be in-person 4-hour sessions; however, it then changed to 2-3 hour sessions over Zoom. Communications on the impacts of this change would have been strengthened by scheduling check-in meetings

between the Chair, Chief Officer, facilitator and Strategic Services Sections. If a Strategic Planning Committee was established (see Recommendation 1) then the Chair of that committee could alternatively attend the check-in meetings.

- **Recommendation 4:** Time-permitting, schedule at least 4-hour strategic planning sessions to allow for more progress per session.

In October/November 2020, the first strategic planning sessions were held, with the initially proposed agenda for March 2020 instead split into two 2-hour Zoom sessions. In retrospect, the 2-hour sessions were not as effective as one 4-hour session would have been. The first 30-minutes of each session was dedicated to setup and introductions, whereas the final 30-minutes was dedicated to debriefs and determining next steps, leaving limited time for group work. Later sessions in 2021 were extended to 3-hours; however, time for break-out room group work was limited, resulting in additional sessions having to be scheduled. While in-person sessions could have potentially solved some of the technical and timing challenges, a model based on 4-hour sessions would have supported a condensed development timeline.

## CONCLUSION

The strategic plan development process in 2020-2021 was atypical due to the COVID-19 pandemic but still provides important lessons learned that could be applied by future Police Boards. Early establishment of a Strategic Plan Committee and selection of third-party consultants will allow the Police Board and management team to more quickly adapt to unexpected changes, while minimizing potential impacts on development timelines for the strategic plan.

---

Chief Officer Dave Jones

Author: Stephen Crosby, Senior Manager, Strategic Services