



# Frequent and Affordable Vancouver Island Bus Service



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

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**Better Island Transit**  
FREQUENT AND AFFORDABLE PUBLIC  
TRANSPORTATION FOR VANCOUVER ISLAND

# *Vancouver Island Transportation*

The Island Highway between central and south Vancouver Island is:

- A major travel corridor carrying about 30,000 people per day.
- Often congested, dangerous and sometimes closed due to crashes, flooding and rockfalls.
- Costly and environmentally damaging to expand.
- Currently lacking convenient and affordable public transit services.

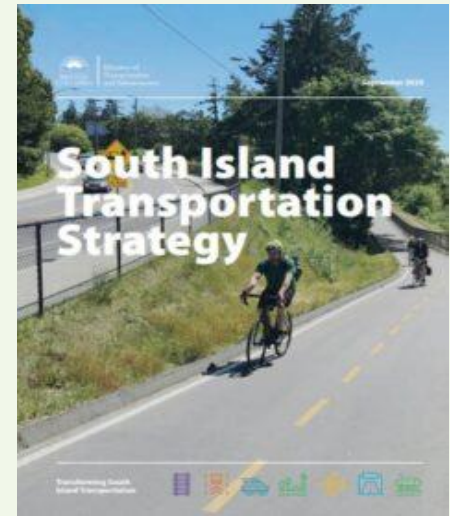




# *Planning Improvements*

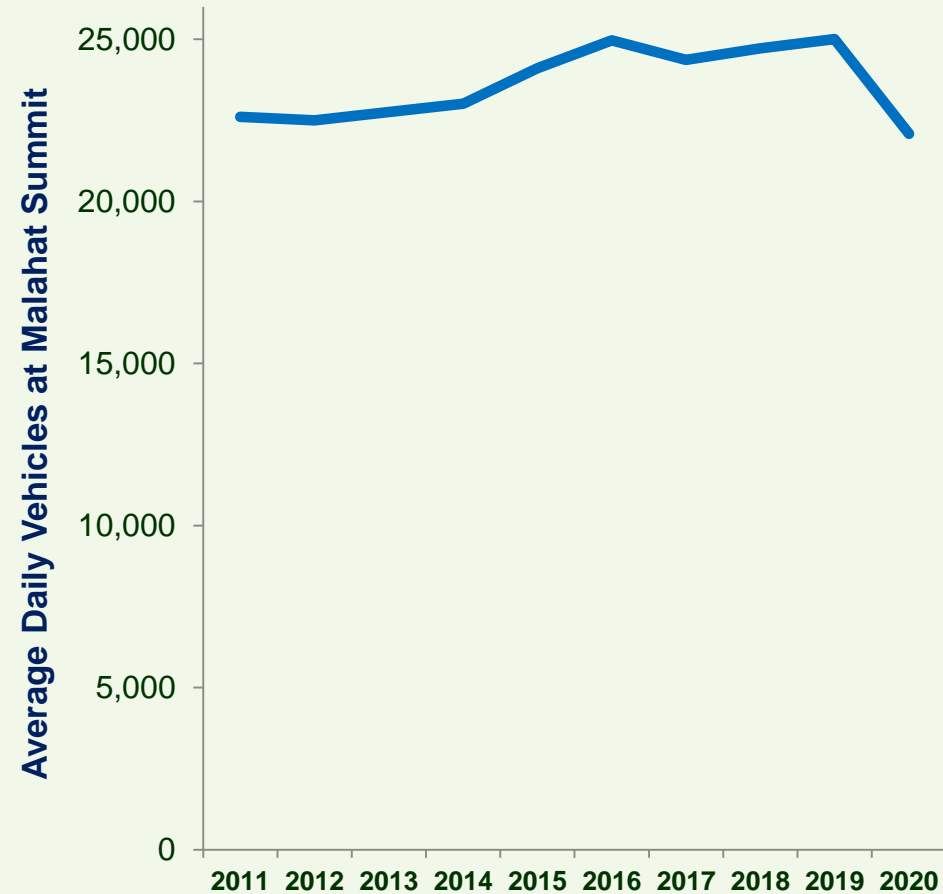
Every few years the provincial government develops proposals to improve Island transportation. These studies focus on costly roadway expansions, which only benefit motorists, or rail which would provide limited service with high fares. They give little consideration to frequent and affordable bus service.

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*

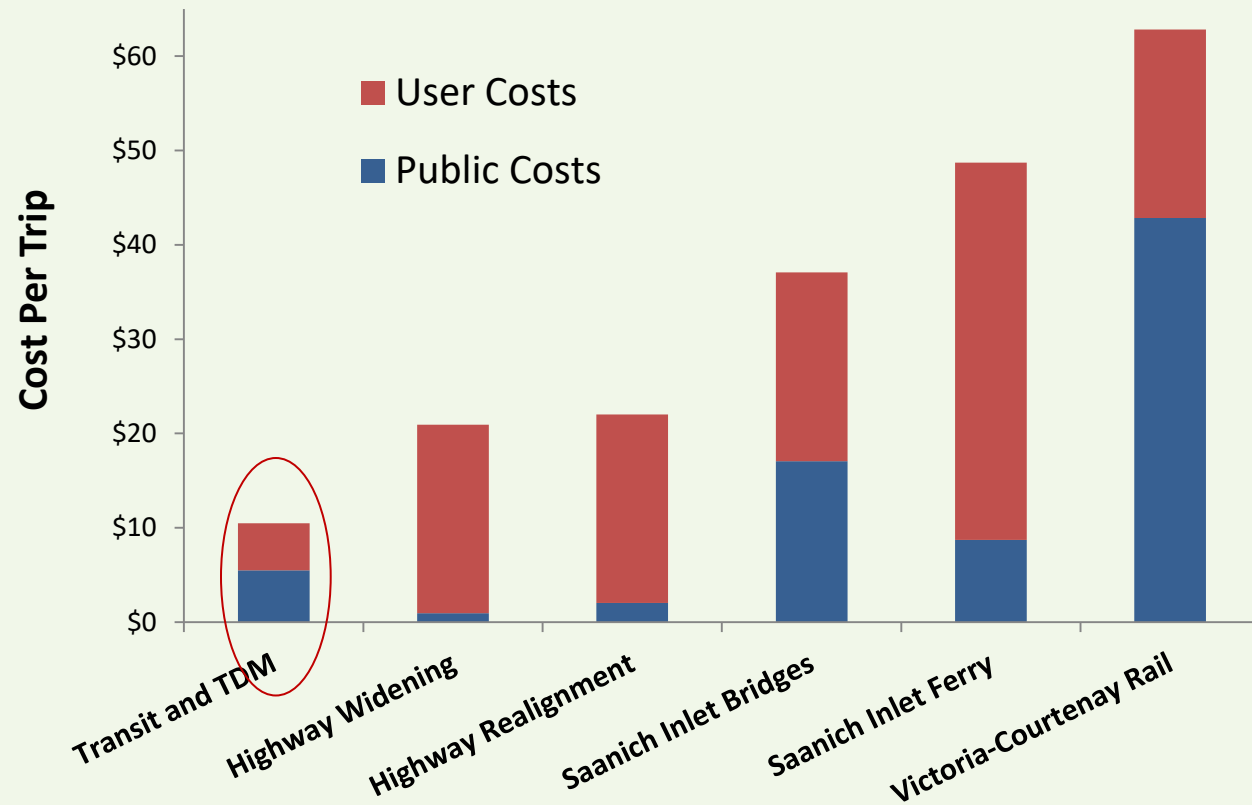
Roadway expansions provide few benefits (✓) and by inducing more vehicle travel contradict other objectives (×). At best they reduce congestion and crashes on that roadway, but these benefits decline as induced traffic fills the added capacity, and it increases downstream traffic problems.

Transit with TDM provides more diverse benefits, including equity goals by providing independent mobility for non-drivers, and ensuring that all residents receive a share of public 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	×	✓	✓
Roadway savings	×		✓
Parking cost savings	×	✓	✓
Consumer savings and affordability			✓
Traffic safety	✓/×	✓	✓
Energy savings & emission reductions	×	✓	✓
Support rural tourism		✓	✓
Encourages compact development	×	✓	✓

# *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.



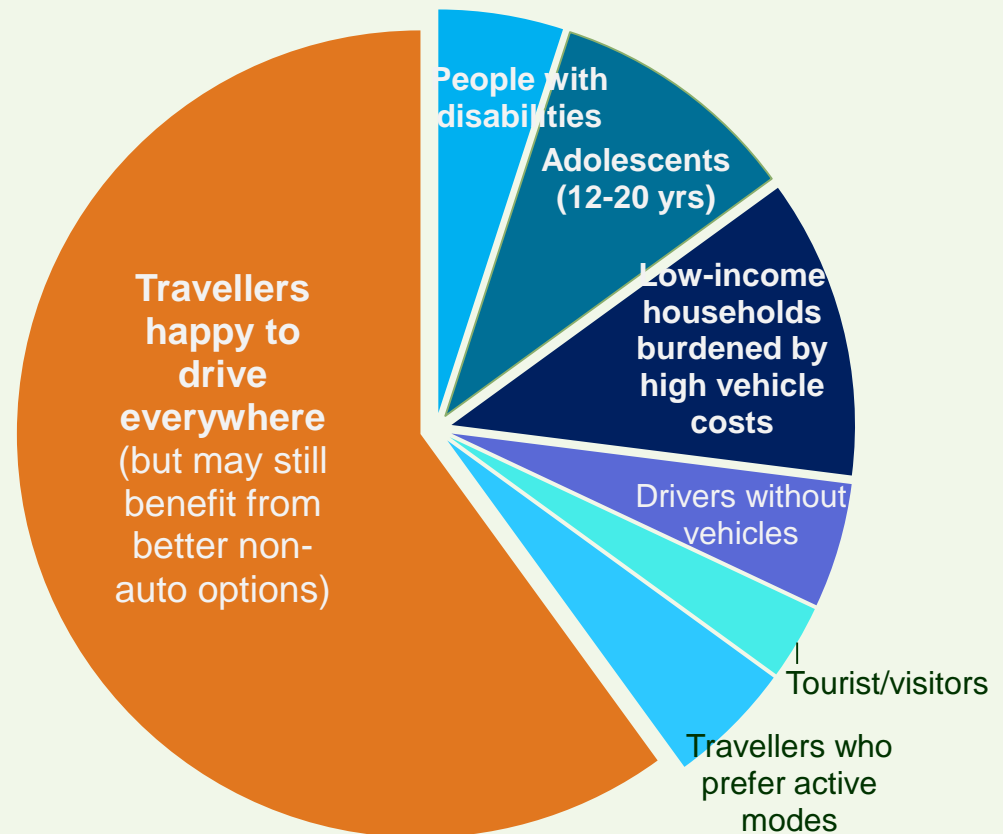
# *Who Needs Public Transit?*

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

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

Aging population, rising poverty and health concerns are increasing the portion of residents needing transit services, particularly in rural areas.

**Travel Demands**





# Current Transit Services

Between central and south Vancouver Island, transit service is currently infrequent and expensive. The Duncan-Victoria link has only four daily buses, with no reverse commute or off-peak service, and \$10 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.



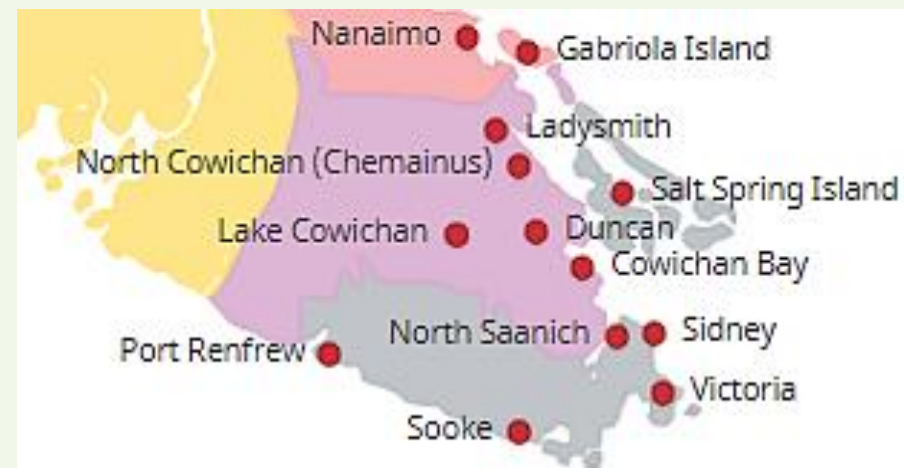


# *Why the Disparity?*

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.





# *TDM Incentives*

Transportation Demand Management (TDM) incentives are successful at increasing transit 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.*

# *Actions Required*

1. Develop a transit planning and funding agreement between Capital, Cowichan and Nanaimo regional districts, BC Transit and the MoTI.
2. Provide at least hourly bus service on the #66 Duncan-Victoria and #70 Nanaimo-Victoria routes, with \$5 maximum one-way fares. Implement TDM incentives to encourage ridership.
3. Basic service requires about \$3.6 million annual subsidy (calculations below).
4. Encourage ridership with TDM incentives.
5. Adjust and increase service in response to demand.

	#66 Duncan-Victoria		#70 Nanaimo-Duncan	
	Basic	Frequent	Basic	Frequent
Current daily trips	4	4	7	7
Proposed daily trips	18	42	18	42
Increased trips	14	38	11	35
Cost per round trip (\$147 x 4 hours)	\$470			
Total annual cost (additional trips x \$470 x 365)	\$2,401,700	\$6,518,900	\$1,887,050	\$6,004,250
Fare revenue	\$360,255	\$977,835	\$283,058	\$900,638
Subsidy requirement	\$2,041,445	\$5,541,065	\$1,603,993	\$5,103,613

# Benefits

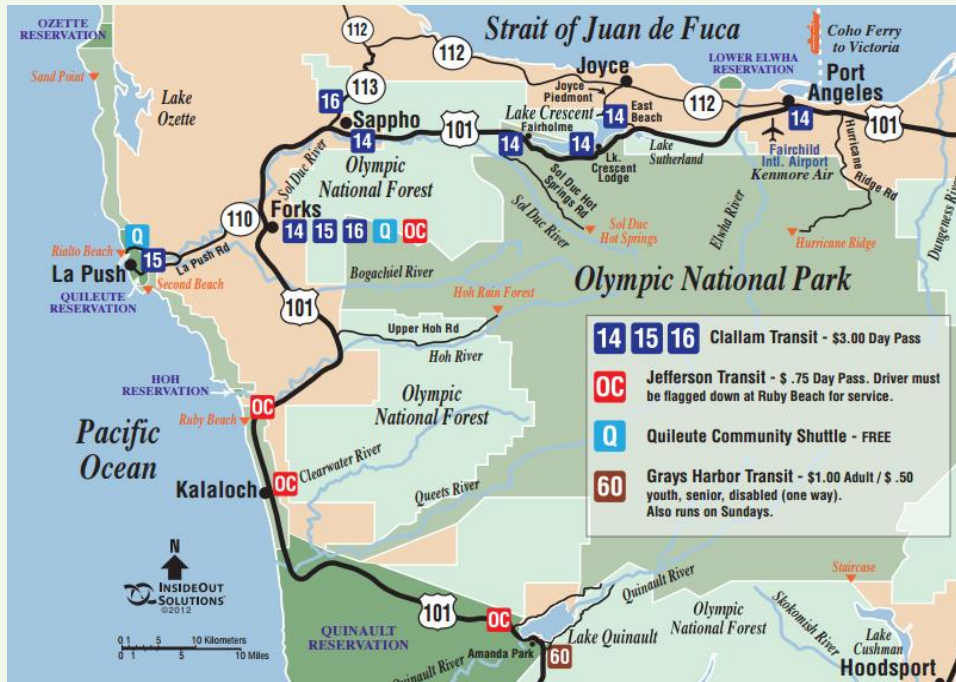
- This service would provide many benefits to users and communities, including benefits to motorists who experience less traffic congestion, crash risk and chauffeuring burdens.
- It supports provincial targets to reduce personal vehicle travel by 25% and double walking, bicycling and public transit 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

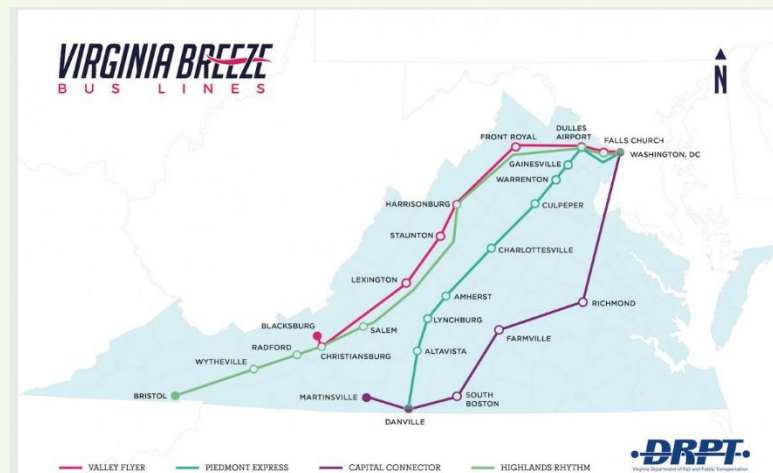
Improved Transit Service	Increased Transit Travel	Reduced Automobile Travel	Transit-Oriented Development
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Improved passenger comfort, convenience and productivity.</li><li>• Affordability (savings to lower-income households).</li><li>• Equity (benefits disadvantaged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



# Integrated Transit Examples



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



# *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 an alternative to driving. Current demographic and economic trends are increasing demands for non-auto modes. Experience elsewhere, including Sooke-Victoria and Fraser Valley corridors indicate that this could attract 20-30% of travel.
- 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 fares less than \$5. As demand grows it could include 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 increase and improve transit service quality.
- This should be a priority project for regional governments, BC Transit and MoTI in 2024.







# Better Island Transit

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