

SOCIAL BENEFITS OF SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORTATION

Having a car or driver's license does not guarantee mobility:

The car may be needed by another household member
A member of a car-owning household may not have their own licence
Those that do have a car and license may not be night-time or winter drivers

Having public transport can benefit those who already use a car:

They don't have to act as unpaid taxi drivers for family
They don't have to provide informal taxi service for neighbours
Their businesses can benefit from tourists who do not drive

Sustainable transport gets people together:

People can get out from "behind the glass" and meet each other
Different "walks of life" meet - quite literally!
Businesses can locate closer together if they need less parking

Two social worlds have been diverging ever since the advent of the car, as locations of goods and services have responded to the needs and preferences of car users. The lifestyle implications are profound:

Shopping has moved to car-oriented retail tracts. This often means: *No car, no shopping!*
New hospitals are built outside or between town centres. *Don't dare walk to the doctor!*
Schools are no longer located to function as the heart of a community. *No car, no access.*
The housing market largely assumes access to a car. *No car, little choice.*
The walking environment becomes dangerous, ugly, boring and polluted. *You're a loser!*

In fact, a two-class society has emerged in rural Canada:

Those with easy access to a car (the upper class)
Those without (the lower class)

Until only a few years ago, and perhaps still in our rural areas, the idea of someone actually *choosing* not to own or drive a car has been considered odd.

But now there are signs of change, and we ignore them at our peril:

Rising fuel prices - Are incomes - especially pensions - rising to keep pace?
Aging population - reluctance to drive at night or in winter; health restrictions
Concern over greenhouse gas emissions - smaller rural population, but greater distances

But I'm straying into other panelists' areas of expertise, so I'll stop while I'm ahead!

QUOTES THAT SAY IT ALL...

1. "Because this bus is being abandoned, I've decided to move into the city." (E. Shore resident)
2. "The sport-utility vehicle has replaced the dining room table as the venue for family interaction."
3. "We're constantly on the move." - rural commutershed wife - not in HRM
4. "I really need this bus. I have only a small income and this bus is my independence. This is the only way I have to get to town for business and appointments. (I don't like to always be asking friends to give up their day to take me.)" E. Shore
5. "The people who rely on this bus would be more than willing to pay a higher fee per trip to travel on it." - E. Shore
6. "Raise the bus fares.... If you take the bus off, my neighbor will charge \$100 - that's correct - \$100 to take me to Halifax for a dentist/doctor appointment." - E. Shore
7. "I have used this service since age 8 yrs. to visit family. Unable to obtain transportation but knowing the Eastern Shore Bus ran was a blessing. It will be sadly missed and affected by *[sic]* my family." - E. Shore
8. "If there is no longer a bus running I will not get home to see my family due to lack of transportation and funds." - E. Shore
9. "Smoother, safer roads for drivers in Halifax County will be the result when work is completed on two paving contracts awarded by the Department of Transportation and Public Works. One contract, worth \$3,188,583, is for repaving on two sections of Trunk 7" (NSDOTPW Press release, August 2006)
10. "The annual subsidy to save the Parrsboro bus would have been equivalent to the cost of enough new pavement to park the bus on." - Transport 2000 Atlantic
11. "The annual subsidy needed to save the tri-weekly Eastern Shore Shuttle (less than \$45,000 for a 195-km bus route) was found to be 1.4% of the provincial spending announced to pave a short section of Highway 7 around the same time the bus was discontinued. What good is a smooth road, if you have a sore thumb?"
12. "Even though I answered no to transit service, we own our car and drive to the city, but I know there is a great need for this service. A young woman said to me last fall that she was lost when the bus run was stopped. She had no way to get necessary school supplies or x-mas shopping done for her family. I had others who had no transportation to medical appointments. - West Quoddy resident

13. "At present metro transit wouldn't be for me, as yet my husband and I are able to get around in our own vehicle. When we get more in our wonderful "Golden Years" transit maybe our only option." - Sheet Harbour resident

14. "I do not have a car and I have to pay my neighbour \$50.00, yes \$50.00 every time I have to go to Halifax or Dartmouth for medical or dental appointments. I used to use the Eastern Shore bus but that was taken out of service the end of September 2006. We need a public bus!" - Pleasant Harbour resident

15. "The last day of our bus service in Sheet Harbour two ladies in their 70's were crying because they would have no way to get to Halifax for their medical appointments. This struck me as a very sad day for Sheet Harbour and area. I am 69 years old and we have always had a bus service. It seems we are going back wards." - Sheet Harbour resident

16. "The transportation issue is of prime importance as it impacts after-school programs, low-income families, and seniors. Medical appointments and even grocery shopping can be major problems for persons without their own means of transportation." - Sheet Harbour resident

17. "The transit service would be very valuable, not everyone has a vehicle and can't afford to hire one because most people charge between \$40 to \$50 to go as far as Sheet Harbour." - Ecum Secum West resident (note this is not even to Halifax!)

18. "We are new to the area and we are concerned that there is absolutely no form of public transportation on the eastern shore. Also, family members would definitely use the service if it were available. I believe people need an option for transportation to and from the city especially for medical appointments." East Quoddy resident

EXAMPLES AND STORIES

A. Walking into New Glasgow from the Acadian Lines bus stop

B. Woman who decided to move from the Eastern Shore into metro Halifax when the bus abandonment was approved.

SURVEY HIGHLIGHTS

EASTERN SHORE, SEPT 12-16 (WEEKDAYS), 2006

C. Over 80% of riders used the bus more than once a month.

D. Half used the bus at least once a week.

E. Over a third used it more than once a week.

F. Over 45% of riders used it for shopping.

G. The same proportion used it for appointments.

H. Surprisingly, over a third used it for work, even though it was not a commuter schedule.

I. Over half used it for visiting family and friends.

J. Surprisingly, the largest user age group was working age: 74%

K. Seniors were a tiny minority of users (only 3.5% admitted they 65 or over!) But this was not a winter survey.

Recent Sheet Harbour area Chamber of Commerce survey....

If Metro Transit were available in your area on a route to Metro in the morning and returned in the afternoon:

a. Would you utilize this service?

Yes 236 No 122

Would you use it?

Daily 8 Several times a week 37 Weekly 106 Weekends only 48

Would this service be used to commute to

Work 35 Medical 151 Shopping 165 Leisure 143 Business 43

What would you be willing to pay?

\$5.00 29 \$6.00 27 \$8.00 38 \$10.00 172