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Alma Mater Society
University of British Columbia - Vancouver
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Dear Councillors and Executive Members:

Statements in the AMS October 27 news release regarding the proposed campus below-grade bus terminal were not merely unfounded and intemperate; they have been injurious and destructive. At a time when universities are receiving strong support from the Province, when confidence is growing in the donor community, when the new Place and Promise Strategic Plan focusing on student learning, sustainability and other commitments is emerging, when the Vancouver Campus Master Plan is coming to fruition, when we are tackling a challenging budget deficit creatively and transparently, and when we are finally making some headway on negotiations for the new SUB, these grave allegations could have a corrosive impact on your University and its reputation.

The news release has resulted in much time being spent by university leaders in addressing erroneous information. That, plus the goodwill that has been eroded, is the true mismanagement and waste in this story. Although the release implies otherwise, the AMS Executive had a private response in hand from the University on this matter the day before the press release. The University was clear that we had not yet been in contact with Translink and were awaiting clarification; that we would then review the financial and other implications, and consult as appropriate; and that we would then immediately update the community, including student government, on the status of the project. The University also noted that the tone of the AMS communications on this subject and of other recent AMS requests (SUB, Olympics, P3) was unproductive and a serious strain on working together.

We have now had that preliminary discussion with Translink and an update has gone out to the community. Let me be absolutely clear: no construction has been carried out on the tunnel. The design work on the tunnel and below-grade terminal is approximately \$400,000 and compensation for those university costs will be discussed with Translink. The other work undertaken at the University Boulevard Neighbourhood was essential for the Neighbourhood Plan, including the future Student Union Building on University Square. An inclusive process to explore viable transportation options will now be undertaken, and we look forward to the views of your Council and students generally on process and options. That said, the Administration and Board remain of the view that the below-grade station was the strongly preferred approach for maximizing user access and safety in a lively, student-oriented square, including substantial traffic for the new SUB and its programs and services. The fact that this plan cannot go forward is due entirely to the budget problems of our partner in the project, Translink.

