



Frequent and Affordable Vancouver Island Bus Service

Why and How to Provide Convenient and Inexpensive Public Transit on Vancouver Island

Better Island Transit

26 February



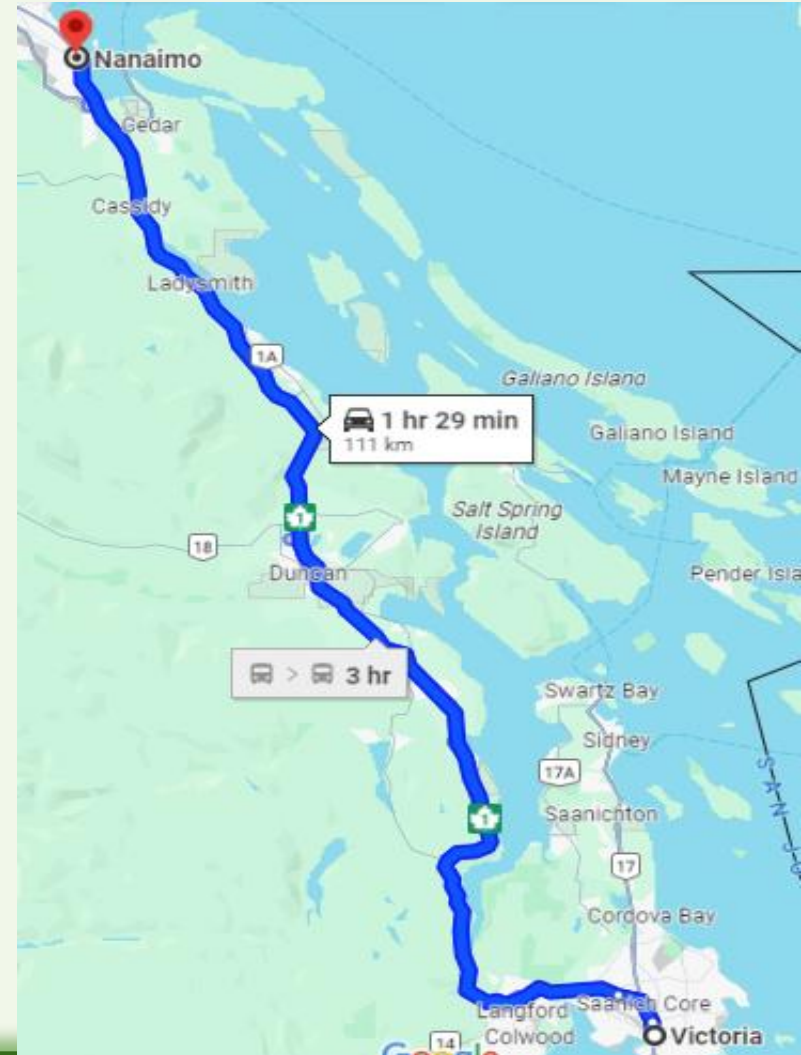
Better Island Transit

FREQUENT AND AFFORDABLE PUBLIC
TRANSPORTATION FOR VANCOUVER ISLAND

The Island Highway

The Island Highway between Nanaimo and Victoria is:

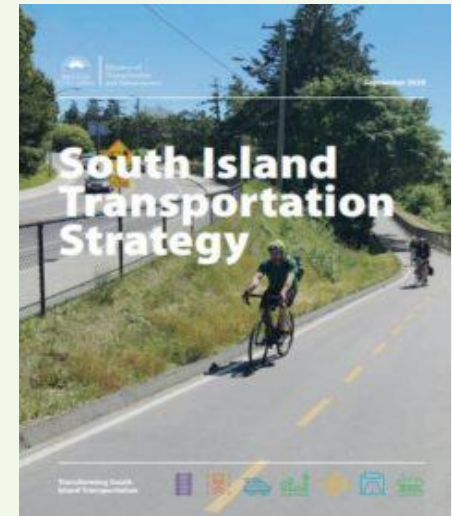
- A major travel corridor carrying about 30,000 daily trips.
- Often congested, dangerous and sometimes closed due to crashes, flooding and rockfalls.
- Costly and environmentally damaging to expand.
- Lacking mobility options for non-drivers.



Planning Improvements

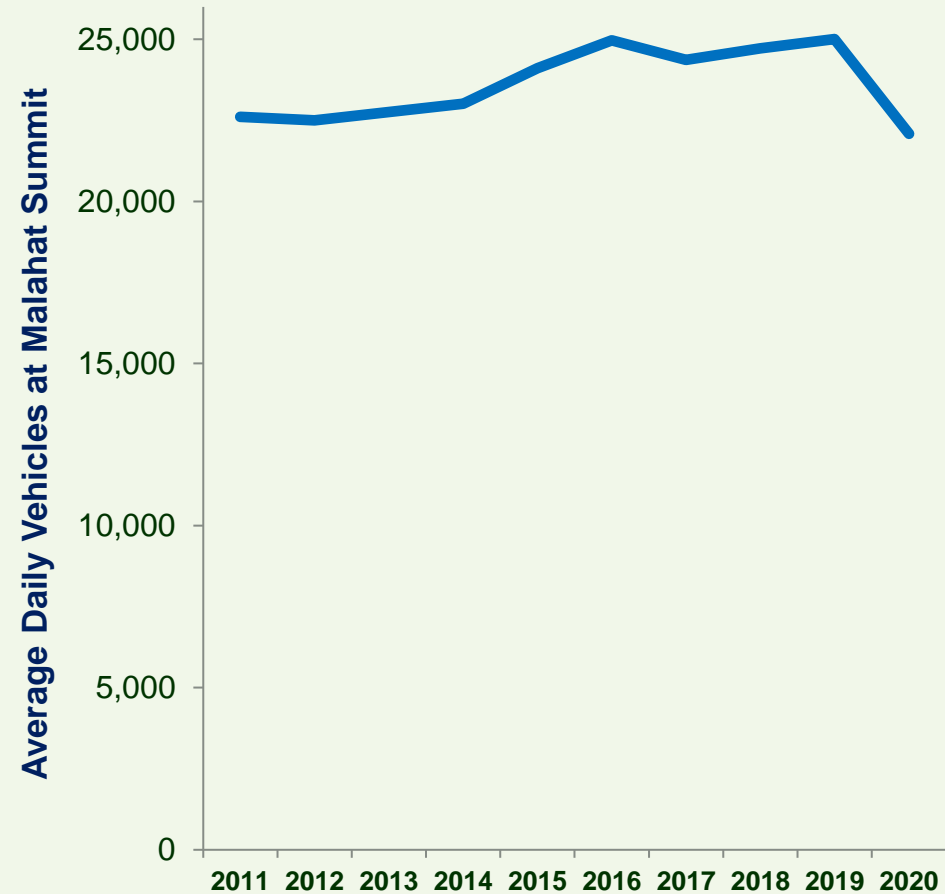
Every few years the provincial government develops proposals to improve Island transportation. These studies focus on costly roadway expansions, which only benefit motorists, or rail which would provide limited service with relatively high fares. They give little consideration to frequent and affordable bus service.

Many community groups and local tribes oppose efforts to widen the highway or establish higher-speed rail service due to environmental and neighborhood safety concerns.



Multimodal Planning

- Island Highway expansions are justified by projections that traffic will increase in the future, but traffic has been essentially flat for the last decade (see graph).
- Current demographic and economic trends (aging population, telework, rising fuel prices, increasing health and environmental goals, etc.) are likely to reduce traffic growth, particularly if the province is successful in its target to reduce personal vehicle travel 25% and double non-auto travel.



Comparing Impacts

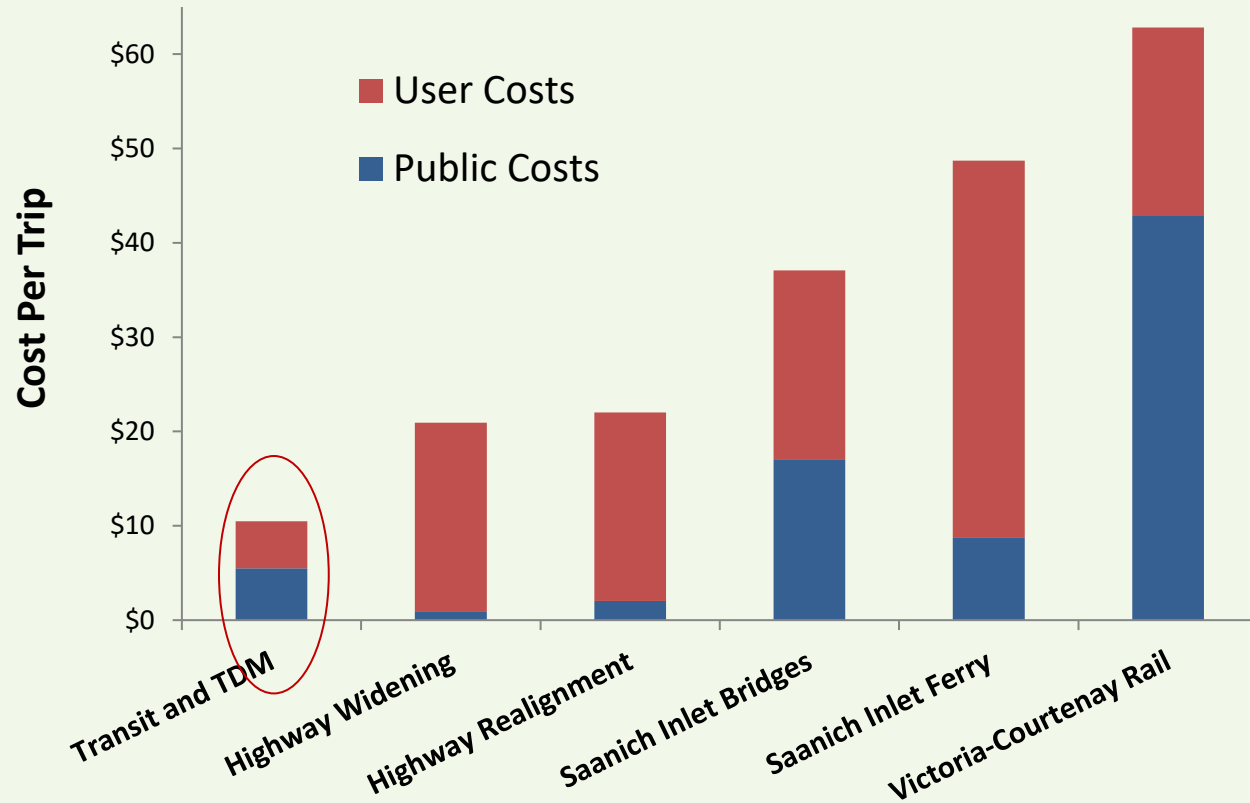
Roadway expansions provide few benefits (✓) and by inducing more vehicle travel they contradict other objectives (x). At best they reduce congestion and crashes on that highway, but these benefits decline as induced traffic fills the added capacity, and it increases downstream traffic problems.

Transit with TDM provides more diverse benefits, including more independent mobility and opportunity for non-drivers, and ensuring that all residents receive their fair share of infrastructure investments.

Planning Objectives	Roadway Expansion	Rail	Bus and TDM
Reduced drivers' stress	✓	✓	✓
More independent mobility for non-drivers (supports equity goals)		✓	✓
Reduced congestion system-wide	x	✓	✓
Roadway savings	x		✓
Parking cost savings	x	✓	✓
Consumer savings and affordability			✓
Traffic safety	✓/x	✓	✓
Energy savings & emission reductions	x	✓	✓
Support rural tourism		✓	✓
Encourages compact development	x	✓	✓

Comparing Solutions

Of the transportation improvements proposed in the *South Island Transportation Strategy*, frequent and affordable bus service with TDM incentives is the most cost effective and it provides the greatest range of benefits, particularly for non-drivers.

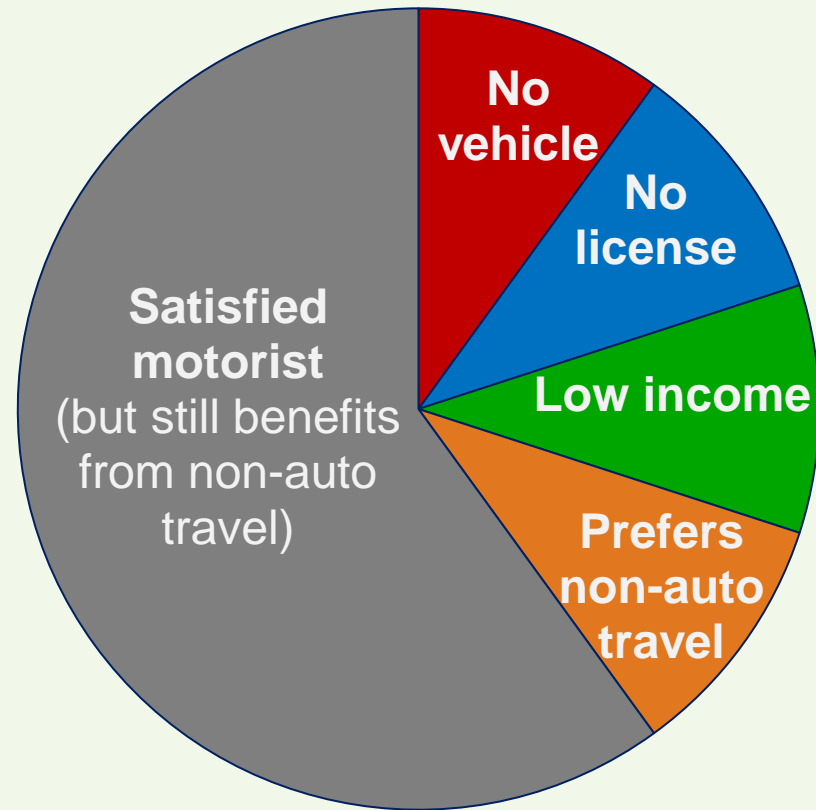


Non-auto Travel Demands

In a typical community 20-40% of travellers cannot, should not, or prefer not to drive for most trips.

Without suitable travel options they lack independent mobility, require chauffeuring, bear excessive costs, or move to other communities that offers better mobility option.

Motorists also benefit from improved travel options that reduce traffic and parking problems and their chauffeuring burdens.



Current Transit Services

Transit service is currently infrequent and expensive between central and south Vancouver Island. The Duncan-Victoria link has only four daily buses, with no reverse commute or off-peak service, and \$10 one-way fares. Nanaimo-Duncan has only seven trips with \$7.50 one-way fares.

Qualicum Beach-Parksville-Nanaimo (#91, 50 kms, 52 minutes), **18 daily trips** with \$2.50 one-way fares. Less than 1% transit mode share.

Nanaimo-Duncan (#70, 50 kms, 70 minutes), **7 daily trips** with \$7.50 fares. Less than 1% transit mode share.

Duncan-Victoria (#66, 60 kms, 75 minutes), **only 4 daily trips** with \$10 one-way fares. Less than 1% transit mode share.

Sooke-Victoria (#61, 40 kms, 70 minutes), **43 daily trips** with \$2.50 fares. More than 20% peak-period transit mode share.

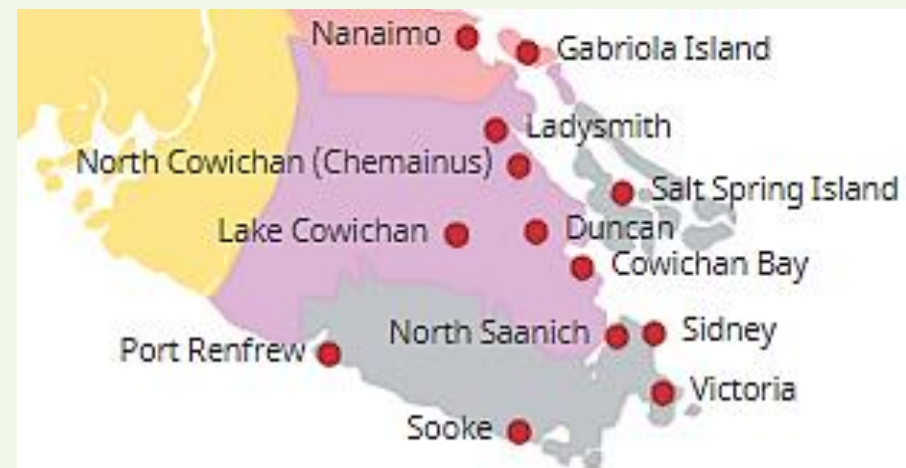


Why the Disparity?

Why does Sooke have frequent and affordable bus service to Victoria but not Duncan, Nanaimo or Parksville?

Because Sooke and Victoria are both in the Capital Regional District, making it easy for the CRD to coordinate with BC Transit, but Duncan, Nanaimo and Parksville are not, so their planning is not integrated.

Provincial leadership is needed to plan intercity public transit services that connect island communities. This would be a model for other intercity transit connections.



Who Uses Intercity Bus Service?

- People with disabilities, including motorists who have difficulty driving at night or on highways.
- People who cannot afford a car, and motorists who want to reduce vehicle operating costs and wear.
- Commuters who want to reduce daily driving stresses.
- Motorists whose vehicles are temporarily inoperable or must be left at another community.
- Patients who must travel for specialized treatments.
- People travelling to another city for sport, cultural or social events.
- Law abiding drinkers.
- Tourists visiting Vancouver Island without a car.
- Students travelling to school and college.
- Motorists who want to avoid chauffeuring non-drivers.

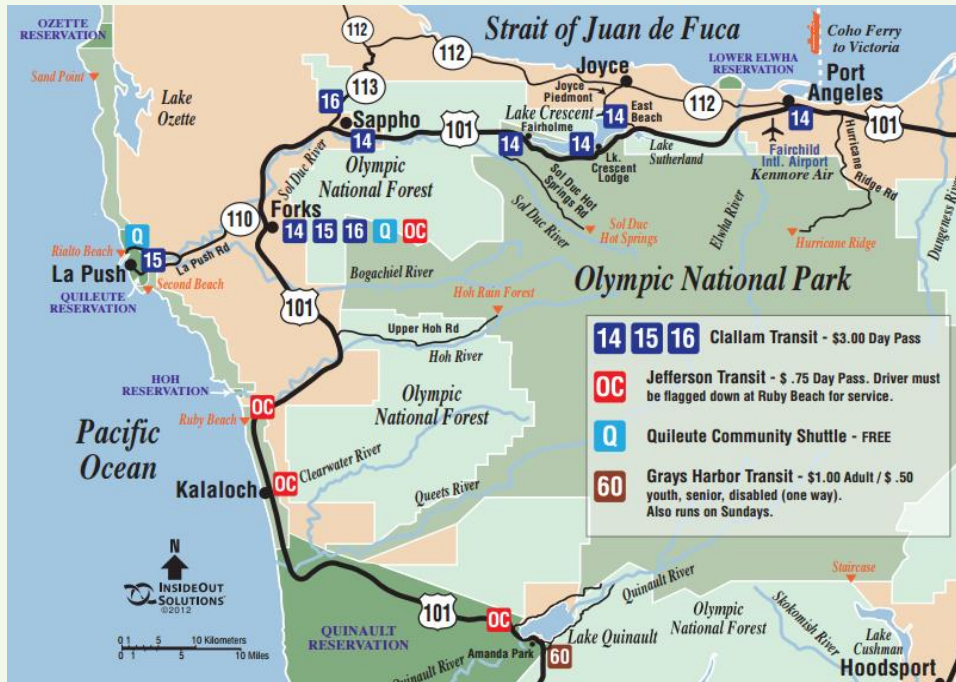


Provincial Goals and Targets

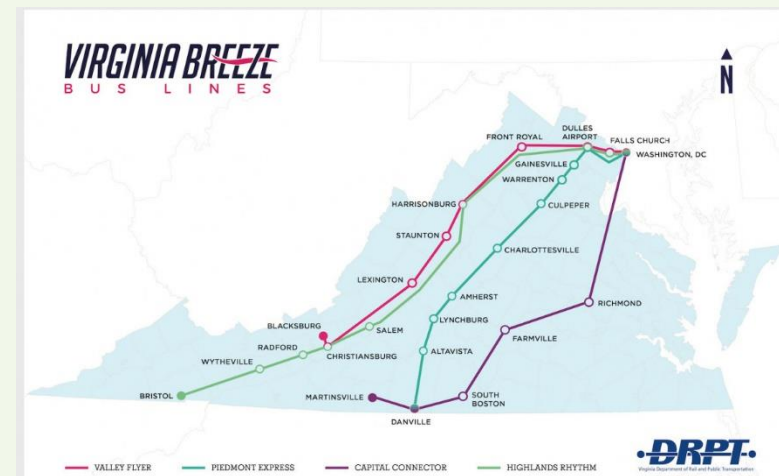
- The *CleanBC Roadmap* has targets to reduce light duty vehicle travel by 25%, and approximately double walking, bicycling and transit mode shares. Expanding highways contradicts those targets by inducing additional vehicle travel.
- The *2022 MoTI Mandate Letter* sets goals to provide clean, fast, and efficient transportation to increase affordability, safety, and healthcare access. Specifically, it highlights these actions:
 - Make public transit a priority.
 - Ensure that rural, remote and Indigenous communities have safe and reliable transportation services.
 - Support communities to build and improve active transportation networks.
 - Build greener and more livable communities.
 - Work with cabinet colleagues, communities and regions to assess and support the planning of transit projects.
 - Complete the Transit Oriented Development framework to advance sustainable communities along transit corridors.
- The *2021 BC Transit Mandate Letter* sets goals to enhance the public services people rely on and make life more affordable and create a cleaner, lower-carbon economy.



Interregional Transit Examples



It is possible to visit most Olympic Peninsula communities using integrated local transit services.



Our Proposal

Establish frequent (at least hourly), affordable (costing no more than two local fares), and integrated service on the #66 and #70 bus routes.

This would provide convenient connections between central and southern Vancouver Island, from early morning to late at night, with \$10 maximum fares between Nanaimo and Victoria.



Cost Estimate

The table below estimates the costs of **Basic** (18 daily trips, providing hourly service between 6:00 am and midnight) and **Frequent** (43 daily trips, as on the Sooke-Victoria route) bus service between Nanaimo and Victoria.

Cost Estimates

	#66 Duncan-Victoria		#70 Nanaimo-Duncan	
	Basic	Frequent	Basic	Frequent
Current daily trips	4	4	7	7
Proposed daily trips	18	43	18	43
Increased trips	14	39	11	36
Cost per round trip (\$147 x 4 hours)	\$588	\$588	\$588	\$588
Total annual cost (additional trips x \$588 x 365)	\$3,004,680	\$8,155,560	\$2,360,820	\$7,511,700
Fare revenue	\$450,702	\$1,223,334	\$354,123	\$1,126,755
Subsidy requirement	\$2,553,978	\$6,932,226	\$2,006,697	\$6,384,945

Basic Service requires about \$4.6 million and Frequent Service about \$13 million annual subsidy.

Implementation

Implementing this plan by 2025 requires the following actions:

1. Regional district and BC Transit boards request more service (Spring 2024)
2. BC Transit develops a specific proposal (Summer 2024)
3. Regional districts and BC Transit create operational and funding plan (Fall 2024)
4. Funding included in the 2025 provincial budget (Winter 2025).

We don't want to repeat the slow and costly planning process for the #70 Duncan-Nanaimo route that took a decade and hundreds of thousands of dollars.

#70 Planning Timeline



Community Actions

- Lobby regional district and regional BC Transit board members to request this service,
- Lobby provincial officials, including MLAs and the Minister of Transportation, to fund it.

The MoTI has good reasons to finance frequent and affordable public transit service a quick and cost-effective way to reduce Island Highway traffic problems and achieve other provincial goals including fairness and affordability, traffic safety, emission reductions and rural economic development.



Benefits

- This service would provide many benefits to users and communities, including benefits to motorists who experience less traffic congestion, crash risk and chauffeuring burdens.
- It supports provincial targets to reduce personal vehicle travel by 25% and double walking, bicycling and public transit by 2030.
- It reflects the Minister of Transportation’s 2017 *Mandate Letter* goals to increase affordability, improve public services, support local (particularly rural) economic development and opportunity, reduce poverty and inequality, and reduce climate emissions.
- It is far cheaper and faster to implement than other proposed highway improvements.

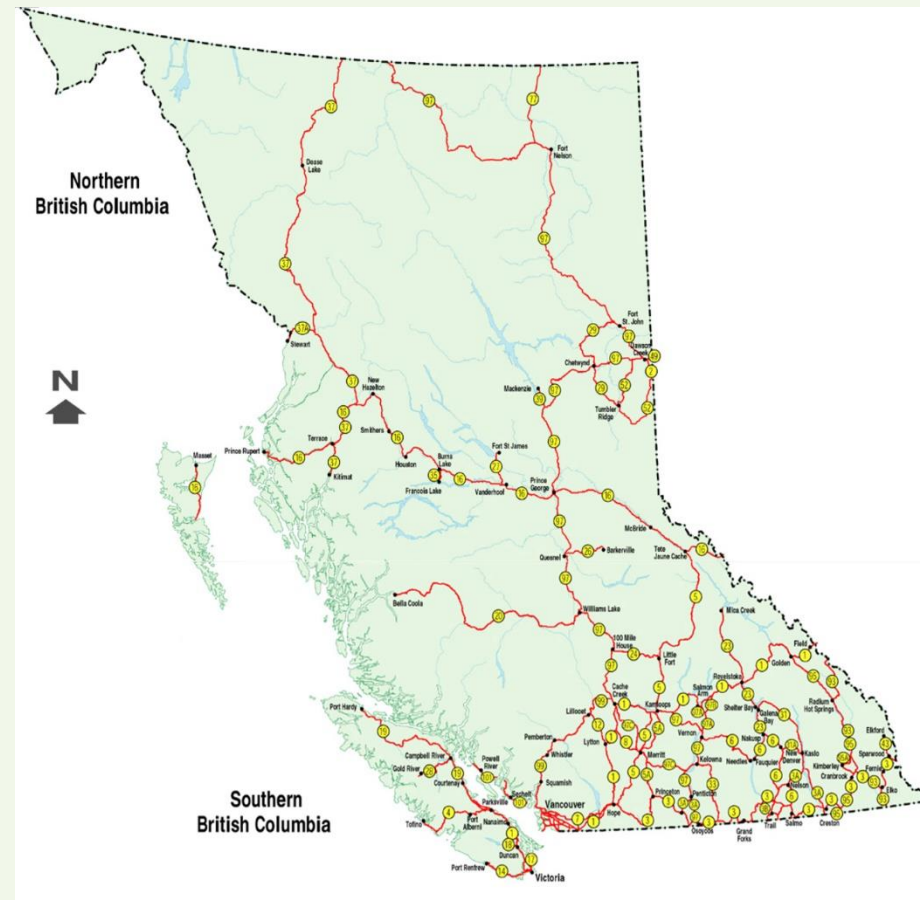
Benefits Summary

Improved Transit Service	Increased Transit Travel	Reduced Automobile Travel	Transit-Oriented Development
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved passenger comfort, convenience and productivity. • Affordability (savings to lower-income households). • Equity (benefits disadvantaged people). • Operating efficiencies (e.g. from bus lanes). • Improved security. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mobility benefits to new users. • Increased fare revenue. • Public fitness and health (since most transit trips include walking and cycling). • Increased security as law-abiding citizens ride transit. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduced traffic congestion. • Road and parking savings. • Consumer savings. • Reduced chauffeuring burdens. • Increased traffic safety. • Energy conservation. • Reduced pollution. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional vehicle travel reductions (“leverage effects”). • Improved accessibility, particularly for non-drivers. • More efficient development (lower infrastructure costs). • Farmland and habitat preservation.

Long-Term Action Plan

To establish interregional transit service on other Vancouver Island highways and all major provincial highways the provincial government should:

1. Establish provincial targets for interregional public transit services
2. Create a department dedicated to interregional transit planning and support.
3. Provide reliable funding.



TDM Incentives

Transportation Demand Management (TDM) incentives can increase ridership:

- Commute trip reduction programs.
- School and campus transport management.
- Bus priority (already on part of the route).
- Bus and station amenities.
- Walking and bicycling improvements around transit stops.
- More Transit-oriented development.
- Mobility management marketing.

This makes transit investments more cost effective and beneficial.



Vancouver regional bus ridership is growing due to service improvements and TDM incentives. Such incentives increase the return on transit service investments.

Transit has 20-40% weekday mode share between Fraser Valley towns such as Langley and Pitt Meadows and Vancouver.

Conclusions

- The Island Highway between Victoria and central Vancouver Island is often congested and dangerous. There are frequent calls for improvements to reduce driver stress, delays and crashes.
- Many travellers want alternatives to driving. Current demographic and economic trends are increasing demands for non-auto modes. Experience elsewhere indicates that this could attract 20-30% of trips.
- Frequent and affordable bus service with TDM incentives is by far the most cost-effective and beneficial way to improve mobility and reduce Island Highway traffic problems.



Conclusions II

- A basic program should provide at least hourly departures from 6:00 am to midnight with one-way fares less than \$5. As demand grows it should have more departures and routes.
- Provincial goals to improve rural mobility, reduce automobile travel and double public transport travel justify provincial leadership in intercity transit planning and significantly increasing – up to doubling – provincial funding to improve transit service quality.
- This should be a priority for regional and provincial governments in 2024.





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