

# TRANSIT VISION 2040 — FROM VISION TO ACTION

TRANSIT VISION 2040 defines a future in which public transit maximizes its contribution to quality of life with benefits that support a vibrant and equitable society, a complete and compact community form, a dynamic and efficient economy, and a healthy natural environment.



## THEME 5: ENSURING FINANCIAL HEALTH

STRATEGIC  
DIRECTION

**5.3**

Maximize municipal government support for transit operating costs

## ENSURING FINANCIAL HEALTH

Strategic Direction 5.3:

### Maximize municipal government support for transit operating costs

*For several reasons, including the anticipated growth in passenger volumes, the future requirement for greatly increased operating support is inevitable, even when transit has a higher level of direct cost-recovery from users than other sectors. The challenge will be to price transit competitively, a goal that could be partly achieved by distinguishing between transit's social and economic functions.*

*Transit benefits both users and non-users. Apart from the important contribution of transit to a cleaner environment, reduced congestion and increased mobility for everyone, transit plays a strong societal role. Seniors and people with disabilities can continue to lead full lives with fare discounts and accessible transit services available to them. It is not hard to make the case that transit improves the livability of communities for all—and as such the costs should be shared.*

*The key to sustained support for transit operating costs is community awareness of the overall benefits and agreement to service standards or guidelines that cover social as well as ridership and revenue generation objectives. To a great extent, the balance of government-supported operating costs would be offset by transit's social, economic and environmental benefits (e.g. congestion reduction, air quality improvements). Clearly communicating this message to decision makers is one way of maximizing their willingness to support transit's financial needs.*

**Service standards or guidelines should be adopted** for regular transit and for specialized door-to-door transit that provide an acceptable balance between the costs covered by users and those covered through tax revenues.

Service standards and performance measures, including the projected revenue:cost ratio, should be developed to reflect the communities values as part of a three or five-year **Transit Master Plan** that should be updated annually.

**Ongoing public relations programs** that emphasize the transit system's role in improving the livability of the community for all should be included in budgets.

# PERFORMANCE INDICATORS AND TARGETS

## Indicator 1: Transit Master Plans with Service Standards and Performance Measures

### Service standards Target:

By 2020, all municipalities will have a rolling **Transit Master Plan**, reviewed and updated annually, that includes transit **service standards** covering hours of service, minimum service frequencies, maximum walking distances and cost-effectiveness.

## Indicator 2: Promoting the Value of Transit in the Community

### Promotion Target:

By 2020 all transit systems will be making efforts to **communicate the social value of transit in the community** to underscore the value of taxpayers' dollars invested in the system.

# INITIATIVES AND BEST PRACTICES

**Sustaining Local Financial Support** for transit systems can be approached by putting service standards in place that balance social, economic and ridership objectives. Targets can also be set for revenue:cost ratio in order to balance the amount of funding supplied by those who use the service; for example, a revenue:cost ratio target of 50:50 has been adopted in Ottawa and several Quebec communities. A lower target may be more suitable in smaller communities where a 50:50 ratio is unrealistic.

## St. Albert, Alberta

St. Albert has identified a clear set of **service standards** designed to guide the provision of optimal, affordable, service for its customers considering **geographical coverage, minimized transfers** and **minimized waiting time** between transfers, **minimized travel time**, ease of **customers' understanding, minimized duplication** of service and **minimized vehicle requirements**. The service standards define minimum levels of service in core service hours.

The service standards are accompanied by the use of performance measures that include **revenue:cost ratio** and trips per capita.



## Vancouver, British Columbia

TransLink's comprehensive **Transit Service Guidelines** address a range of customer needs including **minimizing walking distances** to transit, providing **convenient and direct connections** between major destinations, and ensure **passenger comfort**. Guidelines range from requiring that 90% of residences and jobs in urban areas are located a maximum of 450 metres walking distance to a bus stop, to ensuring that transit trips between adjacent town centres are connected with direct transit service with no transfers.

TransLink aims to continually improve its transit services and **regularly review** its service standards to best meet customer needs.



**Promoting the Community Benefits of Transit** encourages overall public support. A CUTA survey revealed that the public considers the most valuable attributes of transit to be the accessibility, affordability and equitability that it provides to the community as a whole. Transit systems should continuously work to enhance this public awareness of transit's wide-ranging long term benefits. Promotional campaigns and informative websites and signage have been used by a number of Canadian transit systems in order to achieve and maintain public and municipal support.

## Montreal, Quebec

In 2009, **STM** implemented a new **branding strategy** that focused on relaying transit's broader **community and environmental benefits** to members of the public. This initiative was propelled by research that revealed a public view of the importance of environmental responsibility in the activities of corporations and public entities, and a realization that the transit system had not been effectively communicating its commitment to sustainability.

STM's "**Society in Motion**" campaign involved a visual branding strategy, including signage on vehicles communicating the equivalent number of single occupancy vehicles that would be taken off the road: "Un bus = 50 autos de moins sur la route" and "Un métro = 715 autos".

The campaign was paired by intensified environmental actions, including the use of biodegradable detergents for bus washing, retreading tires to increase their lifespan, and completing the OPUS smart card implementation.



# MUNICIPAL FUNDING CHECKLIST

- Does the municipality have a 3-5 year Transit Master Plan in place that includes service standards or guidelines and revenue:cost indicators and is updated and reviewed annually?
  
- Is an effort being made through promotional programs to underline the societal benefits of transit in your community?

This guide is one in a series designed to assist CUTA members with implementation of *Transit Vision 2040* strategic directions for which they are in a leadership role. It incorporates performance indicators used in annual reporting at a national level to track progress towards 2040 targets. While CUTA is taking the lead for ten of these 27 strategic directions, the remaining 17 fall within the responsibility of other stakeholders, and these guides have been developed in order to provide support to CUTA members and encourage progress toward the *Vision*. The guides summarize the goals and objectives of each strategic direction, propose performance indicators and targets, illustrate best practices from transit systems across the country and provide a checklist to assist members in reviewing their progress.