

INFRASTRUCTURE SPOTLIGHT: IMPROVING PUBLIC TRANSIT FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

We've come a long way from the early days of our country, when horse-drawn trams and private carriages were enough to meet the public transit needs of Canadians. With the growth and urbanization of our country and ever improving technology, public transit in Canada has changed significantly. From the inauguration of the electric street car service in Vancouver in 1890, the operation of the first municipally-owned streetcars in Calgary in 1909, Toronto's Union Station receiving and dispatching its first passenger trains in 1927, and the opening of Montreal's Métro in 1966, our transit systems have been instrumental to the development of our cities.

Governments at all levels are turning their focus towards the future and projects that will further modernize our transit systems, such as building Vancouver's Evergreen rapid transit line, expanding Calgary's light rail transit system and revitalizing one of Canada's key transportation hubs at Toronto's Union Station.



Passengers boarding a streetcar on Calgary's 8th Avenue, ca. 1930.

(photo courtesy of the Canadian Government Motion Picture Bureau / National Film Board of Canada Funds, Library and Archives Canada, C-029462)

Key public transit benefits

Efficient transit systems move commuters to and from centres of employment, commerce and other points of interest. They enhance our quality of life, and help our cities attract and retain business investment and talented people. Better public transit makes it easier for Canadians get to work, to school, to visit the doctor, or to see friends and family.



SkyTrain's Lougheed Town Centre Station in Burnaby, Metro Vancouver will be further connected to the new Evergreen Line.

(photo courtesy of TransLink)

Vancouver's Evergreen Line

Thanks to a partnership between the Government of Canada, the Government of British Columbia and TransLink, Metro Vancouver residents will benefit from the construction of the Evergreen Line, a new 11-kilometre rapid transit line that will provide fast, frequent and convenient transit service from Coquitlam to downtown Vancouver via Port Moody and Burnaby. The new rapid transit line will connect to the current SkyTrain network and will integrate with regional bus and West Coast Express networks.

The \$1.4-billion project is a key component of the Provincial Transit Plan. The federal government is contributing a total of \$416.7 million towards that project, with \$350 million coming from the Building Canada Fund, and \$66.7 million that was previously allocated under the Public Transit Capital Trust. This new rapid transit line is planned to be in service in the summer of 2016 and is expected to serve 70,000 passengers per day in 2021. It will bring shorter commutes to residents, saving almost 45 minutes per day for those travelling from Coquitlam City Centre to Vancouver compared to driving.



Artist rendering of the future Evergreen Line.

(illustration courtesy of the Evergreen Line project's on-line image gallery)

Effective public transit systems also help reduce urban traffic congestion and the cost of gridlock to our cities' economic competitiveness. Traffic gridlock means increased fuel consumption and air pollution, more public health issues, higher costs from traffic accidents, increased greenhouse gas emissions, and productivity losses. In fact, a national study from Transport Canada¹ found that congestion in urban areas could cost Canadians as much as \$ 4.6 billion per year.



Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) networks are one of the many viable alternatives provided by public transit to commuters.

(photo courtesy of Nova Bus)

Ultimately, high-quality public transit systems mean more balanced, integrated urban transportation that improves the safety of daily travel and the quality of life in our cities. Whether they include buses, subways, light rail vehicles or commuter rail, transit systems increase transport options available to residents, workers and visitors. By improving mobility and accessibility to services and jobs, they make our cities more attractive and competitive.

¹ Transport Canada, 2006. "The Cost of Urban Congestion in Canada".

Greater Toronto's Public Transit

The Greater Toronto Area (GTA) is one of the largest and fastest-growing metropolitan areas in North America – and with this size and growth have come transportation challenges, such as longer commutes and increased traffic congestion, common to many global cities.

For many years, the Government of Canada has worked with other orders of government to support key transit infrastructure projects throughout the GTA. This includes federal funding commitments of over \$1 billion through the Building Canada Fund for projects such as the Toronto-York Spadina Subway Extension, investments in the GO Transit rail and bus networks, as well as the revitalization of Toronto's Union Station, Canada's busiest passenger facility.



GO Train
(photo courtesy of Metrolinx)



Rendering of Union Station overhaul
(illustration courtesy of Metrolinx)

Under the Infrastructure Stimulus Fund, part of Canada's Economic Action Plan, the federal government provided over \$101 million in additional funding towards important transit projects in the GTA. These include enhancements to the City of Toronto's transit system, a transit facility in Oakville, and a new intermodal "Mobility Hub" in Brampton. In addition, since 2005, the municipalities of the GTA have used over \$550 million of their federal Gas Tax Fund allocations towards transit investments.

These significant and strategic investments ensure that Canada's largest metropolitan region can benefit, now and in the future, from a modern and more efficient public transit system that improves the region's quality of life and competitiveness.

Making our communities more liveable

Reliable public transit systems are important for communities large and small. They are the main transportation option for many Canadians, and provide easier access to jobs, education, recreation and social activities. In fact, Canadians are using public transit in record numbers. In 2010, transit ridership increased by 4.1%, representing an all-time record with 1.9 billion trips². These numbers continue to grow, with a nearly 5% ridership increase for the first half of 2011.³

Access to transit is particularly important to newcomers to Canada. As reported in a recent study by the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, new Canadians are twice as likely to commute by public transit.⁴ Efficient public transit helps people to connect with their community and provides access to jobs and much-needed services, such as language training, medical care, and others. As immigration is expected to play a significant role in Canada's economic growth, public transit is an important piece in our nation's future.

In today's economy, public transit also plays a key role in supporting young Canadians across Canada. Indeed, Canadian Urban Transportation Association (CUTA)'s ridership data and surveys show that the 15-24 age group uses public transit more frequently than other segments of the population.⁵

As increasing numbers of Canadians are relying on public transit, our cities must be able to meet that demand. This means renewing and expanding rapid bus, light rail and subway systems, and building new terminals, stations and facilities.

Improved Transit Services in Cornwall, PEI

The 5,000 residents of the Town of Cornwall, Prince Edward Island, will benefit from improved transit services thanks to a new bus which was put into service in fall 2010. The low-floored, wheelchair-accessible bus can seat 35 passengers. It will expand the Cornwall leg of the Capital Region Public Transit system as a compliment to the existing City of Charlottetown and Town of Stratford systems.

"This represents a huge step forward for the Town of Cornwall," said Cornwall Councilor Marlene Hunt. "To have a modern bus, equipped with a bike rack and being wheelchair accessible is wonderful. We are delighted with the support this project received through the Gas Tax Fund."

The federal government provided \$450,000 to the Town of Cornwall through the Gas Tax Fund for transit initiatives in the community.



² Information provided by the Canadian Urban Transportation Association, February 2012.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ Federation of Canadian Municipalities, "Backgrounder – Starting on solid ground: the municipal role in immigrant settlement", 2011.

⁵ Information provided by the Canadian Urban Transportation Association, February 2012.

Enhancing transit services for commuters in Québec City

Thanks in part to financial support of nearly \$4 million from the federal Gas Tax Fund, a new high-frequency bus service is now available between Québec City's eastern and western districts.

The Métrobus 803 line is a 15-kilometre express route that includes seven kilometres of reserved bus lane in both directions. It also features a series of spacious, in some cases heated bus shelters to improve client comfort.



Métrobus 803 complements three existing high-frequency bus routes in Québec City. It provides better access to businesses along the route, faster east-west connections for commuters, and improved connections to other major routes serving larger business centres. The City expects the new line to serve up to 7,000 people daily as its popularity grows.

Increased public transit investments

The current level of federal investments in transit infrastructure is unprecedented. Since 2006, the Government of Canada has committed close to \$5 billion to provinces and municipalities across the country for public transit projects that they have identified as priorities. At no other time has the Government of Canada made such substantial investments in transit systems. This has not only helped build better transit – it's also built strong partnerships among all levels of government and key stakeholders, and created momentum for increased public transit investments. These coordinated efforts have meant tangible improvements to public transit all over Canada, such as new and expanded transit systems, larger fleet sizes with more accessible vehicles and the capacity to handle increasing ridership. Furthermore, CUTA reports that over the past decade, existing federal, provincial and municipal funding programs have increasingly been able to cover the expansion and renewal needs of the country's transit systems. The result: more and more Canadians across the country can count on modern, efficient and attractive transit systems in their community.

"Close collaboration between all orders of government has been key to building successful transit systems in Canada. The contribution of the federal government, in full respect of jurisdictions, has had significant impact in improving the mobility and quality of life of Canadians in communities of all sizes."

**– Michael Roschlau, President-CEO,
Canadian Urban Transit Association**

Modern transit infrastructure is vital for the long-term economic growth and prosperity of both our largest urban centers and our smaller communities. The Government of Canada recognizes that provinces and municipalities are best positioned to develop and implement transit strategies that meet their local needs. Federal investments in transit infrastructure have clearly respected jurisdictional responsibility for public transit, and provide significant flexibility for provinces, territories and municipalities to address their respective priorities.

Federal investments are being provided through several infrastructure programs, including the \$8.8-billion Building Canada Fund (BCF). Under that program's Major Infrastructure Component (MIC), public transit is one of five national priorities, along with Core National Highways, Water, Wastewater and Green Energy infrastructure. Under the BCF-MIC, over \$2.3 billion in federal funding has been committed towards 22 transit infrastructure projects, including significant investments in some of Canada's largest cities.

Under Canada's Economic Action Plan, the \$4-billion Infrastructure Stimulus Fund (ISF) has also supported transit infrastructure projects. In fact, federal investments of over \$240 million have supported 70 transit projects completed between 2009 and 2011.

In addition, municipalities across the country have used over \$1.6 billion of their federal Gas Tax Fund (GTF) allocations towards transit investments since 2005. In fact, a number of cities have directed either all or a very large portion of their GTF transfers to transit. Since 2005, GTF funding has supported over 400 transit infrastructure projects in communities of all sizes.

For the long term, our achievements are paving our way towards greener, more liveable and competitive communities. Our recent and ongoing efforts will keep Canada's communities moving ahead towards a more sustainable and prosperous future.

Infrastructure Spotlight: Improving Public Transit for the 21st Century

©Her majesty the Queen in Right of Canada, May 2012

Cat. No. T94-5/3-2012E-PDF

ISBN 978-1-100-20880-0

This document and additional information are available on the Web at www.infrastructure.gc.ca.

Cette publication est également disponible en français : *L'accent sur l'infrastructure : Améliorer le transport en commun pour le 21^e siècle.*