History page

BEST has been promoting sustainable transportation in the Lower Mainland of BC since 1991. Formed by a group of dedicated cyclists 26 years ago, BEST opened Vancouver’s first do-it-yourself bike store (Our Community Bikes) and coordinated Ride for the Environment events during National Environment Week, at a time when bicycling was still a fringe transportation mode.

In 1994 BEST decided to be more inclusive, changing its mandate to promoting all forms of sustainable transportation. With this we started organizing the BC chapter of Commuter Challenge, a national one-week initiative where participants commute sustainably for a chance to win great prizes. We converted our Bike Week to Bike Month.

Did you know that BEST:

Started Our Community Bikes in 1993, Vancouver’s first do-it-yourself bike store.

Initiated the first Bike Week in 1996, before focusing on Commuter Challenge.

Was awarded the first $1M grant from Vancity in 2001 for development of the Central Valley Greenway.

BEST celebrates over 25 years of history!

Check out our 25th anniversary e-zine

We’re Proud of Our Positive Changes

In 1997 we launched the Go Green Choices Program, working with Translink, the regional transportation authority, to promote sustainable transportation to workplaces. Two years later we spun Our Community Bikes into its own non-profit, PEDAL, which now runs summer bike camps for kids, refurbishes old bikes, and trains and teaches people to fix their own bikes. Also that year we started Street Reclaiming, Moving for Change, and Off-Ramp, an internationally awarded project promoting sustainable transportation in secondary schools.

In 2001 BEST was awarded the first one million dollar grant from Vancity, used to develop and leverage funding for the Central Valley Greenway, a 20 km long regional urban trail from Vancouver to New Westminster, which is heavily used today for cycling and walking. For this work, BEST received the City of Burnaby Gold Environmental Star. More importantly, the Greenway served as a catalyst for a constituency for active transportation.

We created and ran an annual celebratory campaign aimed at promoting bicycling in the Province, June is Bike Month, resulting in unprecedented media coverage and awareness. After running Bike Month for ten years, we felt enough ground had been covered, and moved from building awareness, to concentrating on making sustainable choices easier. In 2016 we brought the initiative back online in a small way to highlight the great cycling activities going on in the region.

More recently, BEST has focused on building viable social enterprises based on offering services to encourage and enable sustainable modes of transportation. These programs include STAR, Seniors Transportation Access Resources, Living Streets, a unique model of engaging recent immigrants to affect change to the pedestrian experience in their neighbourhood, Commuter Challenge, a free one week national initiative encouraging sustainable commuting, and The Bicycle Valet, free and safe bicycle parking for events. Beginning in 2016, BEST is offering Parkbus BC to transport people to BC Provincial Parks without the need for a car.

**Pop-ups**

1991

Created as a non-profit organization to promote cycling as a sustainable form of transportation. BEST was started by a group of dedicated cyclists, or “bicycle people” as we used to call ourselves. Our vision is vibrant, healthy communities built around walking, cycling, public transit, and ride/car shares. Our mission is the transformation to sustainable transportation.

1992

Coordinated Ride for the Environment events during National Environment Week in June of 1991 and 1992.

1992

Published the first Spoke ‘N Word Newsletter. Running until January 2000, Spoke ‘N’ Word was the source for all bicycle advocacy news in the Lower Mainland. Out of the ashes grew Momentum Magazine, first published in February 2001, and still going strong.

1993

Started Our Community Bikes, Vancouver’s first do-it-yourself bike store. In 1999 we spun OCB into its own non -profit, PEDAL.

PEDAL’s three core programs are:

Our Community Bikes – full service mechanic and retail bike shop.

Our Community Bike Club – bike skills for youth.

Pedals for the People – providing refurbished bikes to people in need.

1994

Change our mandate to all forms of sustainable transportation, rather than focusing solely on cycling. Also incorporated as a Canadian Charitable Organization. Our charity number is 140171216RR0001 .

1996

Ran the first Bike to Work Week Campaign, from 1996 to 1999, as a way to promote cycling and build awareness.

1997

Launched Go Green Choices to address the Lower Mainland’s air quality and transportation concerns through a media and communications campaign and supporting trip reduction initiatives. BEST ran the program until 1999, with a focus on employer outreach and alternative commuting modes. We ended the program when Translink was given the mandate to assume responsibility for Transportation Demand Management, allowing for a more coordinated and regional approach.

1997

Began coordinating Commuter Challenge in BC, a friendly competition including all forms of sustainable transportation. A national initiative, participants walk, cycle, take transit, ride share, car-share, or work from home during Canadian Environment Week (typically the first week of June), and track their commutes online for the chance to win great prizes!

1999

Developed Off Ramp, an internationally awarded project promoting sustainable transportation in secondary schools. The program trained and supported student leaders in developing strategies and activities to encourage their peers to travel to school by walking, cycling, skateboarding, rollerblading, taking transit or ride sharing. Off Ramp ran until 2003, in Victoria and Metro Vancouver.

2000

Bike Month, an annual celebratory campaign aimed at promoting bicycling in BC, was started. Bike Month built on and is testament to the success and growth of previous Bike Week and Bike to Work Week campaigns. June was officially declared as Bike Month in the Province of BC by the Minister of Transportation and Highways, Harry Lali. After building awareness with unprecedented media coverage, after ten years we felt enough ground had been covered, and focused our efforts on making sustainable transportation choices easier. Another feature of Bike Month was our annual Clean Commute Breakfast, a celebratory media event promoting sustainable commuting and volunteers tested out their pancake making skills!

2001

Awarded the first million dollar grant from Vancity for development of the Central Valley Greenway, a 20 km long regional urban trail from Vancouver to New Westminster. The vision was of an 20-kilometre long trail stretching from the False Creek in Vancouver through Burnaby and Coquitlam, and ending in New Westminster along the Fraser River, a unique, flat and direct pathway for cyclists, pedestrians and other travellers in the region.

BEST brought together many partners throughout the Greenway’s six years of development, including Transport Canada, Province of British Columbia, TransLink, Metro Vancouver, City of Vancouver, City of Burnaby, City of New Westminster, and Vancity.

The Central Valley Greenway officially opened on June 27, 2009, and is today used regularly by all modes of active transportation.

2002

Held Canada’s first National Transportation Demand Management (TDM) Conference. Bringing over 200 transportation professionals, elected officials and planners for three days of practical workshops, the conference advanced the field within Canada and lead to BEST launching its Building TDM Capacity project the following year. Through this project BEST helped Nanaimo, Prince George, Victoria, Whistler and the Lower Mainland significantly increase their capacity to deliver TDM programs and engage in larger policy discussions around sustainable transportation.

2003

Produced “How to Reclaim Your Street: A Community Guide”, to assist neighbourhood groups in their efforts to address local traffic concerns such as volume, speed, safety and loss of community. Through facets such as neighbourhood organizing, celebration, art, community designed streetscapes, direct action strategies, and individuals reducing their own car use, the guidebook helps people become active participants in finding solutions that help them rediscover streets as places to build an engaged, healthy and connected community.

2006

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2008

Coordinated the production of a cycling map for Richmond and YVR Airport, distributing 25, 000 copies to civic facilities, grocery and convenience stores and other community agencies.

2009

Central Valley Greenway is officially launched. For its work, BEST received the City of Burnaby Gold Environmental Star. More importantly, the Greenway served as a catalyst for a constituency for active transportation. Today, it is used regularly by people on bikes, foot, skateboards, rollerblades and other forms of active transportation.

2010

Operated The Bicycle Valet at eight locations for two weeks for the City of Vancouver during the 2010 Winter Olympics.

2011

Launched Living Streets, an educational engagement program focusing on promoting walking in urban environments. Living Streets currently operates in the City of Surrey.

2011

Launched STAR, Seniors Transportation Access and Resources, a province-wide coordinating initiative to help agencies provide transportation to seniors.

2014

The Bicycle Valet reaches the important milestone of 100, 000 bikes safely parked. We celebrated by giving away a bike to our lucky 100, 000th rider, and throwing a party to thank our volunteers, staff and sponsors. #bikevalet100k

2016

BEST celebrates 25 years of sustainable transportation!

Throughout its history, BEST has advocated for sustainable transportation and healthy communities. Some of our policy contributions include:

Working with local, regional, provincial and federal government agencies and decision-makers/policy-makers assessing sustainable transportation options and land-use planning, and the impact on air quality, traffic congestion, and energy consumption of various transportation options

Participating as a stakeholder in a variety of transportation planning bodies

Participation and advocacy for:

Bikes on Sky Train

Increased regional funding for cycling

the Canada Line

TransLink’s 3-year Strategic plan and 10-year Outlook

Sustainable transportation strategies for the Sea-to-Sky corridor and other 2010 Winter Olympic transportation legacies;

The federal government’s Urban Transportation Showcase;

Transport Canada’s Sustainable Development Strategy; and

The City of Vancouver’s Downtown Transportation Plan.

Transportation 2040 Vision

Education for voters on sustainable transportation and livable communities in 1999 and 2002 municipal elections

Impact of the Olympics on Citizens Coalition (IOCC), developing position papers on Olympic Transportation Legacies and Developing a Sustainable Transportation for the Sea to Sky Corridor.

BC’s Smart Growth on the Ground and Smart Growth Canada

Member of the Better Transit and Transportation Coalition and Moving in Livable Region