



Cities for Everyone supports more affordable housing and transportation, in order to provide security, mobility and opportunity for people with all incomes and abilities

www.citiesforeveryone.org

Board of Directors, Committee of the Whole
Capital Regional District
CRDBoard@crd.bc.ca
Victoria, BC
8 December 2020
RE: **South Island Transportation Strategy**

Dear CRD Board,

Cities for Everyone is an independent organization that supports affordable, inclusive and sustainable housing and transportation policies in the South Vancouver Island region. The *South Island Transportation Strategy*, recently released by the BC Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure, provides an opportunity for strategic transportation planning in this region. We have the following six recommendations to ensure that this strategy maximizes efficiency and social equity.

1. **Accelerate implementation of our regional transit plan.** BC Transit's [Victoria Transit Future Plan](#) provides a strategic vision for improving our region's transit network. It includes increased service (more frequency, destinations and operating hours), higher operating speeds (bus lanes, signal priority and faster loading), more comfort and amenities (better buses, stops and stations), plus improved user information and payment systems. It can include [fare discounts](#) for lower-income residents. The only problem is its 25-year completion target. Increased funding will allow faster implementation.
2. **Offer frequent and affordable interregional transit services.** Public transit service between the CRD and areas north is infrequent and expensive. Four buses depart Duncan between 5:30 and 6:30 am, and return between 3:15 and 5:15 pm weekdays. There is no reverse-commute or evening service, and only three weekend trips. The fare is \$10 each way, about four times a local fare. Service to Nanaimo is even worse. The Island Connector makes one or two daily trips, with \$24-34 one-way fares. This combination of poor service and high prices explains why transit serves less than 0.1% of trips over the Malahat.

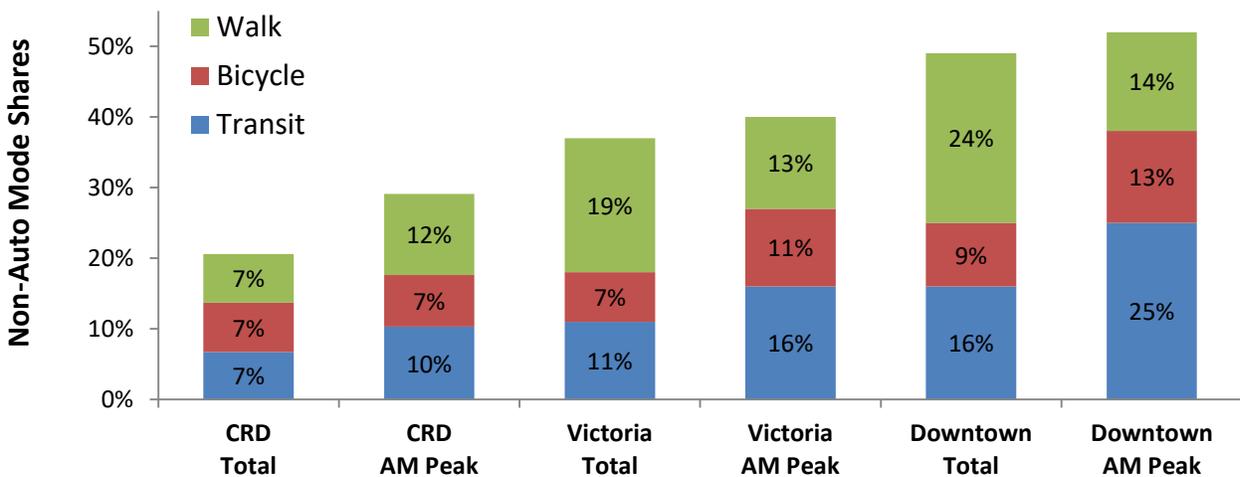
Experience elsewhere indicates that many interregional travellers will choose bus transit if it is convenient and affordable. For example, according to the CRD's *2017 Capital Regional District Origin Destination Household Travel Survey*, 12% of total trips and 22% of peak-period trips between Sooke and Victoria are by transit. On this corridor, the #61 bus makes 30 daily round trips between 6:00 am and midnight, with \$2.50 one-way fares or \$5.00 for an unlimited-use daily pass. Similarly, 20-40% of weekday trips between Fraser Valley towns, such as Langley and Pitt Meadows, and Vancouver, are by public transit. Service on this corridor is frequent and fares are just \$3-12 each way.

Frequent (at least hourly service between 6:00 am and midnight) bus service between Victoria and Nanaimo, with prices no more than two local fares (\$5.00 maximum each way), is the most cost effective and beneficial way to improve mobility on this corridor. According to a recent study, [Rethinking Malahat Solutions](#), frequent and affordable bus service, with Transportation Demand Management (TDM) incentives, could attract 10-30% of trips, and only cost \$10-18 million in annual public expenses. This is cheaper than other potential improvements, and provides more benefits including reduced driver stress, consumer savings and affordability, more independent mobility for non-drivers, reduced congestion, parking savings, energy savings, emission reductions and habitat protection. It directly benefits disadvantaged groups, and so helps achieve social equity goals, and motorists benefit from reduced congestion, risk and chauffeuring burdens.

- 3. Improve Active Transportation (Walking and Bicycling) Conditions.** Walking and bicycling play important roles in an efficient and equitable transport system. They provide basic mobility, connections to motorized modes, and healthy exercise. Improvements include sidewalks and crosswalks where lacking, more bike lanes and parking, separated paths, plus education, enforcement and encouragement programs. The CRD has a [Regional Pedestrian & Cycling Masterplan](#), and local governments are improving walking and bicycling conditions, but implementation is slow due to inadequate funding.

How much should we invest in active transport programs? According to the 2017 CRD travel survey, 14% of trips in the region, 26% of trips in Victoria, and 33% of downtown trips are by active modes (graph below). The survey also found that about 10% of regional households, 20% of Victoria households, and 40% of downtown households are car-free. Provincial, regional and local governments have ambitious goals to increase active travel. The Province has a target of doubling active mode shares by 2030. The CRD has targets that by 2038, 30% of regional trips and 50% of trips in densely populated areas will be by active modes. Victoria has a target that by 2041, at least 60% of all local trips are by walking, cycling and public transit. Similarly, the City of Saanich has targets to approximately double active travel mode share by 2036 and triple it by 2050. Achieving these goals will require increasing active travel investments.

CRD Mode Shares ([2017 CRD Origin-Destination Study](#))



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- 4. Implement Transportation Demand Management (TDM).** The CRD can work with provincial and local governments to implement TDM incentives. In 2008 the CRD established a largely unimplemented regional [TDM strategy](#), and the [South Island Transportation Strategy](#) identifies various TDM programs that could be implemented in our region. Some local organizations have successful TDM programs: UVic’s [Sustainable Transport program](#) and Camosun College’s [TDM program](#) significantly reduced vehicle travel to these campuses. [California](#) and [Washington](#) states, and some [cities](#), support TDM and mandate Commute Trip Reduction programs for some businesses. [Washington State’s Commute Trip Reduction law](#) has significantly increased transit ridership and reduced automobile travel in the Puget Sound region.
- 5. Support Transit Oriented Development (TOD).** Transit improvements and local policy reforms to create compact, walkable neighborhoods along frequent transit. This type of development maximizes the number of jobs and homes located in areas where residents can reduce their driving. [Consumer surveys](#) indicate that many households want to live in such neighborhoods, and many businesses want to locate in TODs in order to improve customer and employee access, and reduce parking costs. Peer communities, including [Edmonton](#), [Hamilton](#) and [Saskatoon](#), have TOD guidelines and incentives.

6. **Eliminate or reduce parking minimums.** Local policy reforms can reduce parking requirements and more efficiently manage parking supply. Eliminating parking minimums does not eliminate off-street parking, it simply allows businesses to decide how many spaces to supply based on consumer demands. It allows *unbundling* (rent parking spaces separately from building space), so car-free households are no longer forced to pay for costly parking facilities that they do not need. This can significantly increase housing affordability and reduce traffic problems. Reducing parking supply and shifting to cost-recovery [pricing](#) typically reduces affected vehicle trips by [10-30%](#), and allows more compact and efficient development.

These six recommendations are consistent with local, regional and provincial goals to improve affordable mobility, increase traffic safety and public health, reduce climate emissions, and support rural economic development. We encourage you to consider them when developing CRD policies and programs.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Todd Litman". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Todd" and last name "Litman" clearly legible.

Todd Litman
Cities for Everyone