

Small City Transit

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Independent
mobility provides
an array of
opportunities for
individuals.

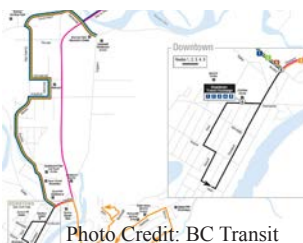


Figure 1: The downtown core in Squamish, BC was the location of a smart growth project to improve transportation options.

Creating public transit and carshare options in small communities can greatly benefit the mobility of pedestrians and improve the accessibility of cities.

Small and rural communities tend to be heavily dependent on single passenger car transport for personal usage. These communities are largely planned to accommodate the automobile and increase the efficiency of traffic; having detrimental effects on the pedestrian landscape, as well as limits transport options for individuals without access to a personal vehicle. Multimodal initiatives offer several advantages to small communities to increase **viable transport options**.

Multimodal Communities and Smart Growth

Multimodal planning is intended to help increase travel options for residents of small and rural communities by focussing on residents' needs and building links between emerging opportunities:

Multimodal planning involves an integrated set of improvements to non-automobile modes so non-drivers have affordable independent mobility. It requires changing many common planning practices to give more consideration to non-automobile transport options. This provides various direct and indirect benefits to individuals and communities. (p.4)¹

Multimodal communities rely on smart growth principles to help achieve better mobility by working within a development framework that provides complementary transport and infrastructure.² Smart growth principles can assist communities in improving the active transportation, public transportation, and ridesharing options that exist or that have potential.

Smart Growth in Squamish, British Columbia

Many small communities have relished in the benefits of using smart growth principles to develop multimodal communities.

Squamish, BC was the site of a smart growth project by a non-governmental organization. The goal was to improve travel options for a more holistic downtown core that would allow for a variety of functions, including places to work and live. The results were a centralized transit hub, a trail network, and a new truck corridor among all of the stakeholders and the public.³



Figure 2: BC Transit buses service small communities throughout the province.



Figure 3: Taxi buses in Salaberry-de-Valleyfield, QC are available for bookings on social media.

Public and Social Transportation in British Columbia and Quebec

“Transit systems support local businesses by helping commuters get to work, bringing shoppers to stores, supporting dynamic downtown cores, and meeting the needs of festivals and other events”(p.2).⁴ Transit systems in small communities can be developed as conventional transit systems or as other forms of social transportation, such as chartered vans and other vehicles.

Public transit in small and rural communities can:

- offer independence through mobility to older adults
- increase customer bases for local stores and services

Several small communities in British Columbia operate under the BC Transit system that has negotiated agreements to describe service standards, fares, and other aspects of the operation. BC Transit shares costs with municipalities and local agencies to help keep transit systems affordable⁵. Social transportation is viable in communities when a conventional transit system is not. In Salaberry-de-Valleyfield, Quebec, a taxi bus exists as a means of public transport to transport passengers between fixed locations.⁶ Passengers can book a ride through a multitude of channels including social media, phone apps, and transport agencies.

Regional Transit in Kawartha Lakes, Ontario

Many small communities are located in close proximity to another small city or larger urban center. Providing mobility options between each would allow all residents to access more services and destinations. Regional communities may be able to negotiate cost-shared service extensions through intermunicipal partnerships.⁷

The City of Kawartha Lakes, Ontario operates a regional transit service called Dial-a-Ride. The service connects five regional communities in the area via ten stops on two circular routes. Operated by Mole Ground Transportation, the service is available to the general public, and for registered customers will travel to additional destinations within 150 meters of the defined route.⁸

Social transportation is a strong alternative to conventional transit systems in small communities.



Figure 4: Kawartha Lake residents boarding the regional transit bus.

Figure 5:
The New
Westminster
skytrain
station houses
several cars
part of the
carshare
system.



Photo Credit: Wikipedia

Figure 6:
GOManitoba
offers carpooling
options to assist
people in their
commutes.

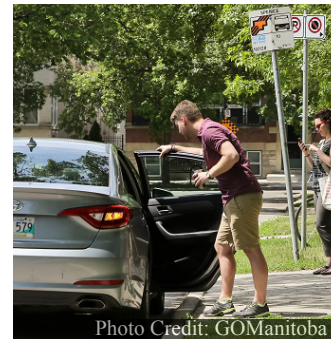


Photo Credit: GOManitoba

Carshare in New Westminister, British Columbia and GO Manitoba

Carsharing is emerging as a popular transportation choice in both urban areas and rural communities.

Carsharing is cost-effective and motivates people to also engage in active transportation and public transit.

Carsharing is designed for local users in support of community transportation goals...to decrease personal car ownership, reduce vehicle distance travelled, improve urban land use and development, and **provide affordable access to vehicles** for all sections of the community. (p.1)⁹

Carsharing is a membership-based service that grants members access to a dispersed network of shared vehicles at self-service locations. It is intended to accommodate short travel destinations while being coupled with additional modes of transportation, such as walking and transit. Modo offers cars in 16 locations in New Westminister, British Columbia; as well as zip-car and designated EVO parking spots.

Carshare shares the same benefits as carpool options as both work to reduce congestion, mitigate environmental impacts, and provide cost effective means of transportation. Both carshare and carpool have the ability to be arranged through websites, mobile applications, and carpooling agencies. GO Manitoba offers carpool options that can be organized and booked through their website for communities throughout Manitoba.¹⁰



Photo Credit: American Striping

Figure 7: Many businesses and employers offer priority parking to carpool and carshare vehicles.

Final Thoughts

Transportation options play a vital role in the liveability of small communities. Small and rural communities are capable of providing their residents with multiple transport options that are more sustainable and cost-friendly than personal vehicle ownership. Public transit, social transportation, regional connections, and carshare options act complementarily to active transportation to increase mobility and accessibility. The promotion of each of these transport methods through planning, initiatives, and implementing facilities can help to develop partnerships and attract positive media coverage that can lead to funding sources.¹¹ Granting self-determination and independent mobility to residents through affordable transportation options can enhance the pedestrian landscape that is impacted by the dominance of the automobile.

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