

A Business Case for Improving Interregional Bus Services

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Todd Litman

Victoria Transport Policy Institute



Abstract

Interregional (also called intercity, long-distance, rural and coach) bus service quality is poor and declining in North America. This is unfair and inefficient. Inadequate public transport deprives non-drivers of independent mobility and therefore economic opportunities and dignity, forces drivers to spend time and money chauffeuring non-drivers, reduces rural economic development, and increases traffic problems. This poor service is often explained as a lack of demand, but where bus service is convenient and affordable it can achieve significant ridership. The real problem is inadequate support; public agencies plan, operate and fund air, highway, rail, ferry and urban transit, but interregional bus service was previously provided by private companies so there is little tradition of public support. This study examines the costs and benefits of improving interregional bus services. It concludes that there is a strong business case for providing basic service on major travel corridors and high-quality service on congested highways. Case studies demonstrate that governments can efficiently provide interregional bus services.

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Introduction

Interregional (also called intercity, long-distance, rural or coach) bus service is the neglected stepchild of the transportation family. There are clearly defined responsibilities for planning, operating and funding sidewalks, bikeways, local roads, public highways, rail networks and local transit services, but not for interregional bus, as summarized below.

Table 1 Transportation Planning, Operating and Funding Responsibilities

	Active Modes	Automobile	Rail	Bus
Local	Local Gov.	Local/Region Gov.	Transit agencies	Transit Agencies
Interregional	State/Prov. Gov.	State/Prov. Gov.	Rail Corporations	???

Planning, operating and funding responsibilities are clearly defined for active modes (walking and bicycling), automobile, rail and local transit services, but interregional bus is an orphan.

Because of these planning practices governments invest significant resources on roads, and require property owners to provide off-street parking to benefit drivers. Governments also subsidize public transit, primarily in urban areas. Investments in interregional and rural public transit are much smaller, as indicated in the table below. Non-drivers can walk, bike, take transit or a taxi for local trips, but without interregional transit services they lack convenient and affordable access to other communities.

Table 2 Transportation Infrastructure Investments

	Urban	Rural
Drivers	Roads and parking facilities.	Large investments in rural roads.
Non-Drivers	Moderate investments in urban transit	Minimal investments in rural transit.

Governments spending and mandates results in large investments in roads and parking facilities to benefit motorists, plus urban transit investments. Investments in interregional and rural bus services are much smaller, leaving non-drivers with inferior service when travelling between cities or in rural areas.

This is unfair and inefficient. It deprives non-drivers of independent mobility and therefore economic opportunities and dignity, forces drivers to chauffeur non-drivers, reduces economic development, and it increases traffic problems and crashes. It creates large disparities between drivers and non-drivers, and between urban and rural residents. There are significant unmet demands for interregional transit, and serving those demands would provide large benefits to travellers and communities,

British Columbia (BC) provides good examples of this problem. Most BC highways have no, or infrequent and expensive interregional transit. This recently became the butt of jokes when contestants in the BBC's *Race Across the World* were required to travel with no car and limited funds from Victoria to Port Hardy, a corridor that lacks public transit; they had to hitchhike (Chan 2023). This inadequacy is no joke for countless non-drivers who lack convenient and affordable travel options between BC communities. The process to develop new services is painfully unresponsive, inefficient and slow, typically taking more than a decade between when needs are identified and new services begin.

This report investigates these issues. It examines interregional public transport demands and the degree that those demands are currently being served, discusses the costs of inadequate interregional transit services, defines optimal interregional transit service levels, describes examples of successful intercity transit services, and recommends policies for optimal interregional transit planning and funding.

Interregional Public Transit Demands

Interregional travel includes trips for business, healthcare, shopping, visiting friends and relatives, sightseeing, outdoor recreation, religious events, and other recreational activities. Many of these trips are high value, providing unique and important benefits. They represent about 3% of total trips and about 30% of total passenger-kilometers (Aultman-Hall 2018).

Currently, most long-distance travel is by auto or air, but those modes cannot satisfy all users. In a typical community, 20-40% of travellers cannot, should not or prefer not to drive (Figure 1 and Table 2), and will use public transport if it is convenient, comfortable and affordable. This is demonstrated on corridors with suitable service, such as the #61 bus between Sooke and Victoria, which has 43 daily trips with \$2.50 per trip fares, serves 13% of total and 22% of peak-period trips (CRD 2017). Similarly, transit serves 20-40% of trips between Vancouver and Fraser Valley towns such as Langley and Pitt Meadows.

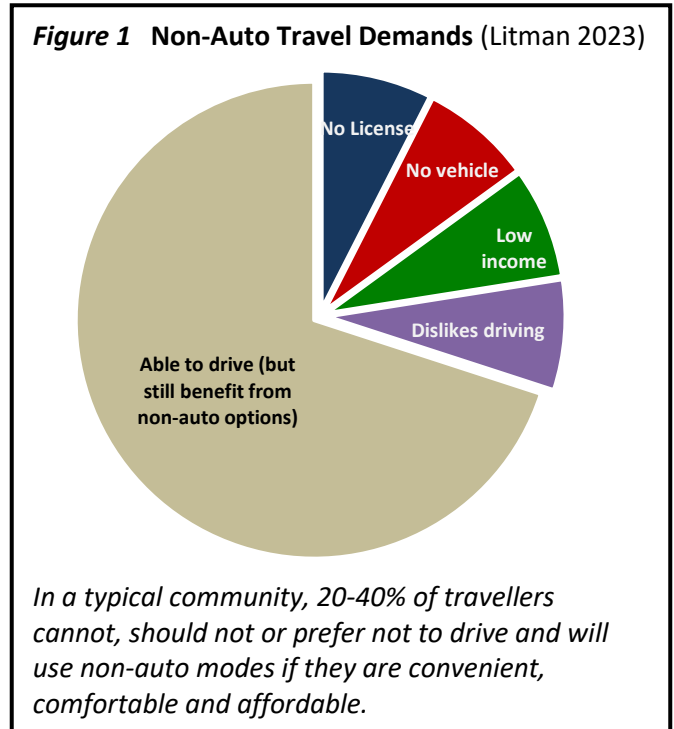


Table 3 Interregional Transit Demands (Litman 2023)

Type	Prevalence	Costs if not Served
Seniors who do not or should not drive.	5-10% of population.	Non-drivers lack mobility, require chauffeuring (special vehicle travel to transport a non-driver), or costly options (taxi and ridehailing), or move to another community with better transport options.
People with impairments.	5-10% of population.	
Adolescents (12-20 years).	10-20% of population.	
Drivers who share vehicles.	5-15% of motorists.	
Drivers whose vehicles are inoperable or must be transported to another region for repair or sale.	Varies.	Requires chauffeuring, or costly taxi or ridehailing.
Lower-income households.	20-40% of households.	Lack mobility or bear excessive transport costs.
Tourists and visitors.	Varies.	Lack mobility or visit other areas.
Impaired or distracted travelers.	Varies.	Impaired and distracted driving, increased risk.

On a typical travel corridor, 20-40% of travelers cannot, should not, or prefer not to drive and will use public transit if it is convenient, comfortable and affordable. Failure to serve these demands imposes various costs.

Failure to serve those demands imposes many costs on non-drivers, their families and communities. It limits their ability to access healthcare and other essential services, shop for affordable food, obtain education and access jobs, and enjoy normal social and recreational activities. A lack of affordable travel options forces many lower-income households to spend more on vehicles than is affordable. It forces motorists to spend time and money chauffeuring non-drivers; such trips are particularly inefficient since they often involve empty backhauls (such as an empty return trip) so each mile of passenger travel generates two vehicle-miles of travel. It reduces the pool of employees available to businesses and economic activities such as tourism. A lack of non-auto travel options increases traffic problems including congestion, crashes and pollution emissions.

The House of Commons' 2023 report, *Improving Bus Connectivity in Canada*, found that rural communities “suffered severely” in recent years from declining bus service, which imposes serious harms, particularly on marginalized communities, and convenient, safe and affordable intercity bus services provides many benefits. The recent *Island Coastal Inter-Community Transportation Study* shows that many Vancouver Island residents want interregional transit services (Baker 2023).

In 2006 the *Highway of Tears Symposium* investigated the high rate of missing and murdered women on the 724-kilometre Yellowhead Highway 16 between Prince Rupert to Prince George, often called the “highway of tears” (CSFS 2006). The following is the first of the Symposium’s 33 recommendations:

That a shuttle bus transportation system be established between each town and city located along the entire length of Highway 16, defined as the Highway of Tears. Except for the Greyhound Bus Line that services the Highway 16 corridor from Prince George to Prince Rupert, (twice a day from Prince George to Prince Rupert, and a once per day return trip), no other public transportation system exists. A shuttle bus transportation system would focus on the pickup and drop off of young female passengers at all First Nation communities, towns and cities located along the entire length of the highway between Prince George and Prince Rupert. During the spring, summer, fall, and perhaps even winter months of operation, these shuttle buses must also stop and pick-up every young woman they encounter walking or hitchhiking between those First Nation communities, towns, and cities on this Highway. The number of shuttle buses required would be exactly seven (7) to cover the entire 724-kilometre length of the Highway of Tears.

However, this and other recommendations were not implemented. This inaction was widely criticized. In 2016 the Canadian federal government launched a *National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls*, with \$54 million funding. The inquiry also concluded that inadequate interregional transit is a major risk factor to low-income, isolated communities. In 2017 BC Transit started three new bus routes on that corridor, which carried about 5,000 passengers during the first year of service. Greyhound Canada announced in 2018 that it would stop servicing routes along the Highway of Tears and other Canadian routes. In 2023 the provincial government committed an additional \$5 million to support that service. All of those decisions were ad hoc, in response to political pressures rather than the result of a systematic planning and funding process to provide adequate and sustainable interregional public transport on major travel corridors throughout the province.

Many factors can affect interregional transit demands including its convenience, comfort, perceived safety, price, integration with other transportation system components, and incentives such as parking prices. Interregional transit ridership tends to increase if it integrates well with local transportation services, and if it is encouraged with transportation demand management incentives.

Who Needs Interregional Bus Services?

- 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.

Interregional Transit Benefits

By most metrics including operating costs, crash rates and energy consumption, buses are the most efficient travel mode (Litman 2021; Woldeamanuel 2012). High-quality interregional transit services can provide significant benefits to users, motorists and communities, as summarized the table below.

Table 4 Interregional Transit Benefits

Users	Motorists	Communities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Independent mobility and opportunity for non-drivers. • Reduced driver stress. • Vehicle cost savings. • Increased safety and security. • Improved home location options. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduced chauffeuring burdens. • Increased safety due to reduced higher-risk driving. • Reduced traffic and parking congestion. • Improved mobility options when they cannot drive. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supports industries such as tourism. • Retains and attracts residents. • Reduces traffic problems. • Increases safety (reduced crashes) and security (reduced crime).

Serving multimodal travel demand can provide various direct and indirect benefits.

British Columbia’s *CleanBC Roadmap* has targets to reduce light duty vehicle travel 25% and increase walking, bicycling and transit mode shares to 30% by 2030 and 50% by 2050 (BC Government 2021). Although these targets are justified primarily to reduce climate emissions they provide other benefits including congestion reductions and infrastructure savings, increased affordability, more independent mobility for non-drivers, traffic safety and improved public health, all goals stated in the BC Minister of Transportation’s *Mandate Letter*. Interregional bus services support and are supported by vehicle travel reduction efforts. For example, they support commute trip reduction by providing an efficient option for long-distance commutes, and support campus transport management programs by reducing the need for students to have cars that they would otherwise require for travelling home during breaks.

Improved interregional bus service can provide downstream benefits by reducing traffic on other roads. For example, if improved Island Highway transit attracts 20% of commuter trips, as on Highway 14 between Sooke and Victoria, this would reduce about 2,500 peak-period vehicle trips on local streets and free up 2,500 urban parking spaces, saving millions of dollars in infrastructure costs. It can leverage additional benefits by allowing some households to reduce their vehicle ownership. For example, a family might need two vehicles if both adults commute by car but only one if they frequently use transit. Similarly, better interregional transit can allow families to avoid owning vehicles needed for occasional trips, such as travel to ferry terminals and airports, seniors who require specialized medical treatments, and university students who travel home on weekends and breaks.

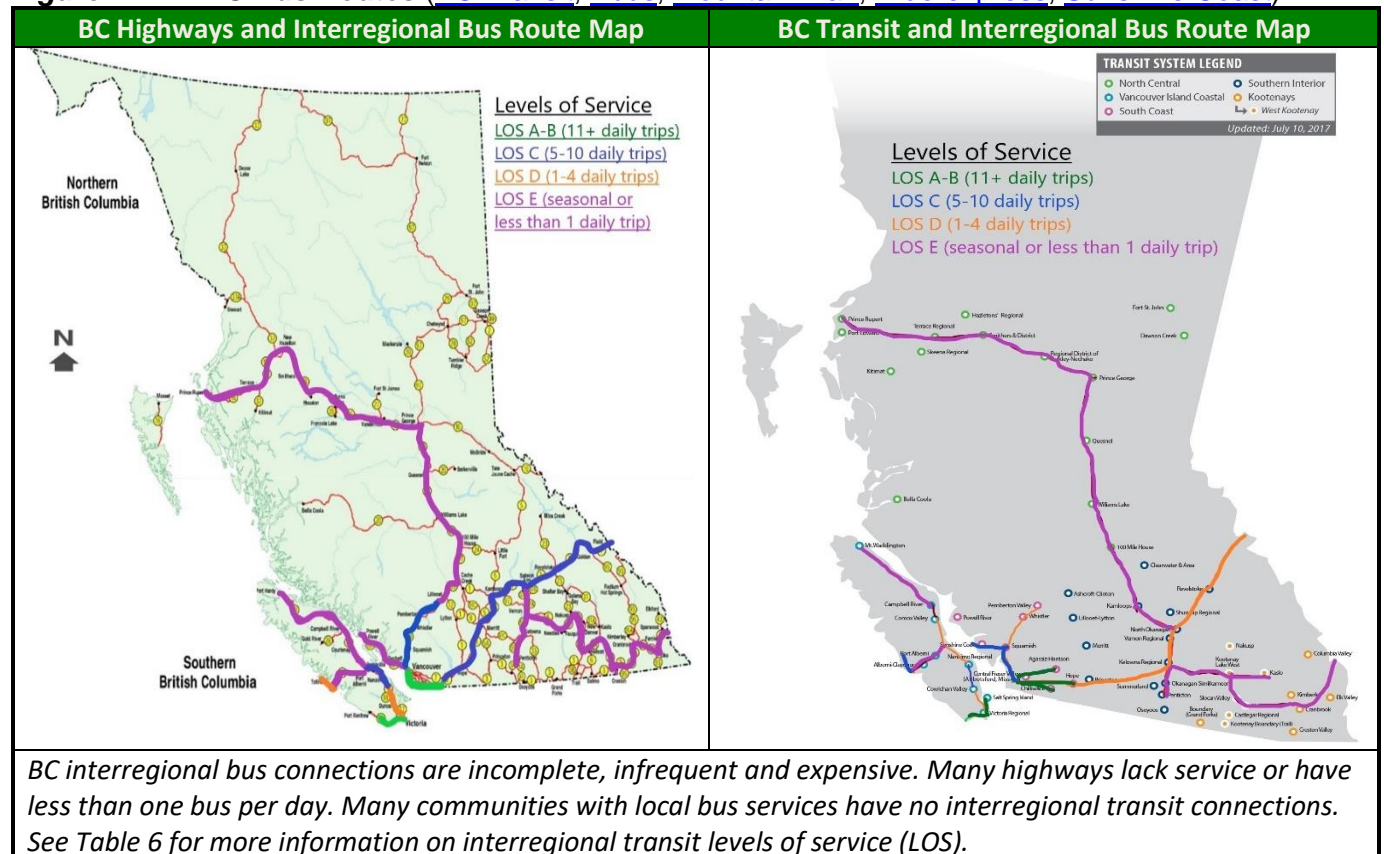
Transit can provide large safety benefits by reducing congestion and higher-risk driving (APTA 2016). For example, young men who pay high vehicle insurance premiums, seniors who dislike driving on busy highways and alcohol drinkers are particularly likely to use buses rather than drive, provided they are convenient and affordable. Traffic safety strategies such as graduated driver’s licenses, senior driver testing and anti-impaired driving campaigns become more effective and acceptable if implemented with transit improvements that provide viable alternatives to driving. As a result, auto-to-transit mode shifts can leverage proportionately larger crash reductions. For example, if the Island Highway achieves Highway 14 transit mode shares (13% total and 22% peak-period trips), crashes should decline at least 13% and probably much more due to reduced congestion and less driving by higher risk groups.

Current Conditions

Interregional bus services were once common, affordable and profitable, but during the last half-century they experienced a death spiral of declining ridership, service, profits and public support (House of Commons 2023; USDOT 2005). Despite growing demand these services and their support infrastructure (such as bus stations) are inadequate and declining (Schwieterman, Chesney, and Das 2024). Major bus companies such as Greyhound and Trailways reduced or eliminated services. They are replaced by budget bus services (called “curb buses” because they lack stations) that operate only on a few high-volumes routes, leaving many routes without public transport.

Information on interregional bus service is difficult to obtain and unreliable. Travel websites often provide outdated or incomplete information, showing discontinued or seasonal routes. The figure below illustrates BC bus routes based on data from various websites. The left map shows bus levels of service (LOS, described in Table 6) on major highways; the right map shows which communities with local transit service have interregional bus connections. Only about half of highways and communities with local transit have interregional buses routes, and these are mostly infrequent and expensive: many routes have less than daily service (LOS E) most of the year, and fares usually cost more than fuel for driving the same trip. Few communities have support services such as comfortable and safe bus stations.

Figure 2 BC Bus Routes (BC Transit, Ebus, Mountain Man, Riderexpress, Sunshine Coast)



This indicates that most British Columbia highways and communities lack convenient and affordable interregional bus services. Of course, service is relatively good in larger urban areas, and some coastal communities have highly subsidized ferry services.

Current Planning and Funding

Currently, BC and most other North American jurisdictions have no standard process for planning and supporting interregional bus services. The Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure (MoTI) plans and finances highways, BC Transit plans and supports local transit services, BC Ferries plans and operates ferries, Via Rail provides passenger rail on some corridors, and Transport Canada regulates motor carriers (including intercity buses) and aviation, but no agency is responsible for analyzing demands, or planning and funding interregional bus services, as summarized in Table 3.

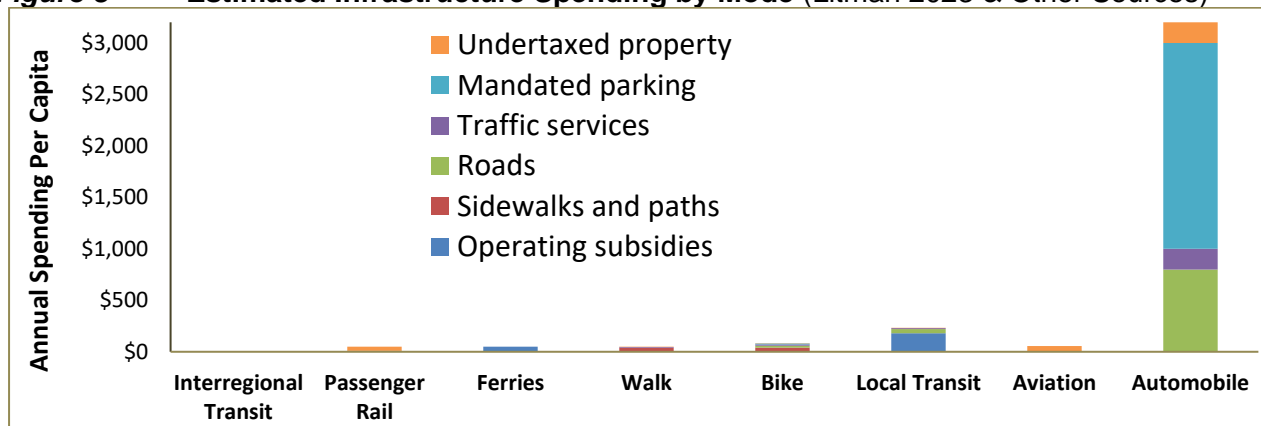
Table 5 Interregional Transportation Planning and Funding

	Interregional Bus	Passenger Rail	Ferry Services	Auto Travel	Local Transit	Aviation
<i>Lead Agency</i>	None	<i>Via Rail</i>	<i>BC Ferries</i>	<i>MoTI</i>	<i>BC Transit</i>	<i>Transport CA</i>
Demand analysis	<i>Minimal</i>	Some corridors.	Extensive surveys, public consultation and models			
Problem identification	<i>Minimal</i>	Major corridors.	Significant analysis using travel models and level-of-service ratings.			
Planning	<i>Minimal</i>	Major corridors.	Extensive planning by local, regional, provincial and federal agencies.			
Funding and subsidies	<i>Minimal, in response to special concerns.</i>	Moderate.	Moderate, large for smaller routes.	Large for roads and parking facilities.	Moderate.	Moderate.
Integration (terminals, information)	<i>Minimal. Few bus stations, limited information.</i>	Some cities have nice rail stations.	Terminals and good user information.	Parking facilities at most destinations. Good information.	Transit networks in most cities.	Extensive support for airports.

Interregional bus services receive less analysis, planning, funding and integration (terminals, parking facilities and convenient user information) than other modes.

When somebody purchases an automobile, they expect governments to provide roads and businesses to provide off-street parking for their use. Governments also mandate parking facilities, subsidize local transit and ferry services, create port and airport authorities, undertax road, railroad, port and airport properties, and provide financial subsidies. The figure below compares estimated annual infrastructure investments and subsidies for various modes. Although some costs are difficult to determine, by any reasonable assumptions interregional bus receives less investment and support than other modes.

Figure 3 Estimated Infrastructure Spending by Mode (Litman 2023 & Other Sources)



Of all travel modes, interregional transit receives the least public investment.

Because there is no standard interregional transit planning process, improvements are only implemented when there are special political concerns. Improvements must be initiated by regional districts, which only perceive a portion of the benefits provided by long-distance bus services that reduce highway traffic problems or help non-drivers and businesses located in other regions. Then, BC Transit must analyze and plan those improvements, and the province must fund them.

This process is unresponsive, inefficient and slow. As previously described, a 2006 conference identified hitchhiking as a major risk on the Highway of Tears deaths and recommended Highway 16 bus service but no government action was taken until 2023. Similarly, in 2012 the Cowichan Valley and Nanaimo regional districts transit services to connect their communities but it took a decade to plan #70 service, as illustrated to the right. Developing Tofino-Ucluelet bus service took 15 years, between 2009 when local officials first requested it until 2024 when the service started. A 2017 study found sufficient demand for transit service on the Sea to Sky corridor between Vancouver, Squamish, Whistler and the Pemberton Valley, and TransLink’s *Transport 2050* plan calls for improved interregional bus services to the Fraser Valley, but these projects have yet to be implemented (Chan 2023).

Explaining the Poor Planning and Support

Interregional bus services receive little government attention because they were previously provided by commercial operators which policy makers assumed simply needed regulation for safety and fairness. As commercial bus services became less profitable and declined, transportation authorities failed to recognize the unmet needs and growing problems that result. This reflects *elite bias*, the tendency of decision-makers to focus on the problems and needs they personally experience. Most policy makers and planning practitioners are busy, middle-class drivers unfamiliar with the problems facing low-income non-drivers. As a result, highway, ferry and airport planning is more responsive and efficient than for interregional bus services.

Optimal Interregional Transit Planning and Support

This section describes four ways to determine the fair and efficient level of interregional public transit planning and public funding.

1. User Demands and Community Goals

By this perspective a mode should receive planning priority and investment based on potential mode shares and community goals. As previously described, typically 20-40% of travellers cannot, should not or prefer not to drive and will use public transit if it is frequent, comfortable and affordable. Serving these demands can help achieve various community goals including basic mobility and economic opportunity for non-drivers, reducing highway traffic problems, increasing safety, reducing pollution emissions and supporting rural economic development. All these benefits and related community goals should be considered when evaluating interregional public transit services.

Figure 4 #70 Planning Timeline
(CVRD and NRD 2021)



BC Transit took a decade and hundreds of thousands of dollars to plan the #70 bus route which now provides seven daily buses between Duncan and Nanaimo.

2. Social Equity

Equitable transport planning strives to minimize disparities in public investments and accessibility between different groups, such as between drivers and non-drivers or urban and rural residents. Transit investments are justified to ensure that all travellers, including non-drivers, receive their fair share of public resources. For example, if 10% of travellers are non-drivers, non-auto modes should receive at least 10% of public investments, and more if needed to give non-drivers access to essential services such as healthcare, healthy food, education, and employment. As previously described, interregional transit currently receives much less public support than other modes, less than the portion of travellers who cannot or should not drive and would use such services if they were convenient and affordable. This is unfair, particularly for non-drivers who live in or visit rural communities and is inefficient if it forces non-drivers to use suboptimal modes such as hitchhiking, chauffeuring or costly air travel.

3. Mode Shift Targets/Sustainable Transportation Hierarchy

Some jurisdictions, including BC, have targets to reduce automobile travel and increase walking, bicycling and transit travel. To achieve these targets some transportation agencies are applying a sustainable transportation hierarchy, which means that planning decisions favor affordable and resource-efficient modes, such as walking, bicycling and public transit, over resource-intensive modes such as automobile and air travel. These targets and priorities justify shifting resources currently devoted to roads, parking facilities and airports to public transit including interregional bus services.

4. Performance Targets

From this perspective a mode should receive sufficient support to achieve a targetted level of service (LOS). Transportation planners often use LOS ratings to identify problems, set performance targets and evaluate potential improvements. LOS ratings have been defined for most modes including local public transit but not specifically for interregional bus services (TRB 2013).

The table below shows level of service ratings suitable for evaluating interregional transit. High quality service (LOS A or B) can attract discretionary travellers who would otherwise drive, and so is justified to achieve traffic problems. LOS C provides independent mobility for non-drivers. LOS D and E don't allow travellers to visit another community and return the same day and so are inadequate for most trips.

Table 6 Interregional Transit Levels of Service (Guillemette, et al. 2019; Litman 2024)

Level of Service	Frequency & Speed	Affordability	Comfort & Amenities	Utility	Transit Mode Share Targets
A	25+ daily trips, as fast as driving.	Much cheaper than driving.	Very good. Free internet, on-board washrooms, etc.	Very high. Attracts travellers who would otherwise drive.	15-25%
B	11-24 daily trips.	Cheaper than driving.	Stations with washrooms.	High. Suitable for most trips.	12-20%
C	5-10 daily trips.	Slightly cheaper than driving	Uncrowded. All passengers seated.	Moderate. Suitable for many trips.	6-12%
D	1-4 daily trips.	Comparable to driving.	Clean and comfortable.	Low. Suitable for some trips.	3-6%
E	Less than daily.	More costly than driving.	Safe vehicles and stations.	Low. Suitable for few trips.	1-3%
F	No service.	Much more costly than driving.	No amenities.	Non-drivers lack independent mobility.	0%

This table defines interregional transit service quality and mode share targets. Where service varies seasonally it should be rated for average or off-peak periods.

Examples of Success

1. Canadian Intercity Bus Services (HOC 2023)

Ontario Northland, a provincial agency created in 1902, provides public transport services numerous communities, as illustrated below. In 2022 its buses carried 281,790 passengers and 34,707 packages, and its trains carried 46,201 passengers. Of its \$148 million annual budget, \$95 million is from sales and \$54 million (36%) is provincial subsidy. Between 1946 and 2017 the *Saskatchewan Transportation Company* provided intercity passenger and freight transport to 243 communities. It required \$17 million annual subsidy.

Figure 5 Ontario Northland (Ontario Northland)



Ontario Northland, a provincial agency, provides bus services that connect numerous communities.

2. Virginia Breeze Bus Lines

Virginia's Department of Rail and Public Transit (DRPT) provides interregional bus services. The first route, the Valley Flyer, connects various communities with the Dulles International Airport. With fares as low as \$15, the Flyer quickly exceeded ridership expectations. With this proven success the DRPT expanded the program to include three more routes, as illustrated right.

Figure 6 Virginia State Bus Routes (Gordon 2022)

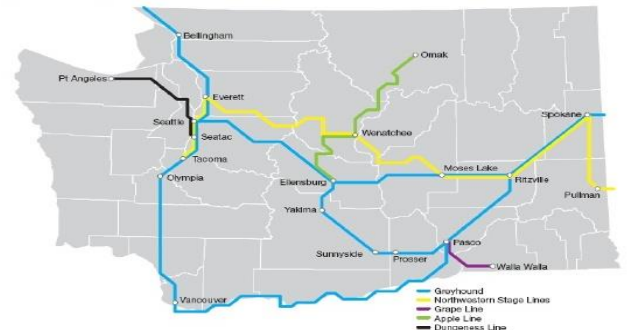


Virginia's Department of Rail and Public Transit provides bus service on major travel corridors. Ridership exceeds

3. Travel Washington Intercity Bus and Rural Mobility Programs (Lynott 2014)

Declining intercity bus service left many Washington communities without connections to other towns and cities. In response the state created the *Travel Washington Intercity Bus Program* which contracts with private companies to provide bus services on major routes, as illustrated right. The State DOT works with communities to design the program and select service providers. Program Manager, Steve Abernathy, says that this approach has garnered strong community support. "When the Gold Line (northeastern Washington) was announced, communities were falling over each other to see who could bring the most to the ribbon cutting."

Figure 7 Washington Intercity Bus Network



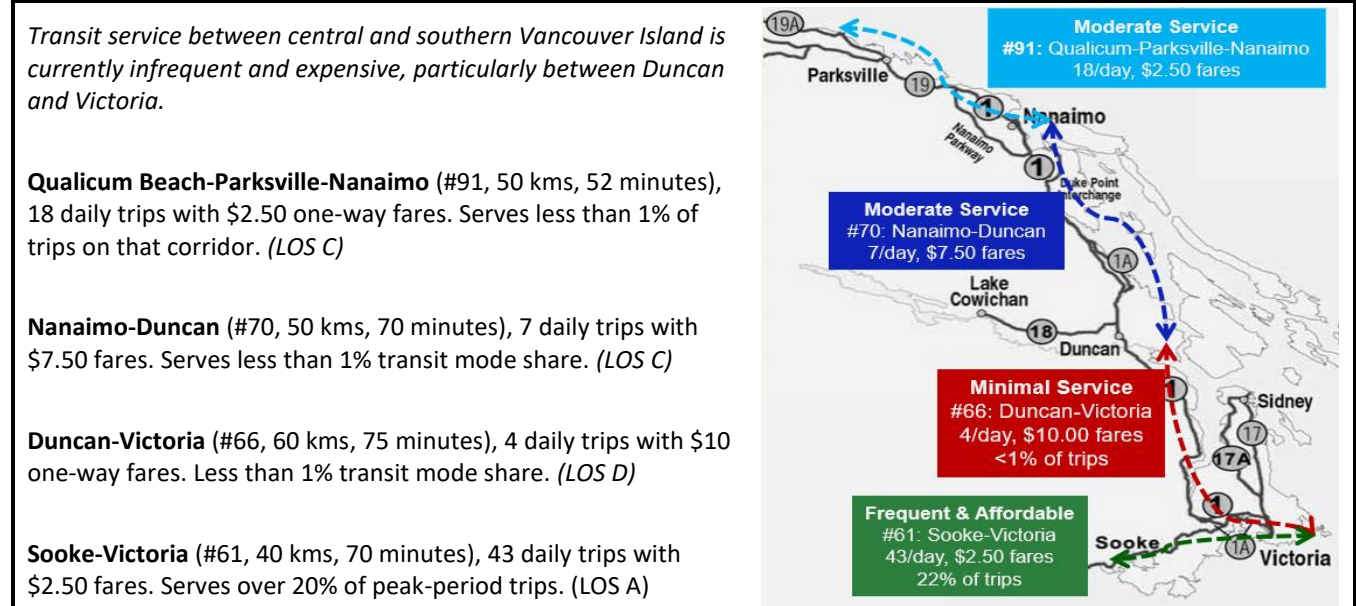
Washington Intercity Bus and Rural Transit Assistance programs support and fund interregional bus routes.

Other state programs to help rural communities plan, coordinate and fund public, private non-profit, private for-profit and Tribal transit services. As a result, most rural counties have coordinated transit services. For example, the Olympic Transit Loop consists of six coordinated local transit services that connect small communities, Indian reservations and tourist destinations around the Olympic Peninsula.

Island Highway Example (BIT 2024)

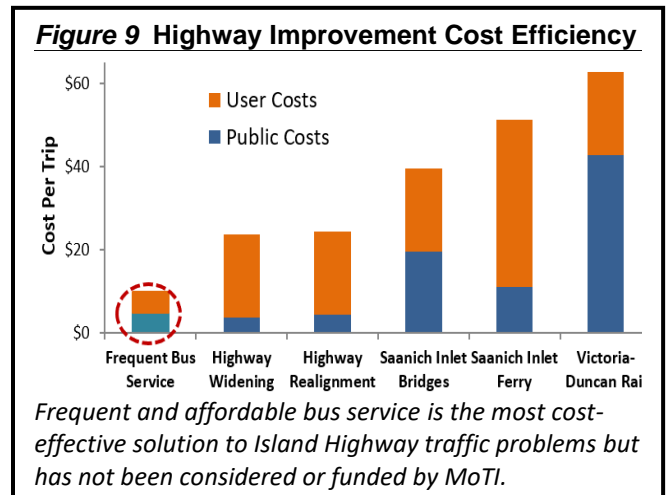
The Island Highway between central and south Vancouver Island is busy and often congested, carrying about 30,000 daily travellers, yet has minimal and expensive transit service, with only four daily buses between Victoria and Duncan and only seven daily buses between Duncan and Nanaimo. As a result, transit currently serves a tiny portion of travel on this corridor, as illustrated below.

Figure 8 Current Central to South Vancouver Island Transit Services



Although the province has targets to reduce vehicle travel, double transit travel, increase affordability and safety, and support rural economic development, this has yet to translate into more Vancouver Island transit service. MoTI is spending hundreds of millions of dollars to expand the Island Highway but does not consider, plan or fund frequent and affordable bus service despite its cost efficiency and many benefits, as illustrated in Figure 6.

BC’s Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure currently collects little data on non-auto demands, does not support multimodal planning, and devotes a tiny portion of its budget to non-auto programs. It has no standard process for analyzing, planning or funding interregional transit service; any new service must be requested by regional officials, planned by BC Transit, and funded by the province. This reflects institutional biases: the way transport problems are defined (focusing on vehicle traffic conditions), the scope of impacts considered (many roadway expansion costs and transit benefits are overlooked or undervalued), and the funding process (highway planning simply allocates pre-budgeted funds but transit improvements require new provincial funding) all favor highway expansions over new transit services.



Discussion Questions

- Who is currently responsible for interregional transit planning and funding? What are gaps?
- What are the true demands for interregional transit services? What demands are unmet?
- What problems result from inadequate service? What are the benefits of providing convenient and affordable interregional transit services?
- How should optimal interregional transit service be defined?
- How do interregional bus subsidies compare with other modes and services, and potential benefits?
- What analysis and planning is needed to identify and serve demands?
- How much can interregional transit reduce emissions, traffic risk, congestion and roadway costs?
- What role can interregional transit play in increasing affordability, inclusivity and fairness?

Conclusions and Recommendations

For non-drivers to have independent mobility they need an integrated system that includes safe walking and bicycling conditions, local transit services, plus interregional connections. Frequent and affordable interregional bus services ensure that all travellers, including non-drivers, enjoy independence and dignity and receive a fair share of public investments. Current planning tends to overlook and undervalue many interregional bus benefits which results in underinvestment, as summarized below. This causes disparities between drivers and non-drivers, and between urban and rural non-drivers.

Table 7 Interregional Bus Benefits

Benefit Category	Degree Considered in Current Planning
Users	
More independent mobility and opportunity for non-drivers	Seldom included in formal economic evaluation
Financial savings compared with private automobile or taxi travel	Generally overlooked
Reduced crash and assault risk	Generally overlooked
Reduced impaired driving	Generally overlooked
Motorists	
Reduced chauffeuring burdens	Generally overlooked
Reduced high-risk (youth, senior, impaired) driving	Generally overlooked
Reduced traffic and parking congestion	Generally overlooked
Provides a mobility option when they cannot drive.	Generally overlooked
Local Economy	
Supports industries such as tourism	Seldom included in formal economic evaluation
Retains and attracts more residents	Seldom included in formal economic evaluation
Helps attract major employers such as colleges	Seldom included in formal economic evaluation

Many benefits of interregional bus services tend to be overlooked or undervalued in current planning.

This underinvestment leads to low transit mode shares. Where public transit service is convenient and affordable it typically serves 10-30% of trips, reflecting true demands. Transit experiences economies of scale. For example, higher load factors increase transit cost recovery, and busways provide more value if transit ridership increases. To optimize our transportation system transportation agencies must correct planning and funding biases which undervalue and underinvest in transit.

The key message: *A highway is incomplete unless it has convenient and affordable public transit services.*

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