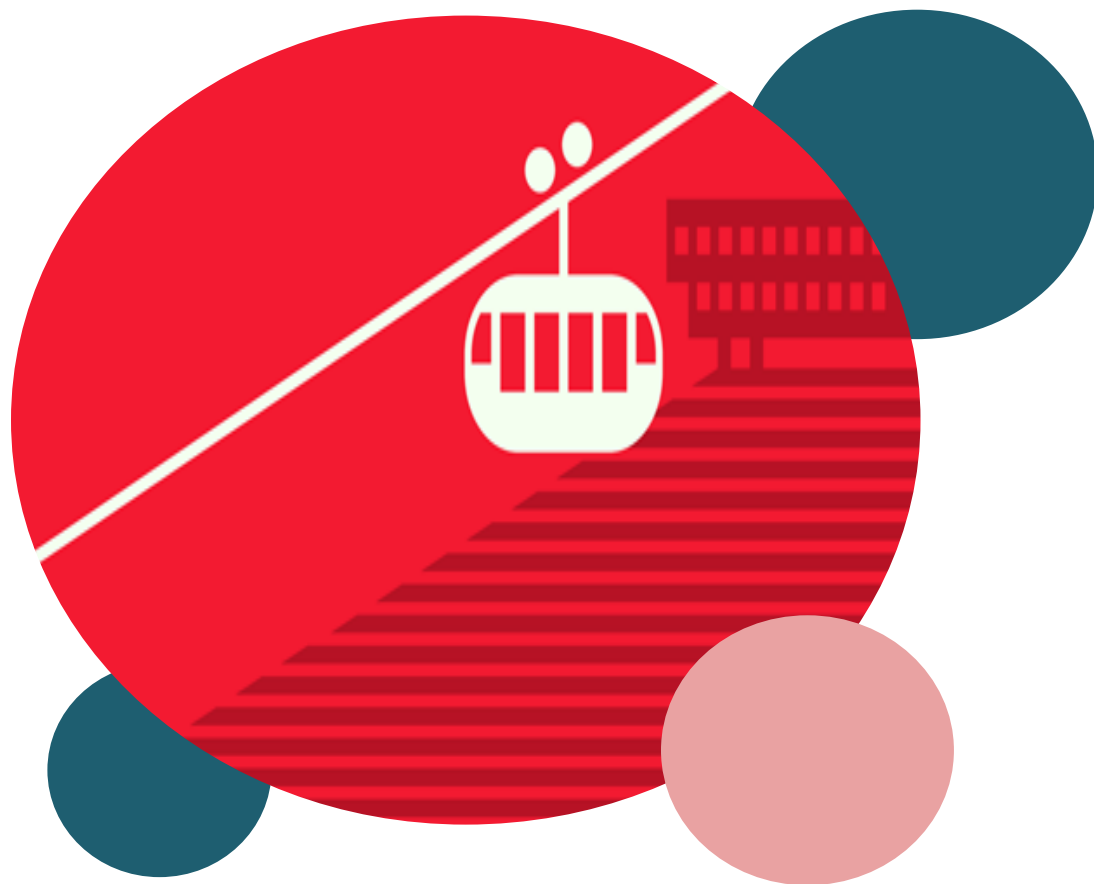


**simon fraser**  
**student society**

# Gondola Open House Feedback Report

January 21 & 22, 2020



## Introduction

The Simon Fraser Student Society (SFSS) is a student-led non-profit organisation that represents over 25,000 undergraduate students across the three campuses of Simon Fraser University (SFU) in Burnaby, Vancouver and Surrey, British Columbia. Our mission is to support students in reaching their full potential by providing resources that represent, connect and benefit our membership. The SFSS supports the mission of TransLink to connect the region and enhance its livability by providing a sustainable transportation network, embraced by our communities and our people. Over 88% of our members regularly use public transportation to commute to class, and nearly 95 percent of SFU undergraduate students consider reliable TransLink services important or very important.

Sustainable transportation, which includes public transit, walking, biking, and even carpooling, has been shown to have many benefits, including contributing less to pollution, reducing traffic congestion and accidents, improving health, and reducing stress. Investments in public transit not only support sustainable development, but students' academic futures and well-being.

The SFSS supports TransLink's proposed Burnaby Mountain Gondola Transit (BMGT) project, as it would provide students with more efficient, reliable and sustainable transportation options, regardless of weather, helping to connect SFU's three campuses and improve student engagement.

## Background

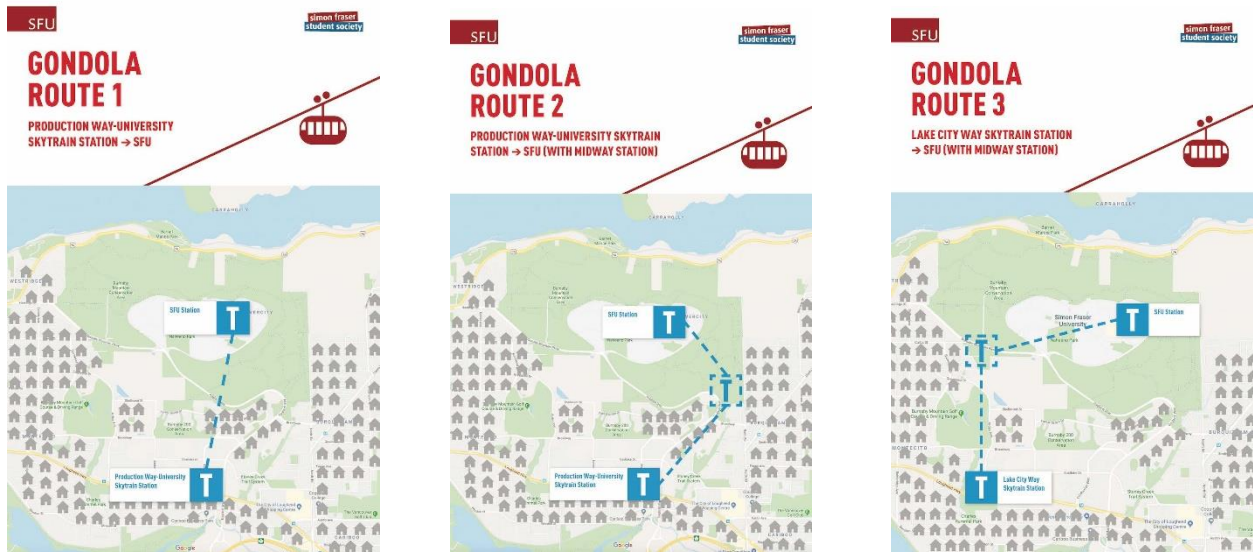
On January 21<sup>st</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2020, the SFSS held an open house for the Burnaby community to provide them with information and an opportunity for feedback on the BMGT project. During the open house, over 700 students and SFU community members participated and 70 students provided comments through the interactive commentary board.

SFSS support for the BMGT project is long-standing. In 2009, the SFSS adopted the *Promotion of Public Transportation Policy*, which included an endorsement of a gondola system connecting Burnaby Campus to the Production Way-University SkyTrain station. Additionally, the 2019 Board of Directors resolved to support the BMGT project as it provides an added evacuation measure in the event the two exit routes on Burnaby Mountain become blocked due to weather or hazardous events at the Burnaby Mountain Tank Farm. The BMGT project could provide an alternative route to transport the community safely and efficiently off the mountain in the event of the aforementioned circumstances. In terms of sustainable transportation, the BMGT project would reduce traffic congestion and parking, and minimize greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions from vehicle travel by 2,348 tonnes annually.

The gondola has the potential to provide a safe and sustainable transportation option for the Burnaby Mountain community, as well as shorter commute times to nearby SkyTrain stations. Over 25,000 Burnaby Mountain community members regularly depend on TransLink services, and commute times to Burnaby Mountain are, on average, 95 minutes roundtrip in comparison to the national average of 50 minutes. However, commute times are often longer than this average during peak hours, with wait times up to twenty minutes due to regular pass-ups. The proposed BMGT project would reduce travel time as little as six minutes to the nearest SkyTrain station, leaving once per minute, and carrying approximately 3,000 individuals per hour.

## Route Preferences

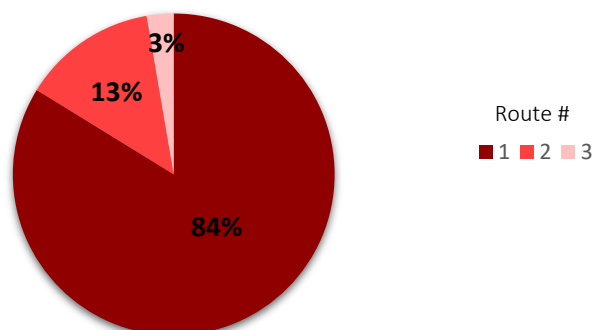
During the open house, students engaged with the SFSS and communicated their preferred route options for the gondola through an interactive commentary board. Three poster boards at the open house provided images of each of the route options for the Burnaby Mountain community to visualize the proposed routes, as show in **Figure 1**.



**Figure 1:** Gondola route option posters

The SFSS collected opinions on preference for each of three route options and found that 84 percent of students favoured route one, 13 percent favoured route two, and only 8 percent preferred route three, as shown in **Figure 2**.

## Route Option Preferences



**Figure 2:** SFU students' preferred route options

Route 1 was the clear favourite travel route option, with students discussing both the efficiency and effectiveness of that option. Furthermore, students made comments praising the route for “less tress being cut down” and “the least impact on the [Mountain] grounds and cuts travel time”. With majority of students connecting to SFU from the Expo and Millennium SkyTrain lines and Production Way-University Station being the convergence of both lines, it would be able to ease or eliminate the increasing demand on the 145 SFU bus that many students rely on to get to campus.

Route 2 also had supportive feedback from the SFU community, being ranked highly by some students who commented that this route was “the best option for students and residents alike”. Like Route 1, Route 2 would begin at Production Way-University SkyTrain station; however, it would forgo passing over the Forest Grove community and be connected to SFU with a midway station. This connecting midway station received mixed reviews, with students concerned about the additional travel time of the halfway station, commenting that “stop[s] in between...would be really crowded”. However, the SFSS found that there was a misconception that this midway station would serve as a stopping point or even a secondary station to pick up more passengers, rather than a place to steer the gondola in the correct path by adding an approximate 90-degree turn. Additional consultation with the Burnaby Mountain community would be ideal to address this misconception. Furthermore, Route 2 would require construction in the Burnaby Mountain Conservation Area, with one student commenting “as a metis [sic] I am concerned with option 2 and the destruction of our environment”. Despite the drawbacks, a benefit of this route is that it passes the furthest away from the tank farm area, which may have been the intention of the comment “if the forest under SFU were set ablaze, thousands would die without the gondola”.

Lastly, Route 3 would connect SFU to Lake City Way SkyTrain station, with a midway station in between. Although Route 3 was the least preferred gondola route option, with students suggesting that “route three [is the] worst” of the highlighted routes, one comment recognized that “route 3 would assist those who come from the west side”. Additionally, with concerns of the aforementioned options passing over residential areas, Route 3 would pass over very few homes. Nevertheless, Route 3 would have the longest travel time out of the options and the highest operating and construction costs of any of the route options.

## Conclusion

Overall, the BMGT project open house provided the SFSS with vital feedback regarding the gondola route preferences in the SFU community, revealing an overwhelming endorsement for the Route 1 option. With comments like “route 1 is the best route” and “route 1 is the most efficient”, SFU students would be very pleased to see a straight-line route from Production Way-University station to SFU. Nonetheless, environmental issues, disruption to nearby residences and tank farm safety should be taken into consideration when evaluating all three options, among other important factors. The SFSS will continue to advocate for the BGMT project to Burnaby city councilors, MLAs and MPs through advocacy campaigns, attending city council meetings, giving media interviews, and writing letters of endorsement. We hope that TransLink considers the findings of the Gondola Open House throughout future public consultation efforts.