

City of Vancouver: Transportation 2040

Transportation Association of Canada Award Full Submission
(Sustainable Urban Transportation Award)

Introduction

The City of Vancouver recently completed Transportation 2040, an update to its citywide transportation plan. The plan establishes a high-level vision that looks out to 2040 and sets more detailed policy and priorities for the next 10 to 15 years. Transportation 2040 was adopted by Vancouver City Council on October 31, 2012, and staff were immediately directed to begin work on its implementation.

Transportation 2040 builds upon the success of the previous plan (1997), which committed the City to not expanding road space despite a growing population and workforce. Since then, the total number of car trips into the city and downtown has decreased, despite growth in total person trips. Walking, cycling, and transit have been the fastest growing modes.

The key long-term goals of Transportation 2040 are to:

- increase the mode share of travel by walking, cycling and transit to at least two-thirds of all trips from approximately 44% today; and
- work toward zero traffic-related fatalities.

The plan strongly recognizes Vancouver's role as an international port and the dual transportation functions of moving people and goods. It affirms the City will prioritize walking, cycling, and transit, and emphasizes different scales of goods movement, from long-distance global goods movement to local deliveries and couriers.

More than in previous plans, Transportation 2040 highlights the importance of public space for people to gather, interact, sojourn, and enjoy. It links transportation not just to mobility, but to public health, safety, accessibility, vibrant and resilient communities, and environmental well-being. The plan includes a dedicated section on Encouragement, Education, and Enforcement, as well as a detailed implementation section with additional background and discussion of emerging priorities.

The actions were refined to connect with other City initiatives and an ongoing dialogue at community and stakeholder meetings. The second phase of consultation confirmed strong support for the policies and actions, and the plan was approved with unanimous support by Council.

Sustainable Urban Transportation

Transportation 2040 is about more than just mobility. The plan includes a number of goals that fall under the three pillars of sustainability. Together they address the challenges Vancouver faces and support an economically, environmentally, and socially sustainable city. The goals support each other across issues; striving for a social goal, for example, will also move forward economic and environmental goals and advance overall sustainability.

The development process for Transportation 2040 grew out of the preceeding Greenest City 2020 Action Plan, adopted by Vancouver City Council in July 2011. Consultation and plan development flowed from the former to the latter, aligning with the transportation goals in the Greenest City.

Transportation 2040, however, sets more aggressive targets beyond those included in Greenest City. By 2040, at least two-thirds of all trips to or entirely within Vancouver will be made on foot, bike, or transit. The total number of trips by sustainable modes will grow significantly, while motor vehicle volumes will slightly decline (see Appendix for a graphical depiction). These mode share targets were based on a sub-region analysis of the City using trip diary data and assessed potential growth for walking, cycling, and transit.

This mode shift will make significant progress toward the City's environmental goals and promote other forms of sustainability. The success of the previous plan in reducing automobile trips benefited from a realization that Vancouver cannot accommodate increasing motor vehicle traffic on limited road space. Impacts to neighbourhoods will continue to be addressed (with targeted traffic calming) while encouraging active lifestyles and promoting healthy communities. To reinforce the plan's emphasis on protecting vulnerable road users, there is also a safety goal to work toward zero traffic-related fatalities. This goal is supported by Pedestrian and Cycling Safety Studies, as well as a dedicated section on Encouragement, Education, and Enforcement.

The implementation strategies and priorities for active transportation will be refreshed as frequently as every year, recognizing the flexibility and potential for rapid change these modes represent, as well as their potential to make immediate improvements to health, safety, and quality of life. Cycling network priorities will be developed and mapped on a rolling five-year horizon, striking a balance between flexibility and certainty to stakeholders.

To make optimal use of scarce resources, the plan relies heavily on targeted investments in areas of high current or potential use, as well as where emerging or ongoing safety issues exist. Low-cost pilots and coordination with other work projects will help save money and effort. Collaboration with partners will continue to be key to achieving the plan's goals.

The plan includes specific and measurable targets that align with the larger goals of the plan. The emphasis on mode share targets is consistent with continuing to shift away from private automobile travel by directing new trips toward walking, cycling and transit and improving lower-cost, more efficient transportation options. By achieving a slight reduction in private automobile traffic, there will be more room for a substantial growth in the (lower impact) goods and service vehicles that are necessary to support a growing port city.

Innovation

Through Transportation 2040, the City of Vancouver has laid out the most aggressive targets and advanced strategies when compared to its Canadian peers. Vancouver has consistently achieved its mode share targets ahead of schedule, and now introduces a vision for more than half of trips by walking, cycling, and transit by 2020, and more than two-thirds by 2040. Vancouver is also adopting a “Vision Zero” approach to traffic safety to take action against preventable deaths that are too often considered to be accidents.

For walking, the plan continues to pioneer low-cost, high-impact public space within road rights-of-way, further developing the City’s pilot parklet program and expanding into larger pavement-to-plaza installations. For cycling, the plan will result in the development of rigorous criteria for “all ages and abilities” cycling facilities that set the bar several notches higher than painted bike lanes. For transit, the plan emphasizes the importance of critical investments in high-capacity transit and an approach that targets particular intersections and reliability issues to improve overall schedule adherence and travel times. For motor vehicles, the plan initiates a broad parking review to eliminate minimum requirements downtown and around transit, while setting other requirements based on mode share targets.

Regional road pricing is identified as an advocacy priority, especially in support of transit investments. Other funding mechanisms could include increased fuel taxes, carbon taxes, and vehicle registration fees, while avoiding increased property taxes and supporting mode shift. In the same vein, the plan supports reforms toward pay-as-you-drive automobile insurance and market-based metered parking and residential parking permits.

These plan directions and more were developed through a comprehensive public consultation process consisting of two phases. The “Listening & Learning” phase ran from mid-May to mid-June 2011 and the “Directions & Discussion” phase ran from early June to mid-July 2012, during which feedback on draft transportation policies and actions was collected. More than 8000 participants were reached in the first phase, and more than 10,000 participated in the second phase.

A wide range of consultation approaches was used, ranging from town hall meetings to neighbourhood and stakeholder workshops to artist-facilitated on-street charettes. An online questionnaire was included as part of the Phase 2 engagement process to gauge the level of public support and receive comments related to the draft directions (see Appendix for graphical depictions). The suggested refinements, as well as more detailed submissions, were then used to develop the plan that City Council ultimately adopted.

In addition to individual plan directions, Transportation 2040 includes a dedicated section on implementation principles, tracking progress, and emerging areas of focus. Plan staff have also been extended to work on implementation strategies for more than one hundred actions, including a comprehensive parking review, the development of “all ages and abilities” cycling standards, and the initiation of multiple programs to increase pedestrian priority and public space in Vancouver.

Along with ongoing data collection efforts, the City of Vancouver is working to establish an ongoing transportation panel survey to track a representative cohort of residents through time. This will add rigour and depth beyond existing Trip Diary surveys to monitor shifts in travel behaviour at an individual level. Regular user surveys and studies of travel behaviour for customers and employees of businesses will help expand the range of data available.

Since many transportation issues cut across modes and have defined geographic scopes, the section on emerging areas of focus explores how groups of actions will apply to a particular issue or area in the City. For example, the False Creek Bridges have been identified for improvements to walking and cycling conditions, exploring opportunities to reallocate road space in areas where vehicle volumes have declined. At the eastern edge of the downtown, the potential removal of the Georgia and Dunsmuir Viaducts would shape the future land use of the area by linking the CBD to an at-grade street network through northeast False Creek, and by providing opportunities to improve connectivity to the downtown core for pedestrians, cyclists, transit, and goods movement.

In the first half of 2013, staff will report back to Council on:

- improving walking and cycling over the False Creek Bridges;
- creating pedestrian-priority streets, parklets, and plazas;
- removing the Georgia and Dunsmuir viaducts;
- improving safety for people on foot and bicycle;
- prioritizing walking and cycling through intersection changes;
- drafting new all ages and abilities design standards;
- planning for a subway under Broadway to UBC; and
- identifying new funding mechanisms to support rapid transit.

Other major work items include a comprehensive reform of parking requirements and the formulation of design standards for the public realm.

Transferability

Many elements of Vancouver's previous transportation plan are now common practice, such as positioning walking and cycling at the top of a hierarchy of modes, and the City has further committed to their principles.

The new plan, however, goes beyond best practice to raise the bar for active transportation. Transportation 2040 recognizes public space as intrinsically linked to transportation by sharing public rights-of-way, and other cities can similarly think about opportunities to repurpose road space to meet transportation goals indirectly, as well as to simply celebrate the city.

The plan's approach to cycling for all ages and abilities positions the high-quality, "experimental" facilities other North American cities have begun to introduce as the new normal. Building off of Vancouver's success with local street bikeways, the new approach relies on significant diversionary traffic calming on local streets as well as separated lanes on busier streets. The plan also directs staff to incorporate separated bicycle facilities into the design and construction of all new major roads.

Of Transportation 2040's fundamental principles, the repurposing of existing space is the most broadly applicable. From reallocating lanes on the False Creek Bridges to improve walking and cycling conditions to evaluating rush-hour parking restrictions to allow for the installation of parklets, this principle can be applied across scales and modes, both within and outside transportation. Existing infrastructure can often be put to new purposes to serve a changing context, both to adapt to conditions quickly and at a low-cost, but also to demonstrate more significant changes.

For example, the 2010 Winter Olympic Games demonstrated that the Georgia and Dunsmuir Viaducts were not critical to the transportation system's functioning. A separated cycling facility was quickly added to provide a connection that did not previously exist. This informed a plan for the potential removal of the Viaducts, providing this important cycling connection in a different way, while rerouting other traffic to better support livability and land-use objectives for the area. Other reallocations may be as simple as widening a sidewalk through a chokepoint by removing a parking space.

Another principle is design for all ages and abilities. This lens is applied particularly strongly to cycling in Transportation 2040, and in that case called for facilities designed to protect riders through separation or significant traffic

calming. In other jurisdictions, as in Vancouver, the lens could equally apply to walking, such as in the timing of placement of traffic signals to provide safe and plentiful locations to cross the street. When applied to transit, the lens produces something similar to Transportation 2040's call for equal transit outcomes: that high-accessibility services should strive to match what is provided by any other transit route. In a milder form, other jurisdictions may find it useful to inform the design of bus stops or choice of stop spacings.

Vancouver's close integration of transportation and land use is another highly transferable planning principle and outcome. In Vancouver, this has led to transit-focused development patterns that provide both towers and a pedestrian-scaled streetscape through the tower and podium typology – with high-quality walking and cycling networks benefiting from the compact urban forms and crisply creased urban fabric.

Vancouver has continued to pioneer an urbanism and transportation approach that work hand in hand to create a compact, walkable core surrounded by vibrant, mixed-use neighbourhoods. By demonstrating continued leadership in sustainability and urban realm design, Transportation 2040 provides an example of a package of approaches that other cities may consider adopting and adapting in meeting their own goals.

Added Value

With the help of an organizational structure based around progressive disclosure, the current document can be read at different depths by different audiences. Each chapter begins with a vision statement and an explanation of the significance of a mode or area of interest. Directions are first presented as a rolled-up list of policies at a glance, and then a detailed exploration of actions in detail. Policies use a two level hierarchy with background and rationale; this in turn groups specific actions below the relevant policy.

Since adoption by Council, staff have begun to work on developing additional versions of the plan, similar to the various formats in which the Greenest City 2020 Action Plan has been presented. These highly visual versions will incorporate the photos and infographics collected during development of the plan for presentations and open houses into editions with a specific focuses.

Transportation 2040 was reviewed by a panel of transportation experts and developed in with an advisory committee of local stakeholders. Their feedback was key to plan development, just as their continued support was critical to the adoption of the plan by Vancouver City Council. Collaboration with health professionals, for example, strengthened policies to encourage active transportation in order to enable both transportation and health benefits

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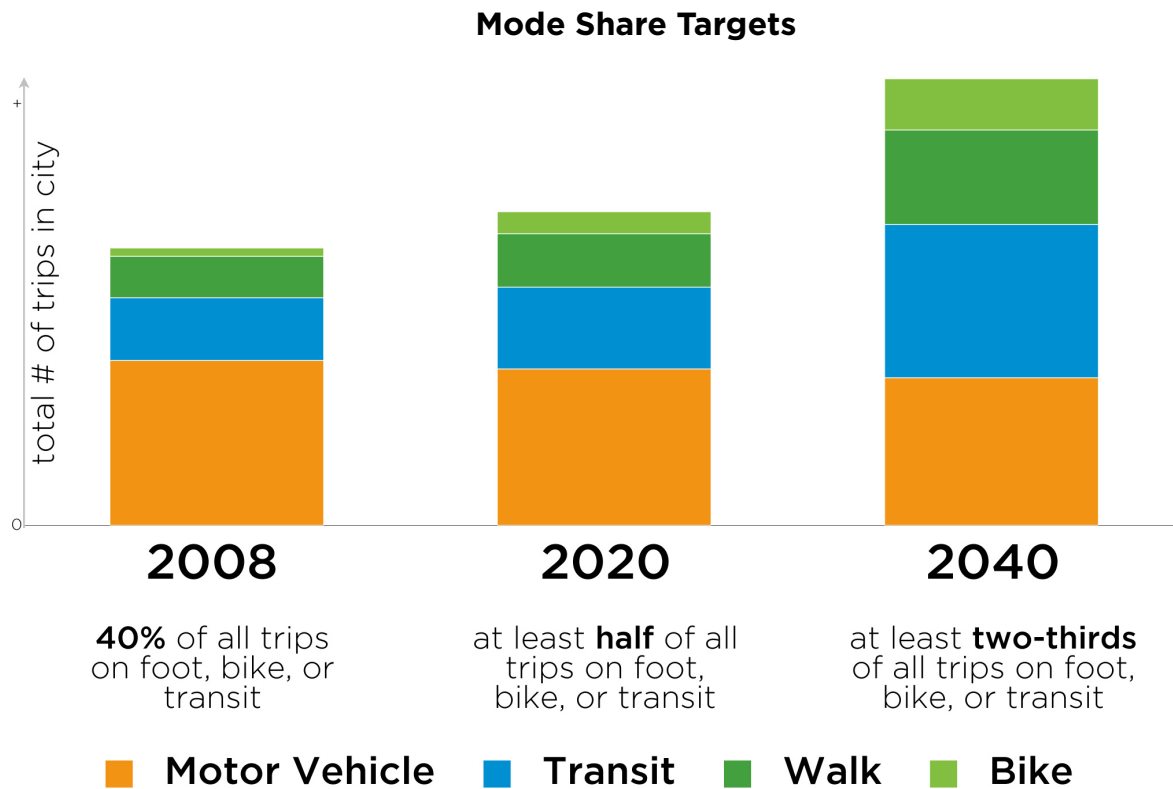
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SFU City Program
SHIFT Urban Cargo Delivery
TransLink
University of British Columbia
Urban Development Institute
Vancouver BIA Partnership
Vancouver Board of Trade
Vancouver Coastal Health
Vancouver Economic Development
Vancouver International Airport
Vancouver Public Space Network
Vancouver School Board
VCC Student's Union
Vancouver Taxi Association
Women's Advisory Committee

Appendix



Phase 2: How We Reached Out

Consultation Activity	Quantity	Participants**
Stakeholder & Community Meetings	23	454 attendees
Public Events	29	2,929 participants
Website	1	5,127 visitors
Online Questionnaire	1	944 responses
Emails	1 account	98 emails
Twitter	1 account	356 followers
Facebook	1 website	293 likes
TOTAL	59	10,201 participants

Support for the Draft Directions, by Section

