

RAIL SERVICE TO THE
ROBERTS BANK PORT FACILITY

Proposal Presented within the
Perspective of the Overall Planning
for the Lower Mainland Region.

A Brief to the
Lower Mainland Regional Planning Board
the Lower Mainland Municipalities
and The Province of British Columbia.

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Prepared by the
Executive Director and Technical Staff
of the
Lower Mainland Regional Planning Board

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To the Board and Councils,
Lower Mainland Municipalities
and the Province of British Columbia.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

I respectfully present this brief as a counter proposal to that currently being advanced by the Railway Companies to provide rail service to Roberts Bank on the south-western shoreline of the Lower Mainland.

It is clear that if the Lower Mainland is to accommodate a port facility at Roberts Bank, immediate study of, and appropriate overall planning for, the land access routes and utilities needs to be done. The attached brief presents the perspective of rail service to Roberts Bank as part of a long range railway network in the Lower Mainland. While it is acknowledged that the Roberts Bank port facility is an important element in the Canadian and Provincial economy, it is also an essential consideration that the planning for a particular port facility should fit in with the planning for the region and communities in which the facility is located. The preface to the Brief presents the view that the Port facility on Roberts Bank will be the most significant development we will see in the next century in the Lower Mainland.

While it is recognized that the matter brought before you involves the whole question of rail service in the Lower Mainland, it will be readily appreciated that to consider a new rail route without such a perspective would be to commit the same sort of independent, single-interest railroad building that characterized the period at the turn of the Century.

We sincerely believe it is our duty to try to give a more complete statement of the proposals, alternatives, and their implications than has heretofore been given the Municipalities and their citizens. A specific policy on

this matter is clearly warranted at the Regional level in order that local Councils and residents have the benefit of a broad point of view, and can thereby plan for the future with proper expectations and knowledge in this matter.

Yours very truly,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "V. J. Parker". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the typed name.

V. J. Parker,
Executive Director.

Att.

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P R E F A C E

The port facility on Roberts Bank will perhaps be the most significant development to take place in the Lower Mainland since the coming of rail to tide water in 1885. The project has the prospect of radically changing the landscape of the south-western area of the Lower Mainland in Delta Municipality, and there are important implications for the entire Lower Mainland in what is being advanced as an industrial-port complex by the Provincial and Federal Governments.

To date, the Lower Mainland Regional Planning Board has had no official involvement in either the Roberts Bank port development or in any of the attendant land service aspects of highways, railways and utilities. But because of the extreme importance of this project in its impact on the economic development and physical environment of the region, and because of the demands that will be made on the land resources of the region for access routes, the Board can ill afford to not concern itself with the projects being advanced by the senior governments and their Crown Corporations in the Lower Mainland.

The technical staff of the Regional Planning Board has been approached by officials of the British Columbia Hydro and Power Authority for comment on a proposed rail route to serve the Roberts Bank Area. In correspondence in May, 1968 with the British Columbia Hydro and Power Authority officials, the Board's staff recommended the Fraser River industrial-rail corridor as the route by which to serve Roberts Bank. It was learned that the British Columbia Hydro officials had also been approaching individual municipal councils to inform them of their proposal to use the Fraser Valley route of the British Columbia Hydro Railway to serve the Roberts Bank development.

There has been no correspondence from the British Columbia Hydro and Power Authority acknowledging receipt of

the L.M.R.P.B. recommendations on the rail route, nor has there been any official notification of the proposal which we now understand is currently being investigated by British Columbia Hydro officials for rail service to Roberts Bank. The Board offices have received a request from Delta Municipal Council for assistance in reviewing the development implications of the Roberts Bank port. There is also a longstanding request before the Board by Surrey Municipal Council for appropriate designation on the shoreline of Boundary Bay to reserve the shoreline and tidal lands for recreational use.

Furthermore, there have been continuing inquiries from municipal staff, from the general public, and from elected representatives in all levels of government for both information on the Regional Planning policy on this matter, and on the specific proposals of the Province of British Columbia. Many individual residents who have enquired at the Board Offices indicated a desire to appear before the Board to urge specific actions to be taken on these Provincial projects.

In place of the regular Board Meeting, the August meeting of the Lower Mainland Regional Planning Board has been arranged for the Board to meet with the municipal councils and the general public to hear what has been advanced in the way of railway routes to serve Roberts Bank. The meeting has been called to afford persons and agencies an opportunity to address the Board and to present any information or views in regard to current proposals. The following brief has been prepared for presentation to the Board at this meeting.

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this brief is to draw to the attention of the Lower Mainland Regional Planning Board and local Municipal Councils the need for a more comprehensive and searching look than has so far been given to the present proposals for rail links to the port facility now being constructed on Roberts Bank.

There is no argument that the port, if it is to serve its bulk shipping function, requires efficient rail connections with Western Canada and the United States. And, quite obviously, this rail line must pass through the Fraser Valley. However, it is suggested in this brief that there are long run considerations that have been missed or ignored in the choice of the current route proposal by the railway companies. These considerations support the choice of some other alternative means for access to Roberts Bank as recommended in this report, particularly if the Port development achieves in future the size and diversity its proponents have claimed for it.

Basically, the approach is to examine the current and prospective rail facilities and operations in the Lower Mainland, and to establish what needs to be done to serve Roberts Bank as part of this overall picture of rail service. Such a perspective can only be gained through appreciation of the present and future development of the Lower Mainland. This brief therefore draws on our cumulative knowledge of the Region and its communities, and on the overall Official Regional Plan policies for the Lower Mainland. Reference has been made in the brief to the Official Regional Parks Plan of the Vancouver-Fraser Parks District and to the forthcoming report on Our South-western Shoreline to support the regional interest in a decision of where rail routes should be located in the Lower Mainland.

This Brief reviews the function of the port at Roberts Bank and assesses the particular type of rail service that this port will require. The implications of the proposed route of the Railway Companies are presented. A counter proposal is presented for rail service to Roberts Bank that would form part of a long-term network of railways in the Lower Mainland.

reducing the number and amount of rail lines that might otherwise have developed.

In summary, the rail network of the Lower Mainland has been developing over the past eighty years. Today, the network is characterized by a series of mainline routes from the east, south and north with terminals on the edge of the Greater Vancouver Area. Within the built up metropolitan area, industrial service lines and lead track extend from the rail yards of the respective railway companies to industrial and port areas. In order for the rail companies to serve all areas, joint operating and reciprocal switching agreements have been established amongst the railway companies.

It should be noted that the Lower Mainland was first opened to settlement with the coming of rail before the turn of the Century. Rail lines extending throughout the Region followed and subsequently lead settlement and the development of adjacent land. The pattern of industrial and port areas that we see in the Lower Mainland today is a demonstration of this process. It may be argued that we could have had a better overall development pattern had the railways in some instances been located elsewhere. The implication of note here is that the railway is both stimulator and detractor of development. If located in appropriate corridors, industrial development will be accommodated in the desired areas. This principle is implicit in the industrial corridors that have been designated in the Lower Mainland.

PART II A REVIEW OF THE RAILWAY COMPANIES' PROPOSAL TO SERVE THE ROBERTS BANK PORT.

This Part briefly discusses the role, importance and the competitive circumstances underlying the development of the Roberts Bank port, as stated by its advocates. This review helps clarify the nature of the rail facilities required to serve it and the arguments that have been used to support the proposed route. Secondly the rail network proposed by the Railway companies is described in terms of the projected changes to, and extensions of, existing lines as well as the possible organizational arrangements likely to occur amongst the various railway companies that are involved in gaining access to the new port facility. Finally, the implications of this proposal for the areas it passes through are examined in this Part.

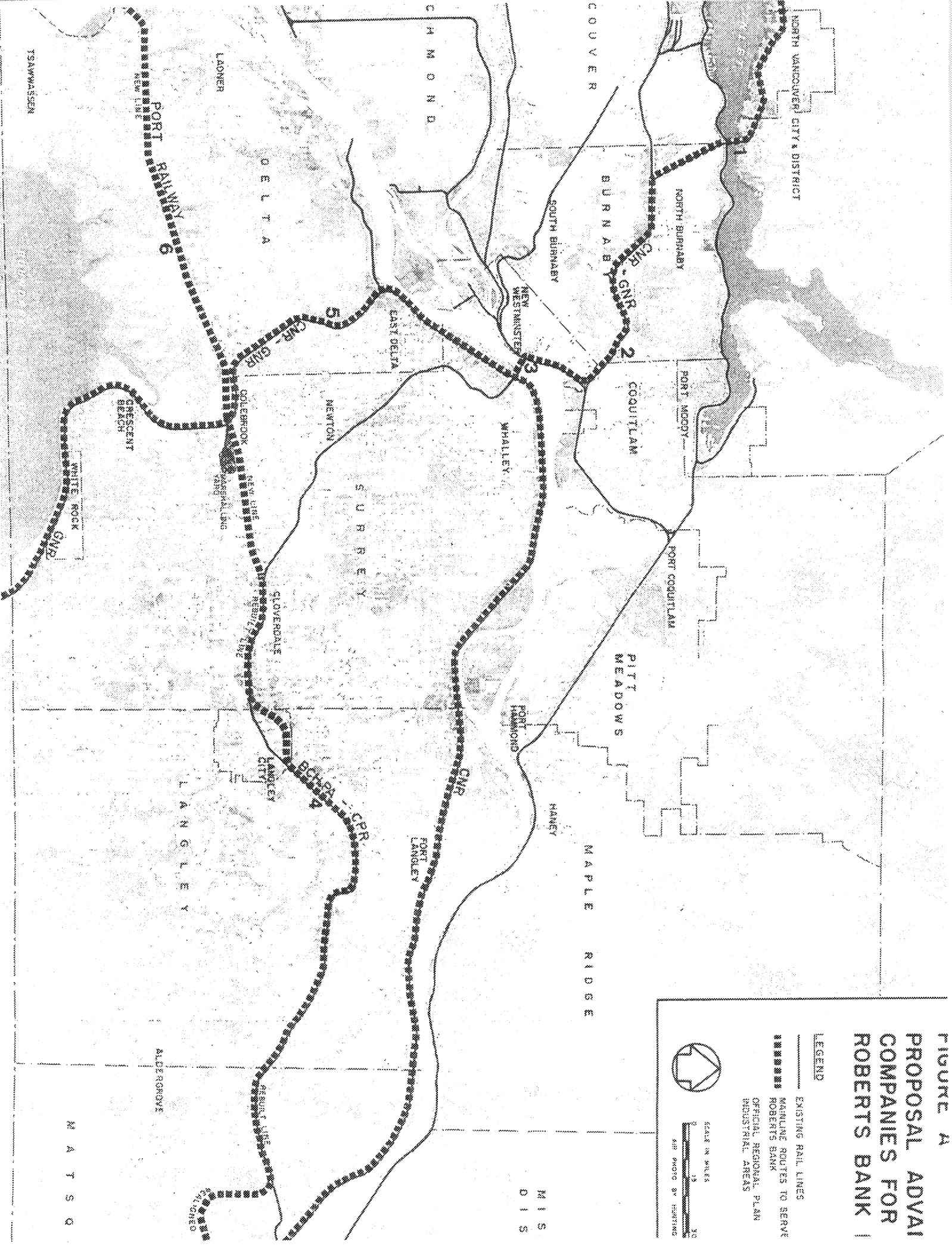
1. The Port at Roberts Bank

Initially, Roberts Bank port proposals were based on the possibility of winning a greatly increased Canadian share of Japanese coal contracts. However, world wide competition, it was maintained, could only be matched by achieving a substantially lower level of transportation costs. This meant that a port able to handle very large bulk carriers and equipped with very efficient loading facilities was required. As well, rail access had to be direct and capable of handling high speed unit trains. This dictated a port facility in a Roberts Bank or Sturgeon Bank location.

The immediate benefits of the port development are centered in the new investment and employment expected in the coal supply areas of the East Kootenay area of British Columbia. This is a part of the Province which has chronically lagged behind in employment and income levels.

Numerous newspaper articles and public comments by B.C. Hydro, the B.C. and National Harbours Boards, and Provincial officials have intimated development well beyond the limited scope of the initial 3.0 million ton annual coal contract. Sales of up to 8.0 million tons of coal annually have been suggested as possible. In addition, the export of sulphur, potash, and mineral ores has been hinted. The possibility of major lumber assembly and container shipping terminals has been mentioned. Hydro officials have also suggested that the port and its rail links could become the western terminus of the

FIGURE A
PROPOSAL ADVAI
COMPANIES FOR
ROBERTS BANK



so-called "land-bridge" concept of shipment of container and pre-packaged cargoes between the Pacific and Atlantic Coasts, in place of shipment via the Panama Canal, as suggested recently at a public meeting by a Hydro official and on other occasions.

As a further step in developing a port-industrial complex at Roberts Bank, the newly formed B.C. Harbours Board has expropriated 2,000 acres of adjacent farmland for port-associated industrial development. This is in addition to the estimated 3,200 acres of land that could be reclaimed on Roberts Bank itself.

Thus, if these estimates materialize, the railway serving the port must be a high-speed, high-density traffic route. It will carry rail traffic unlike any presently carried in the Region. Unit trains of one hundred cars or more travelling at speeds of 50 to 80 miles per hour which are becoming common in eastern Canada and the United States in transporting bulk commodities, are similar to those which are expected to serve the Roberts Bank port. Trains of up to one mile in length with eight and more diesel locomotives have been reported as the likely transportation unit for moving the bulk coal cargoes. This idea would likely be extended, where possible, to other containerized, pre-packaged or bulk commodities attracted to the Port.

2. Description of the Proposed Route and Operating Arrangements

The description of the proposed rail route and inter-railway operating scheme to service the Roberts Bank port facility has been gathered from statements made by a B.C. Hydro official at a public hearing held August 13th in Matsqui, and from other B.C. Hydro and Railway Company officials. Little official information has been made available by the British Columbia Harbours Board, B.C. Hydro, or the Railway Companies.

(a) The Operating "Concept"

The Province of British Columbia has apparently declared that rail access to the Roberts Bank port would open to all railway companies over a rail link built by the British Columbia Hydro and Power Authority. The scheme to which the Railway Companies have apparently agreed involves a common junction

point accessible to all five companies, and a link from there to Roberts Bank.

Apparently the currently agreed upon "junction" is located in the Colebrook area on the Surrey-Delta Municipal Boundary. The Great Northern Railway is the only line now passing through this area. At present, Canadian National could reach it by using Great Northern track from Port Mann to Colebrook. The British Columbia Hydro and Power Authority proposes to build an extension of their Central Fraser Valley line from Cloverdale to Colebrook. The Canadian Pacific Railway, it appears, would gain access from the Matsqui area via B.C. Hydro's Central Fraser Valley line and its Cloverdale-Colebrook extension. The Pacific Great Eastern Railway could reach Colebrook via the Canadian National track from North Vancouver through Burnaby, crossing the Fraser River at the New Westminster Railway bridge, and finally reaching Colebrook via Great Northern Track.

From the "Colebrook Junction", a rail line open to all companies under agreement would be constructed by B.C. Hydro to Roberts Bank via the Boundary Bay shoreline and west across Delta and Highway 17 to the Port development.

The co-operative arrangements necessary to provide this rail service to Roberts Bank are:

1. The CNR would require an agreement with the GNR to gain access to Colebrook from Port Mann.
2. The CPR would require an agreement with the BCHPA for access over the Central Fraser Valley line to Cloverdale and thence to Colebrook, with rebuilding of the existing track to mainline standards.
3. The PGE would require an agreement to move its trains over CNR and GNR track and bridges.
4. BCHPA would build, or at least be co-ordinator, of a shared railway link from Colebrook to Roberts Bank.

In summary, it is clear that while official statements have been rare regarding the particular interest