



# Sunshine Coast Transit Business Plan

May 2006

Sunshine Coast  
Regional District



  
BC Transit



# Sunshine Coast Transit Business Plan

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# Sunshine Coast Transit Business Plan

## Executive Summary

### 1.0 Plan Objectives and Key Performance Indicators

The overall goal for the Sunshine Coast Transit Business Plan is to guide the development of the Transit System so that it can, in an effective and affordable manner, meet the present and future demand for transit service in the Sunshine Coast and encourage greater transit use in the community.

1. Provide frequent and convenient transit services to key destinations.
2. Encourage greater ridership by providing an attractive transportation alternative to the automobile.
3. Provide safe and reliable, clean and comfortable, environmentally friendly transit service that is accessible to all customers.
4. Effectively communicate transit information with the public.
5. Collaborate with our partners and our stakeholders on a regular basis.
6. Provide service in a manner that maintains the financial viability of the system.

Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) can be used to monitor system performance and to set performance targets.

### 2.0 Population and Land Use

Population and land use are key variables affecting transit demand.

- The overall population of the Sunshine Coast is forecast to grow moderately over the next 10 years.
- Students/young adults (aged 15-24) and older seniors (aged 80+) are two key transit markets. Growth in the student/young adult market is forecast to slow dramatically in the next 5 years, while the older seniors market is forecast to remain the fastest growing age group.
- The relatively low density and multi-nodal nature of the Sunshine Coast creates challenges for providing effective transit service. However, local and regional land use plans on the Sunshine Coast promote policies that will encourage more transit-supportive development.

### 3.0 Review of Existing Transit Service

A review of existing transit service, along with historical trends and comparisons with other similar communities, was used to identify key market opportunities and required changes to the transit system.

- Overall, the transit system performs well compared with its peers and performance has been improving over time.
- The transit connection to the Langdale-Horseshoe Bay ferry service is a key feature of the Sunshine Coast Transit System.

## 4.0 Service Strategies

The table below summarizes transit service enhancements proposed for the Sunshine Coast Transit System over the next 5 years (2005-2010):

Description of Service Options	Vehicles	Service hours	Total cost
Improved service frequency on the Langdale-Gibsons-Sechelt corridor:			
Option 1: Increased frequency on existing Langdale-Sechelt route	2	5,720	\$412,000
Option 2: Separate regional & local service	2	8,800	\$616,000
Improved service coverage			
Pender Harbour service	1	900	\$61,000
Community bus to areas currently not served by transit	1	3,000	\$154,000

## 5.0 Supporting Strategies

There are a number of strategies which can be used to encourage greater transit ridership and improve transit system performance:

- Fare strategies can be used to encourage more regular ridership and target key market groups.
- On street facilities form a highly visible component of the transit system.
- Transportation Demand Management (TDM) can encourage people to make more efficient use of the transportation system.
- Marketing strategies can be used to identify key markets and raise the profile of transit through public information and promotion.

## 6.0 Service Implementation

The following table outlines the schedule for proposed service changes over the next 5 years. The Regional District has approved a financial plan that supports this implementation schedule.

Year	Improvement	Service Hours	Annual total
2006	Annualization of Halfmoon Bay service improvements	220	1,080
	Implement Langdale-Sechelt service frequency phase 1 (September)	860	
2007	Annualization of Langdale-Sechelt phase 1	1,740	3,690
	Implement community bus (June)	1,950	
2008	Annualization of community bus	1,950	3,510
	Implement Langdale-Sechelt phase 2	1,560	
2009	Annualization of Langdale-Sechelt phase 2	1,560	3,100
	Implement Regional/Local service strategy (June)	1,540	

## **7.0 Recommendations**

It is recommended that the Sunshine Coast Regional District approve this plan as a guide for transit service planning and delivery.

### **Service Strategies**

1. Approve Phase 1 of the Langdale-Sechelt service frequency improvement and direct staff to proceed with more detailed planning work.
2. Approve in principle the service strategies for implementation over the next 5 years. These proposals will further evaluated as part of the annual budget development process.

### **Supporting Strategies**

3. Approve in principle the Supporting Strategies, including the introduction of a high school semester pass and the development of an integrated fare product in cooperation with BC Ferries and Translink.



## 1.0 Plan Objectives and Key Performance Indicators

### 1.1 Proposed Goals and Objectives

The overall goal for the Sunshine Coast Transit Business Plan is to guide the development of the Transit System so that it can, in an effective and affordable manner, meet the present and future demand for transit service in the Sunshine Coast and encourage greater transit use in the community.

The specific objectives for the Sunshine Coast Transit Business Plan, outlined below, are based on discussion of the Business Planning Committee. The objectives can be grouped into six areas:

1. *Provide frequent and convenient transit services to key destinations:*
  - Provide increased service frequency on key routes, especially between the Langdale ferry terminal, Gibsons, and Sechelt.
  - Expand the transit service area where viable, potentially including parts of Area "A" and Area "F".
  - Use of flexible community bus to serve some lower density neighborhoods.
  - Maximize the use of available transportation services, taxis, and ridesharing.
2. *Encourage greater ridership by providing an attractive transportation alternative to the automobile:*
  - Initiate service improvements that will attract choice transit riders.
  - Develop supporting strategies such as marketing, fare strategies and transportation demand management, that will encourage greater transit ridership.
  - Survey non-users to determine barriers to using transit.
3. *Provide safe and reliable, clean and comfortable, environmentally friendly transit service that is accessible to all customers:*
  - This objective focuses on vehicles, but also includes other aspects of the passenger experience such as on-street facilities.
  - Encourage the use of low emission transit vehicles in the Sunshine Coast.
4. *Effectively communicate transit information with the public:*
  - Provide information to the public in a courteous, helpful, and professional manner.
  - Provide improved transit information at exchanges and transit stops.
  - Provide better access to transit information via the internet and telephone.
  - Promote transit in the community.

5. *Collaborate with our partners and our stakeholders on a regular basis:*
  - Develop partnerships with institutions, major employers, and other transportation providers.
  - Work with the school district to better integrate student transportation with the transit service.
  - Integrate transit planning with local and regional land use planning.
  - Develop an integrated fare product with BC Ferries and Translink.
  
6. *Provide service in a manner that maintains the financial viability of the system:*
  - Ensure that the above objectives are achieved in a manner that is viable and affordable.
  - Use Key Performance Indicators to measure the viability of existing and new services.

## **1.2 Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)**

Objectives may include Key Performance Indicators to monitor transit system performance and to set specific targets.

- KPIs can be used to monitor system performance. Comparisons between budgeted and actual performance for a number of KPIs can be made annually, quarterly, etc.
- KPIs can also be used to set performance targets. For example, five year targets might be set for certain KPIs. The targets would be set by looking at performance for comparable systems and industry leaders.

It is important to realize that KPI's only show part of the picture. For example, KPI's do not measure the objectives of "integration of the transit system with other modes of travel" and "reduced automobile dependence". Nonetheless, these are important objectives that are not being measured by using the proposed KPI's. However, many of the objectives are non-quantifiable and are difficult to measure and indicate performance.

## 2.0 Population and Land Use

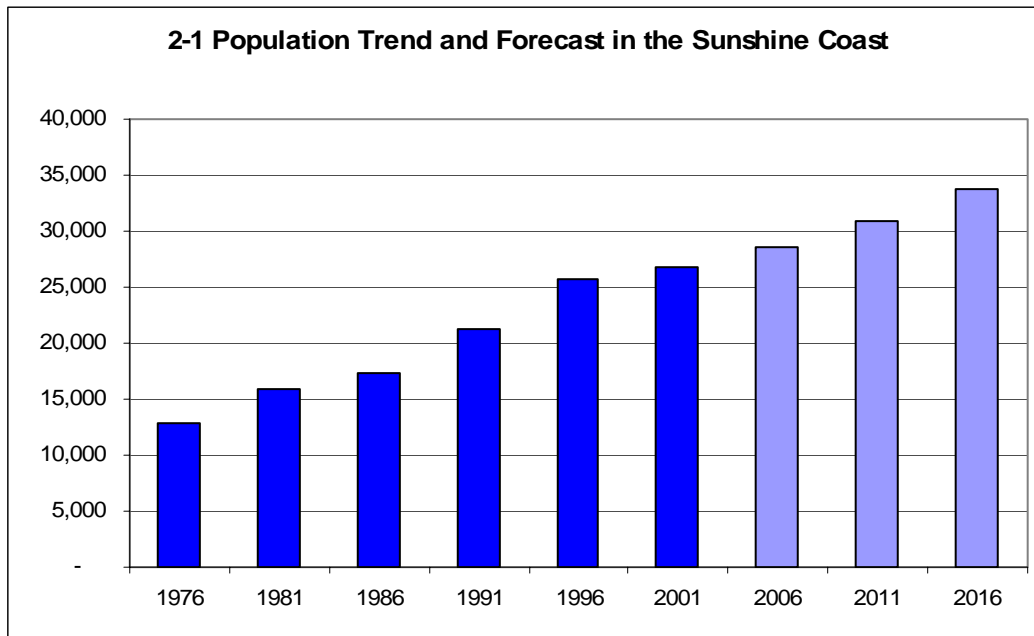
### 2.1 Introduction

This chapter looks at population distribution and trends, and land use patterns in the Sunshine Coast as background to determining patterns of transit demand in the region. Population and land use are key variables affecting transit demand. The distribution of population and other land use patterns can greatly affect transit performance since this will determine the number of potential transit riders along a given route. Changes in the size and characteristics of a population over time result in changes to key markets that can also greatly influence transit use.

### 2.2 Population Change

#### *General Population Trends*

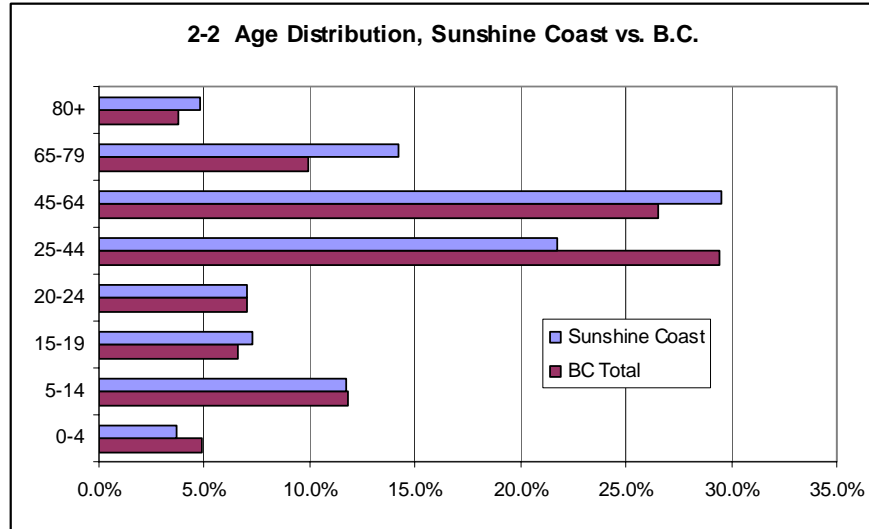
The Sunshine Coast's population was estimated at 28,600 in 2005. The region has experienced rapid growth over the past 25 years, with the population more than doubling since 1976. Growth was particularly rapid during 1976-81 and 1986-96 with annual increases of around 4%. Growth slowed dramatically during the 1996-2001 period, averaging just 0.7% per year, and for the first time the growth rate dropped below the provincial average. Population growth is forecast to rebound to nearly 1.8% annually over the next 10 years, with the population reaching nearly 34,000 by 2016.



Source: Statistics Canada and BC Stats

## Age Distribution

The Sunshine Coast has a relatively old population, with a median age of 44 compared to 38 for B.C. as a whole. The chart compares the 2005 age distribution in the Sunshine Coast with the B.C. average. There is a significantly smaller proportion of people aged 25-44 than the provincial average, whereas those aged 45 and over make up a much larger proportion of the Sunshine Coast's population. The differences in other age groups are less significant.



Source: BC Stats

The propensity to use transit varies significantly with age, so current and future age structure will impact transit use. In particular, there are two key markets for transit: students/young adults (aged 15-24) and older seniors (aged 80+).

### *Student/young adults (aged 15-24)*

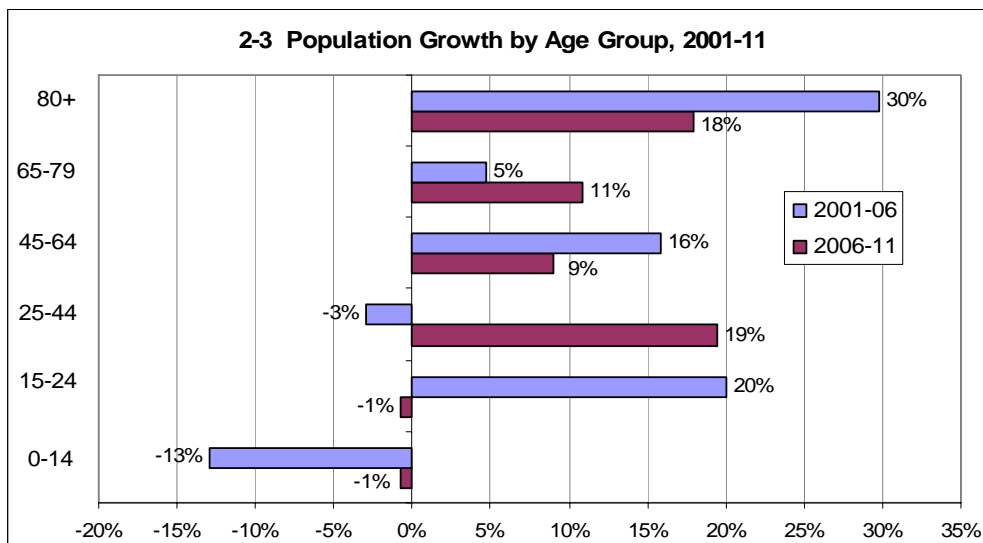
This group is highly mobile, and has the highest rate of transit use among all age groups. In 2004, 15-24 year olds made up 14.3% of the population in the Sunshine Coast versus 13.7% for B.C. This group has been growing faster than the population as a whole during 2001-06 (a 20% increase vs. 6%) as the children of the baby movers move into this age group. However, during 2006-11, this group is forecast to decline slightly (-1%) compared with 9% overall population growth. As a result of this slowdown in growth, beyond 2006 transit will have to rely more on increasing transit's market penetration among students and young adults since the total numbers in this group will not be increasing.

### Seniors aged 80+

Seniors older than 80s are among the most dependent on transit of all age groups, and they are particularly dependent on accessible and custom transit services. This group makes up 4.8% of the Sunshine Coast population compared with 3.8% for B.C. as a whole. This group has experienced the fastest rate of population growth among all age groups during the 2001-06 period (+30%), resulting in increased demand for accessible conventional and custom transit service. Growth in the older seniors group is expected slow during 2006-11 (+18%) but this will still be twice the overall rate of population growth for the period.



The chart below illustrates population growth by age groups over the next decade. Along with students/young adults and older seniors, the other group to experience above average growth during 2001-06 are those aged 45-64 (+16%). This latter group also shows the largest absolute growth in population as a result of the aging baby boom generation. People in this age group typically have low rates of transit use so this may tend to dampen the demand for transit. During 2006-11, the 25-44 year old group will experience the fastest growth (+19%), as a result of the baby boom echo generation. The forecasts highlight the need to target these groups and encourage greater transit use. In particular, if the large baby boom echo generation can be encouraged to use transit during their student/young adult years, some of these habits may be carried through as they become adult commuters during 2006-11.



Source: BC Stats

## **2.3 Existing Land Use**

Transit and land use are closely inter-related, so it is useful to examine the land use patterns in the Sunshine Coast to understand the opportunities and the challenges they present for a successful transit system. In general, transit performs better when densities are higher and when there is a mix of land uses, since this results in a larger number of potential riders along a given route. Greater concentration of employment and other non-residential trip generators is even more important than residential density in encouraging transit use since dispersed employment sites are very difficult to serve with transit. Even when overall densities in a region are relatively low, transit can be successful if development is concentrated into nodes or corridors rather than scattered throughout the region.

The design of a particular development can also make it more transit supportive. Since transit trips typically begin and end on foot, development that is pedestrian-friendly also tends to be transit-friendly. For example, locating a shopping mall close to the street with parking in behind can result in greatly improved access for customers arriving by transit, since they don't have to make their way through a parking lot to get to the entrance. This design also creates a more pleasant streetscape for all users.

### ***Residential Distribution***

The Sunshine Coast does not have a typical urban form compared with most other communities in B.C. which are served by transit. There are two major nodes of development centred around Gibsons (about 7,000 including Elphinstone/Gower Point) and Sechelt (about 8,000). While there is some compact development within the cores of these two nodes, there is also considerable lower density development on the edges of these nodes and all along the Highway 101 corridor. This type of low-density, multinodal development is challenging to serve with transit, although the linear pattern of the nodes and development areas along the Highway 101 corridor does help to make transit more feasible.

The first map shows major areas of development in the Sunshine Coast. The Gibsons area includes 4,000 in the Town of Gibsons plus an additional 3,400 in the Elphinstone/Gower Point area. There are 1,300 additional residents in the Langdale area. Sechelt includes 2,200 in Central Sechelt, 2,200 in West Sechelt, 2,400 in the Davis Bay/Wilson Creek area, and 1,500 to the north along Sechelt inlet. There are about 3,000 residents on the Highway 101 corridor between the Gibsons and Sechelt nodes, with the greatest concentration in the Roberts Creek area. There are nearly 5,000 residents west of Sechelt along the Highway 101 corridor. The major areas of development are in Redroofs (1,500), Halfmoon Bay (800), Pender Harbour (2,000), and Earl's Cove/Egmont (300).

The second map shows population density in the Sunshine Coast. More than 80% of private dwellings in the Sunshine Coast are single family structures, one of the highest proportions in B.C. Population densities in the core of the urban nodes ranges from 500 to 2000 persons/km<sup>2</sup>. The outer parts of the nodes and a strip along Highway 101 has densities of 250-500. Elsewhere, densities are extremely low, in most cases less than 100 persons/km<sup>2</sup>. As a very rough guideline (there are numerous other factors involved), a population density of 1000 persons/km<sup>2</sup> is considered the minimum level required to support conventional, fixed-route transit service. Only about 15-20% of the population in the Sunshine Coast lives in areas with a density of 1000 or more and about 40-50% of the population lives in areas with density of 500 or more. This indicates the difficulty in providing transit service to all areas of the region.

### ***Non-residential Development Patterns***

As with residential development, the commercial development in the Sunshine Coast is concentrated in the two major nodes around Gibsons (Upper Gibsons and Gibsons Landing) and Sechelt. There are smaller clusters of commercial development in Roberts Creek, Wilson Creek, and Pender Harbour (Madeira Park).

#### *Education institutions:*

High school and post secondary students form a key market for transit, so the location of these schools is an important consideration.

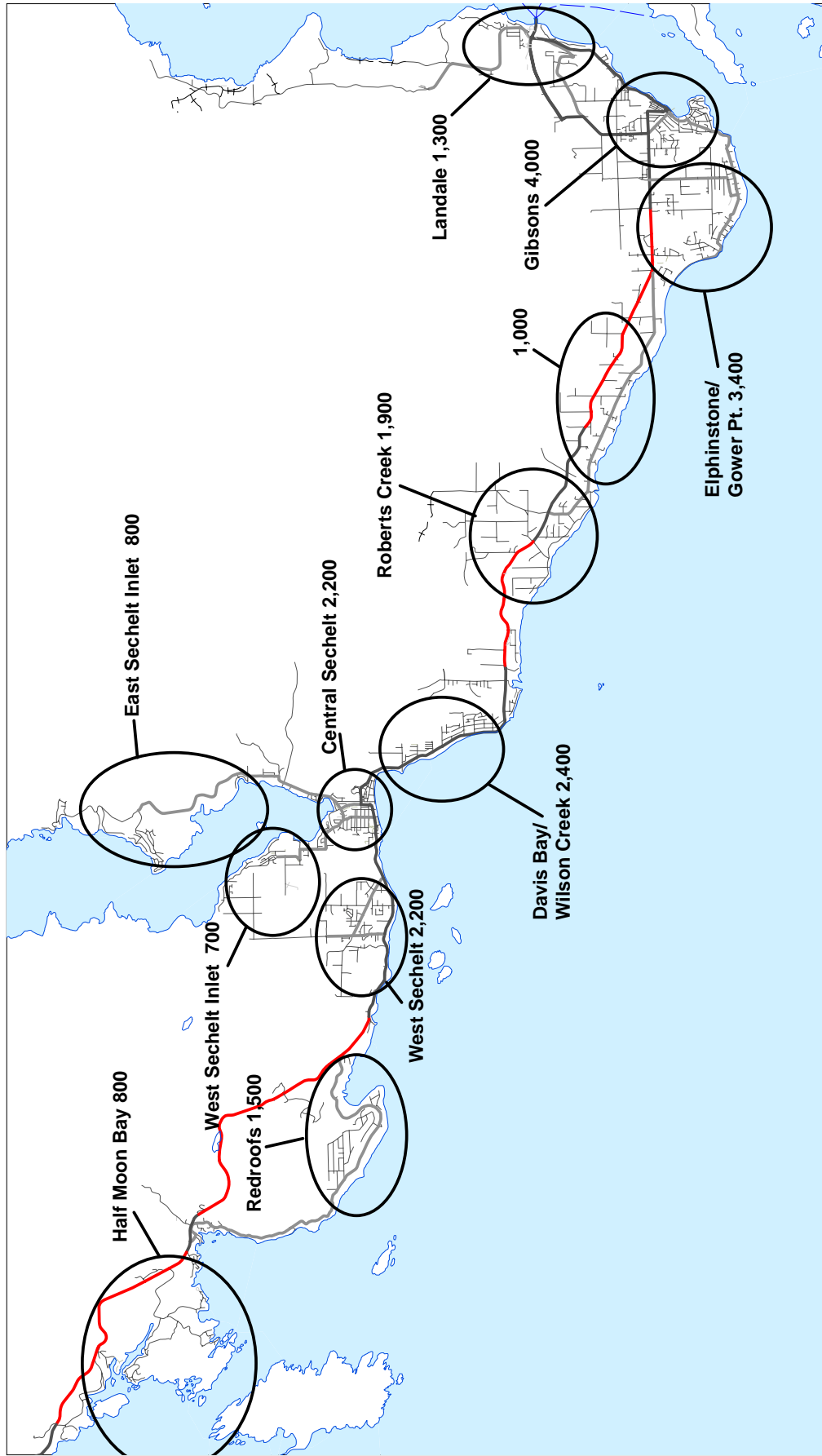
Capilano College has a satellite campus in Sechelt. Enrolment averages 500-600 during the fall and spring terms, with those taking credit courses making up slightly under half of the total and continuing education students making up the remainder. Enrolment is lower during the summer term, averaging 200-250 students.

There are three high schools (grades 8-12) in the Sunshine Coast: Elphinstone in Gibsons (768 students), Chatelech in Sechelt (786 students), and Pender Harbour Secondary (187 students).

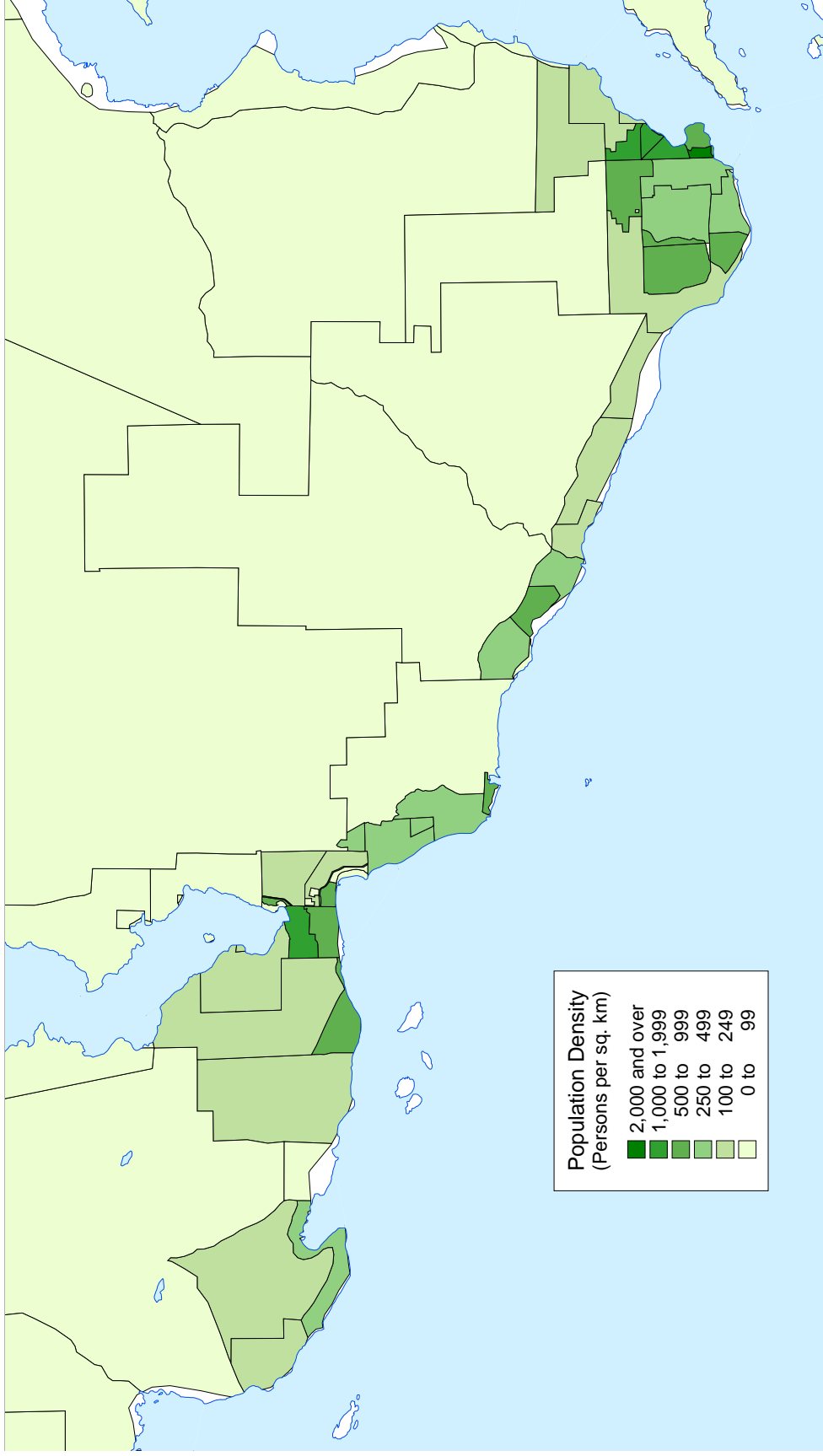
#### ***Growth Patterns:***

Over the past two years, most growth in the Sunshine Coast has occurred in Sechelt, Pender Harbour, Roberts Creek, and Halfmoon Bay, with growth rates approaching 5% annually in some of these areas. Other areas, including Gibsons, have grown at a slower rate. Within Sechelt, most growth has been concentrated in the West Sechelt area, which has sewers, while there has been little growth in other areas, which are on septic fields that tend to limit development.

## 2-4 Development Areas in the Sunshine Coast



## 2-5 Population Density in the Sunshine Coast, 2001



## **2.4 Transportation System**

### ***Automobile Transportation***

As is the case elsewhere in North America, automobiles remain the dominant mode of transportation in the Sunshine Coast. According to the 2001 Census, 75% of Sunshine Coast residents drove to work, and a further 9% were automobile passengers. Although there is no comparable data on non-work trips, it is likely that the automobile is equally dominant for these. Automobile registrations in the Sunshine Coast increased 40% from 12,018 in 1989 to 16,783 in 2000. This represents 80 automobiles for every 100 residents 16 years and over.

Highway 101 is the key transportation corridor in the Sunshine Coast. Most commercial development is along this corridor and most residents live nearby. This is the only route that connects all areas of the Sunshine Coast. The highway also connects ferry terminals in Langdale and Earl's Cove.

### ***BC Ferries***

Since the Sunshine Coast does not have fixed connections with the rest of the B.C. mainland, ferries form a key link in the transportation system and ferry terminals are important transportation nodes. The Langdale Ferry Terminal, with service to Horseshoe Bay and access from there



to the rest of the mainland, is key. For most of the year, ferries operate on this route roughly every 2 hours, with 8 round trips each day. The schedule is increased, with up to 10 daily round trips, during the busy summer months of July and August. The fare on this route is \$8.00/8.25 (low/peak) for passengers and \$23.50/28.75 (low/peak) for vehicles. Fares are only paid travelling from Horseshoe Bay to Langdale. This route carries approximately 2.5 million passengers and 1.1 million vehicles annually. The Earl's Cove Terminal provides service to Powell River, with 8 round trips per day.

### ***Private Intercity Bus***

Malaspina Coach Lines provides service between the Langdale and the Earl's Cove Ferry Terminals, with continuing service to Vancouver and to Powell River. As shown in figure 2-6, there are two round trips per day in the summer. During the rest of the year, the second trip operates Friday to Sunday only. The fare is \$22 for Langdale to Earl's Cove and \$8.00 for Gibsons to Sechelt. Frequent users can purchase 10 tickets for the price of 9.

## 2-6 Malaspina Coach Lines Schedule

	Sep-Jun		Jul-Aug			Sep-Jun		Jul-Aug	
	Fri-Sun	Daily	Daily			Daily	Fri-Sun	Daily	
Langdale	10:00	<b>6:10</b>	10:15	<b>4:50</b>	Earl's Cove	8:20	<b>4:20</b>	8:20	<b>5:10</b>
Gibsons	10:15	<b>6:20</b>	10:25	<b>5:00</b>	Mad. Park	8:45	<b>4:50</b>	8:45	<b>5:45</b>
Sechelt	11:00	<b>7:00</b>	11:15	<b>5:45</b>	Sechelt	9:35	<b>5:35</b>	9:35	<b>6:30</b>
Mad. Park	11:45	<b>7:45</b>	11:55	<b>6:30</b>	Gibsons	10:00	<b>6:05</b>	10:00	<b>7:00</b>
Earl's Cove	<b>12:20</b>	<b>8:20</b>	<b>12:50</b>	<b>7:20</b>	Langdale	10:20	<b>6:30</b>	10:20	<b>7:20</b>

## 2.5 Land Use Planning

Local and regional plans can promote policies that will encourage more transit-supportive development. There are several strategies which can be used to reduce dependence on automobiles and promote greater use of alternative transportation modes such as transit; this has been a common theme in many of the growth strategies in other parts of the province developed to date. As noted previously, higher population densities can improve transit performance. However, transit does not require uniformly high densities throughout the region; encouraging the creation of higher-density nodes and corridors in those areas served by transit can be just as effective. Such a land use pattern can be achieved using urban containment boundaries and designating village or town centres where mixed-use, higher density development is encouraged. Transit must also be considered when planning the region's transportation system. For example, road systems should be designed so that bus routes can be developed that will serve neighborhoods in an efficient manner.

The relationship between transit and land use works in both directions, and transit can also help to support many of the goals and objectives outlined in these plans. (Although, admittedly, transit's impact on land use patterns is less in smaller more rural communities such as the Sunshine Coast than it would be in large urban regions.) By providing an alternative to driving, transit can help communities to reduce their dependence on automobiles. By focusing transit routes and improving access, it can be used as a tool for encouraging a strong downtown core.

### ***Official Community Plans in the Sunshine Coast***

#### *Town of Gibsons*

The Town of Gibsons Official Community Plan (Smart Plan) was completed in 2005. The plan attempts to reduce urban sprawl through the principles of smart growth, including mixed-use, walkable neighborhoods with a range of housing and transportation choices. The plan includes specific policy statements to support transit through land use decisions, development of on-street facilities, and the promotion of inter-modal trips. The plan also calls for a shuttle service to connect upper and lower Gibsons. A new Upper Gibsons neighborhood is planned on a 34 hectare site that was removed from the Agricultural Land Reserve.

### *District of Sechelt*

The District of Sechelt has an Official Community Plan that was completed several years ago. The Plan puts a strong emphasis on the idea of sustainable communities and includes objectives to promote alternative modes of transportation. There is specific mention of improving transit service and increasing the opportunities to use transit through transit supportive land use. The Plan encourages the development of a vibrant and compact village core and concentrated neighborhood commercial nodes. New developments are encouraged to consider transit access in their road layout, pedestrian links, and other aspects of design.

### *Regional District Electoral Areas*

The Regional District has also prepared official community plans for most of the electoral areas: Egmont/Pender Harbour, Elphinstone, Halfmoon Bay, Roberts Creek, Hillside/Port Mellon, and West Howe Sound. In the electoral areas, residential densities are generally low, with single family dwellings on large lots. At the same time, the plans encourage the development of transit service in these areas. One way this is proposed is through the design of road layouts and pedestrian paths to make it easier for residents to access transit. Provision of transit service will be challenging in the more rural electoral areas.

The Regional District recently completed a Regional Issues Assessment Report. This is a precursor to doing a Regional Growth Strategy. This report identified growth-related issues in the Sunshine Coast and assessed the strategies to deal with them. Polling residents' attitudes towards these issues was an important part of this process.



Improved transportation was one of the issues that was identified. There was strong consensus for the development of a transportation strategy, and 83% of residents believe that this strategy should specifically address transit.

## 3.0 Review of Existing Transit Service

### 3.1 Introduction

This paper examines the existing transit service and patterns of transit demand in the Sunshine Coast. It uses historical service level and ridership data, passenger counts, and the results of a recent on-board passenger and a recent public opinion survey.

### 3.2 Comparison with other Systems

The table below compares the Sunshine Coast Conventional Transit System with other transit systems in similar-sized communities. Sunshine Coast has the highest level of transit service per capita among this group. This can be attributed to the high level of commuter service connecting to the Langdale Ferry. About two thirds of the total population in the Sunshine Coast is within 400 metres of a transit route (considered to be the maximum distance most people are willing to walk to a bus stop on a regular basis). The Sunshine Coast also has the highest rides per hour among these similar-sized transit systems. Cost recovery (revenue as a percentage of total costs) is above the average while cost per ride is lower than the average.

#### 3-1 Comparison of Conventional Transit Performance Measures, 2004/05

	Population Served*	Hours of Service	Revenue Passengers	Hours/ Capita	Rides/ Hour	Cost per Ride	Cost Recovery
<b>Sunshine Coast</b>	<b>18,400</b>	<b>15,769</b>	<b>424,700</b>	<b>0.86</b>	<b>26.9</b>	<b>\$3.31</b>	<b>37.5%</b>
Campbell River	28,500	16,972	380,000	0.60	22.4	\$3.26	43.2%
Chilliwack	44,400	16,589	395,700	0.37	23.9	\$2.82	34.4%
Comox Valley	36,300	18,039	311,400	0.50	17.3	\$4.28	24.2%
Cowichan Valley	30,400	17,685	247,600	0.58	14.0	\$5.14	20.1%
Penticton	28,000	15,763	289,600	0.56	18.4	\$3.89	37.9%
Vernon Regional	34,200	13,228	246,300	0.39	18.6	\$4.15	37.0%
<b>Tier 2 Total</b>	<b>201,800</b>	<b>98,276</b>	<b>1,870,600</b>	<b>0.49</b>	<b>19.0</b>	<b>\$3.80</b>	<b>32.4%</b>

\*Estimate of population within 400 metres of a transit route

The second table below compares the Sunshine Coast Paratransit System with those in similar-sized communities. Sunshine Coast has a relatively low level of paratransit service; only Penticton and Cowichan Valley have less among this group. Sunshine Coast has the lowest rides per hour, and it has the highest cost per ride among this group. Sunshine Coast does not have a high proportion of group trips to institutions which produce high performance levels in communities such as Vernon. A change in service in 2004 means that some paratransit passengers can now be accommodated on the conventional service. This has resulted in a drop in paratransit ridership and is partly responsible for the low performance levels.

### 3-2 Comparison of Custom Transit Performance Measures, 2004/05

	Municipal Population	Hours of Service	Revenue Passengers	Rides/ Hour	Cost per Ride
<b>Sunshine Coast</b>	<b>25,000</b>	<b>3,880</b>	<b>6,723</b>	<b>1.7</b>	<b>\$34.01</b>
Campbell River	35,000	5,383	22,712	3.9	\$12.53
Chilliwack	67,600	8,186	39,685	3.8	\$10.20
Comox Valley	53,600	8,621	31,423	3.4	\$13.94
Cowichan Valley	32,700	2,265	6,365	2.8	\$16.21
Penticton	33,000	1,992	11,534	2.7	\$8.65
Vernon Regional	45,000	9,959	63,073	5.5	\$7.70

\*Includes entire population of all participating areas

### 3.3 Historical Trends

The Sunshine Coast has had transit service since the paratransit system began operation in 1982. Conventional transit service began in 1989. The chart below shows the growth in paratransit and conventional transit service and ridership. The amount of paratransit service was fairly stable from its introduction in 1982 until 1988 while ridership increased gradually from 9,000 to 14,000. With the introduction of conventional transit service in 1989, paratransit ridership decreased significantly as many former paratransit riders began using the conventional service. Since then, paratransit service has almost doubled, but ridership growth has not kept pace. Conventional service and ridership has grown sharply since being introduced in 1989. The dip in 1999 was due to a labor disruption. Ridership has reached all-time highs in every year since 2001.

### 3-3 Annual Service Hours and Ridership in the Sunshine Coast, 1982-2004

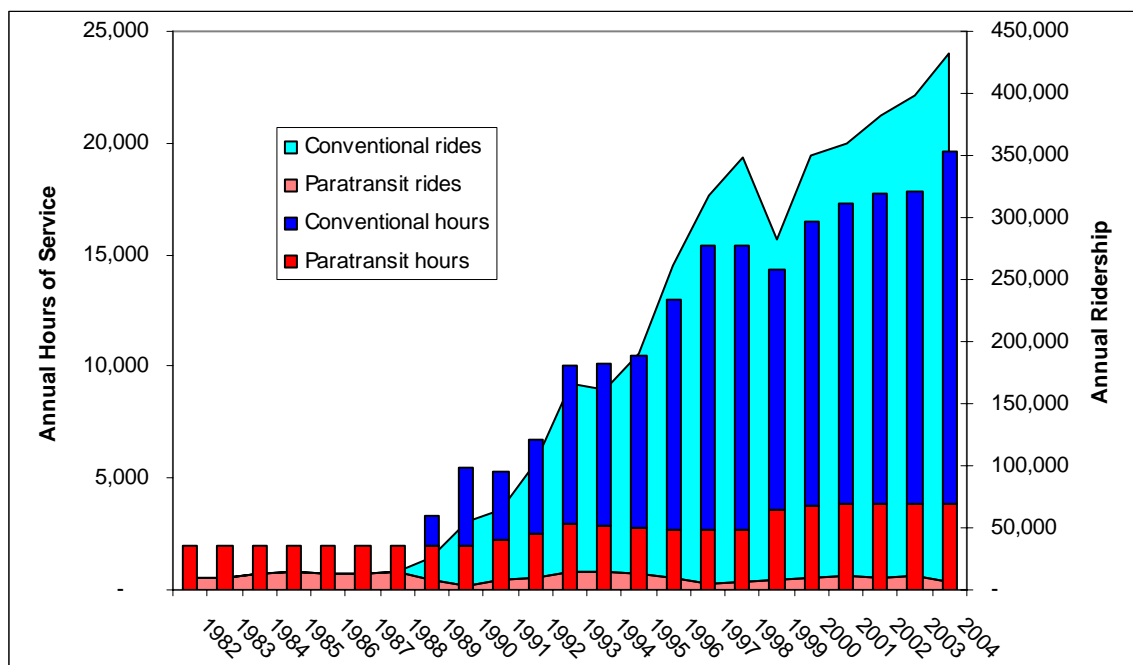
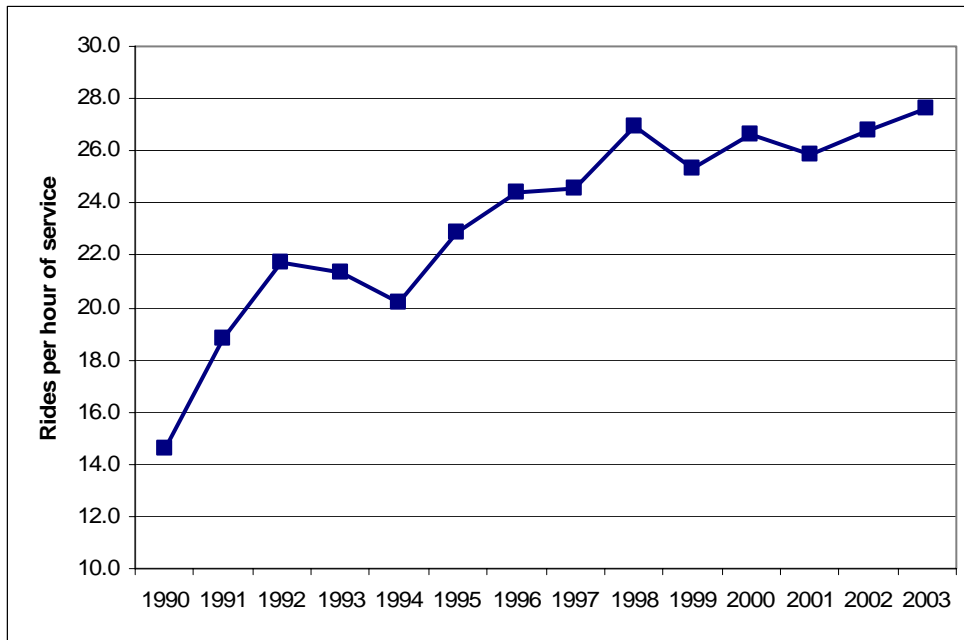


Chart 3-4 shows the trend in transit system productivity in the Sunshine Coast. Productivity, as measured in rides per hour of service, improved sharply between 1990 and 1998, increasing from 15 to 26 rides per hour. Since 1998, productivity has been relatively stable, ranging between 25 and 27 rides per hour.

**3-4 Transit System Productivity in Sunshine Coast, 1990-2004**



### 3.4 Existing Service

The Sunshine Coast Transit System operates from approximately 5 AM to 11 PM Monday through Friday, and from 7 AM to 11 PM on Saturdays, Sundays, and holidays. There are four transit routes in the system. All services are fully accessible to passengers with disabilities using wheelchairs and scooters.

- **Sechelt/Gibsons/Langdale Ferry**

This route forms the backbone of the system, accounting for 74% of the service hours and 87% of total ridership on the transit system. The route connects the two main settlement nodes with the Langdale Ferry Terminal, and it is timed to meet ferry sailings to and from Horseshoe Bay. The route generally follows Highway 101, although alternate trips route via Lower Roberts Creek Road to serve Roberts Creek. The service operates approximately every hour with the first trip leaving Sechelt at 5 AM (7AM on Saturday, Sundays, and holidays) and the last trip arriving back in Sechelt at 11 PM.

- **West Sechelt Loop**

The West Sechelt Loop is a continuation of some Sechelt/Gibsons/Langdale Ferry trips to serve the West Sechelt neighborhood.

### Sechelt Arena

The Sechelt Arena route serves the arena and neighborhoods along the west side of Sechelt Inlet. This service operates approximately every hour between 7:40 AM and 6:15 PM on weekdays, and from 9 AM to 4:00 PM on Saturdays, Sundays, and holidays. Limited evening service, operating until 8:30 pm, was recently introduced on Fridays and Saturdays.

- **Halfmoon Bay**

The Halfmoon Bay route provides service between Sechelt and Halfmoon Bay. This route operates approximately every 2 hours from 6:40 AM to 7:00 PM weekdays, and from 9:40 AM to 3:30 PM on Saturdays, Sundays, and holidays. Limited evening service, operating until 11:00 PM, was recently introduced on Fridays and Saturdays.

### 3.5 Trip Profile

This section presents a detailed picture of the current transit system in the Sunshine Coast using results from the most recent passenger count (October 2005) and on-board passenger survey (September 2002). Passenger counts are done annually and involve counting every passenger using the transit system for a two-week period. This information is categorized by route, time, day and passenger group. During an on-board passenger survey all passengers using the transit system over a 24-hour period are asked to fill out survey cards on the time, origin, destination and purpose of their trips as well as other information including suggestions for the system. The response rate to the most recent survey was estimated at 65%

**3-5 Hourly Revenue Passengers in the Sunshine Coast**

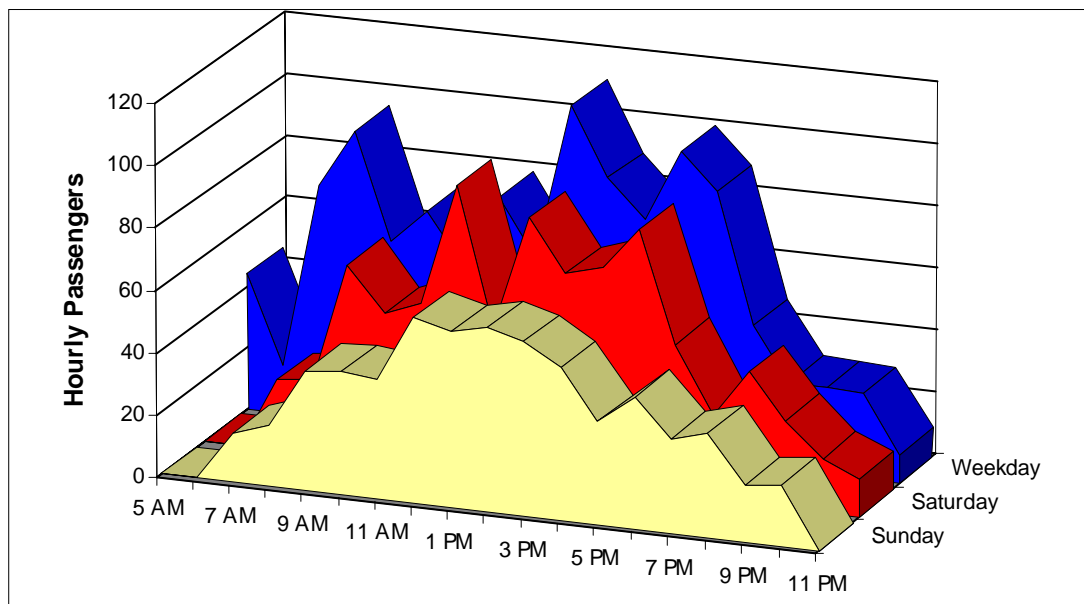
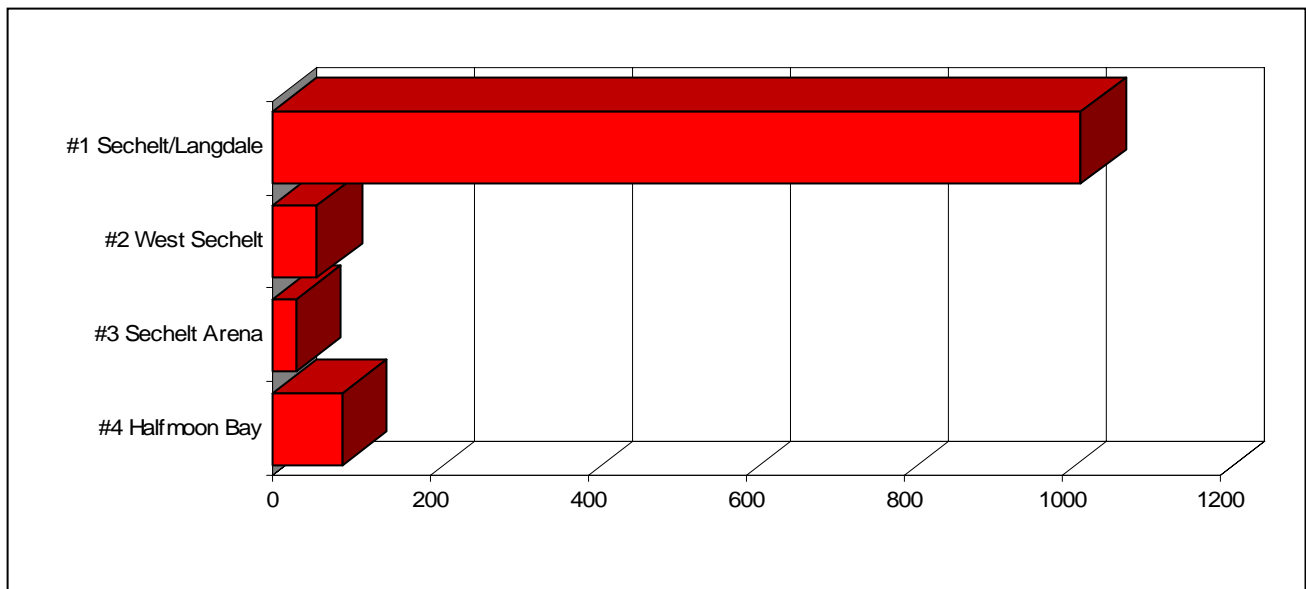


Chart 3-5 outlines revenue ridership on a daily and hourly basis for the Sunshine Coast Transit System. The system carries an average of 1,150 revenue passengers each weekday. Saturday ridership is somewhat lower, averaging approximately 830 revenue passengers, while Sunday ridership is lower still, averaging 610 revenue passengers. Unlike many transit systems, Sunshine Coast does not have sharp AM and PM peaks. Ridership is distributed throughout the day, although it tends to be highest during the midday and lowest in the evening.

***Ridership by Route***

The chart below displays average weekday ridership by route for the Sunshine Coast Transit System. As noted above, the Sechelt/Gibsons/Langdale route accounts for 85% of total system ridership. This route carries more than 1,000 passengers each weekday, more than one third of whom are ferry commuters. The other three routes all carry between 30 and 90 passengers each per day.

**3-6 Weekday Ridership by Route**



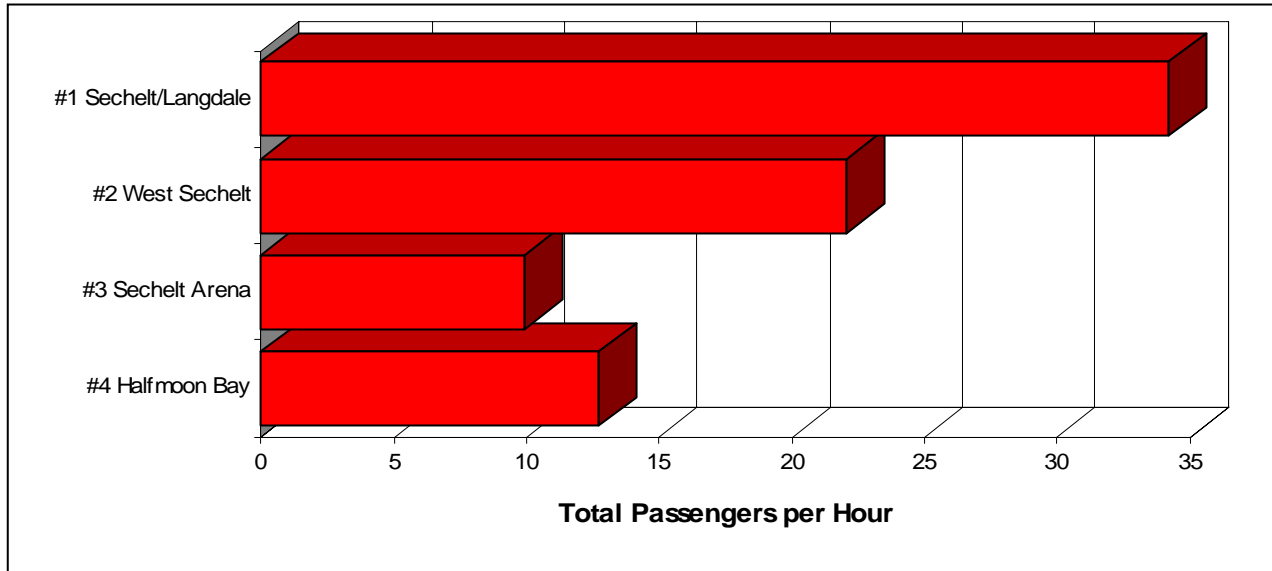
***Productivity by day and time***

Rides per hour of service is a measure of productivity in the transit system. The system as a whole, averages 23.9 rides per hour on weekdays, 22.4 on Saturdays, and 20.5 on Sundays. The system is generally most productive during the midday (9 AM to 3 PM) and PM peak (3 to 6 PM) periods. However, PM peak productivity is much lower on Sundays when productivity is highest during the evening period.

### ***Productivity by route***

The chart below compares the productivity of each route. The Sechelt/Gibsons/Langdale route has the highest productivity, averaging around 34 rides per hour on weekdays. This is not surprising given the strong commuter market for this route. The West Sechelt Loop has the next highest productivity, at about 22 rides per hour, followed by the Halfmoon Bay route (13 rides per hour) and the Sechelt Arena route (10 rides per hour).

**3-7 Weekday Productivity by Route**

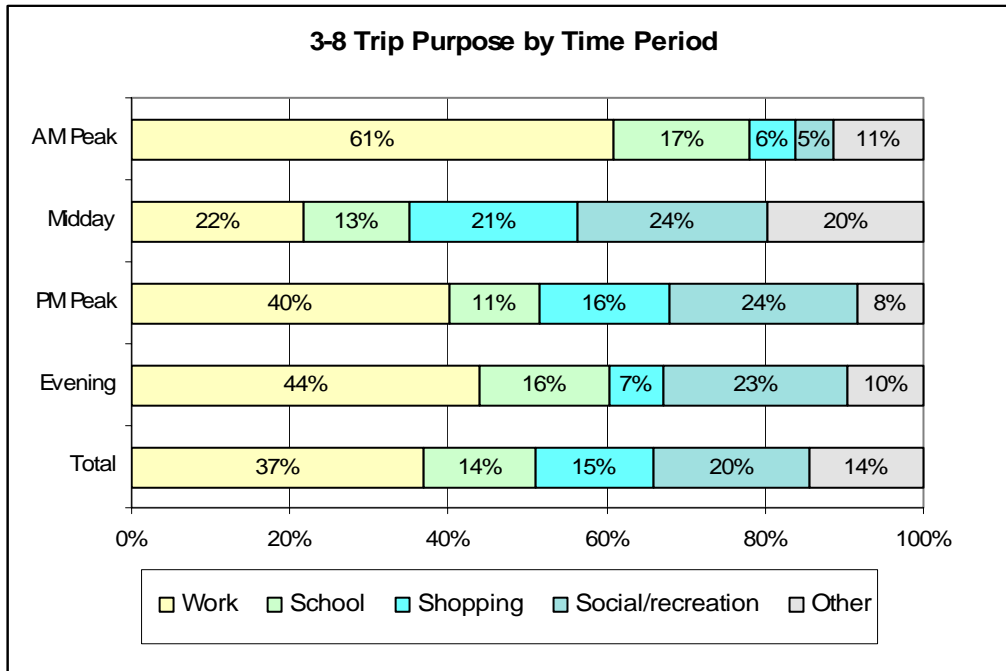


### ***Trip Purpose***

The chart below shows trip purpose for trips made on the Sunshine Coast Transit System.

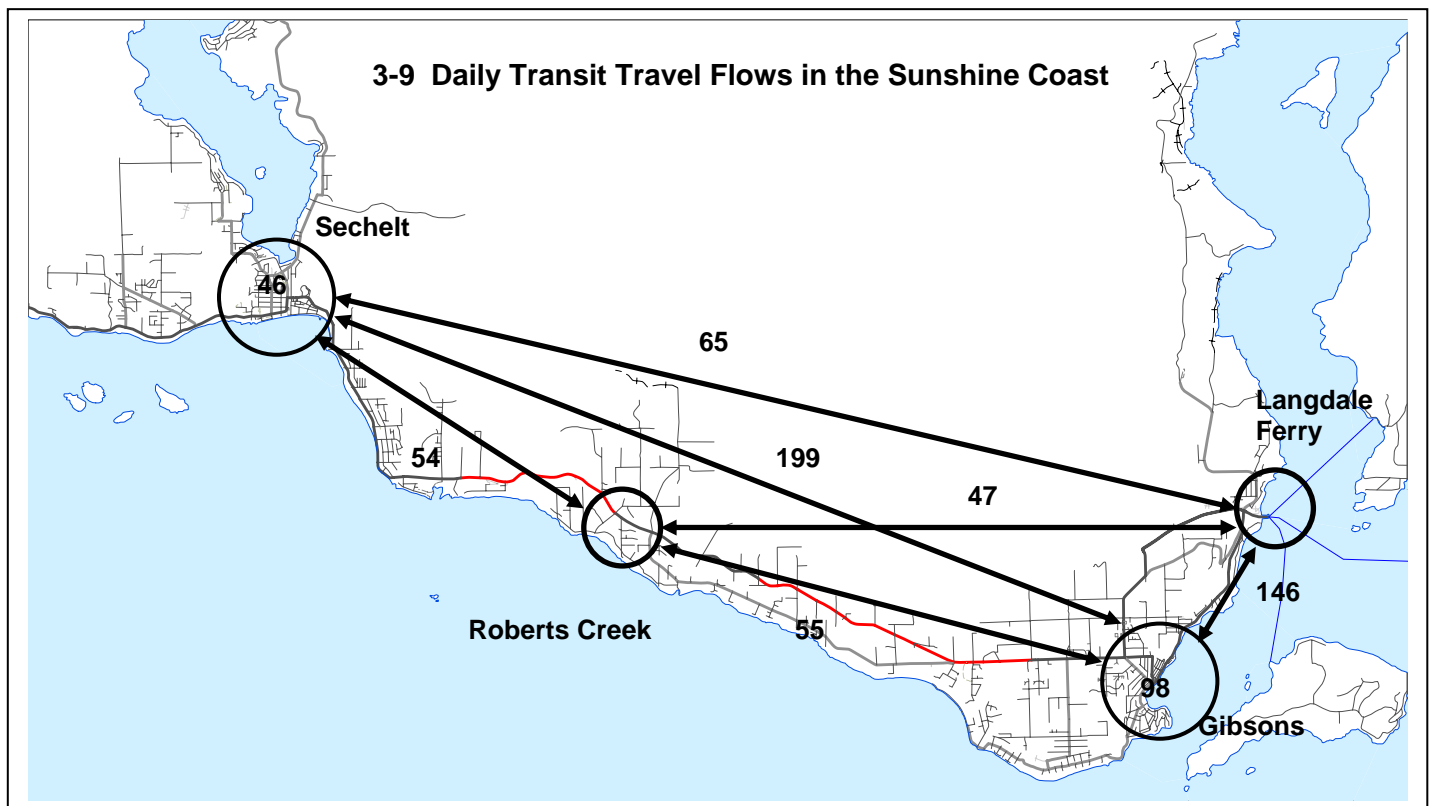
- Work trips make up the largest single component of ridership, about 37% of total trips. This is a relatively high proportion, reflecting the ferry commuter market in the Sunshine Coast.
- College and high school trips make up 14% of all transit ridership. High school trips account for two thirds of these trips, with college trips making up the remainder. School trips make up a somewhat smaller proportion of all transit trips in the Sunshine Coast compared with other similar communities.
- Shopping accounts for 15% of trips on the Sunshine Coast Transit System. This is relatively low compared with other communities.
- Other trip purposes make up the remaining 34% of transit trips. This includes social/recreation trips (19%) and medical/dental trips (6%).
- More than one third of Sunshine Coast transit trips involve making a ferry connection. For these trips, a greater proportion are work (39%), and social/recreation (23%) trips while a lower proportion are shopping (11%) and college/school (11%) trips.

- Trip purpose varies considerably by time of day. During the AM peak period, work commuting trips dominate, accounting for 61% of the total. School and college trips account for a further 17% of AM peak trips. Trip purpose is most varied during the midday period, with work (22%) and shopping trips (21%) being the most common types. The PM peak has a diverse range of trip purposes, although work trips are the most important (40%).



### ***Origins and Destinations***

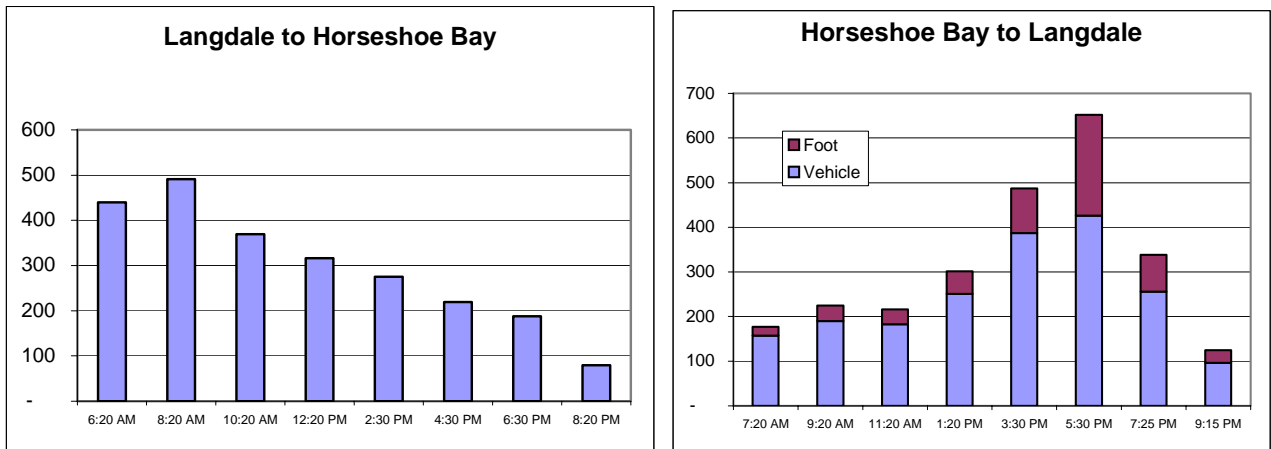
In terms of transit passenger origins and destinations, the main nodes in the Sunshine Coast are Sechelt, Gibsons, and the Langdale Ferry Terminal. The Roberts Creek area is also an important origin/destination for transit travel. The map below shows the travel flows (in passengers per day) between these nodes, which account for nearly 80% of the approximately 900 daily trips on the transit system. The largest flow is between Gibsons and Sechelt (199), followed by Gibsons-Langdale Ferry (146) and Sechelt-Langdale Ferry (65). There is also a considerable amount of short trip transit use within the Gibsons area (98) and Sechelt area (46).



### 3.6 Transit connections to the ferry service

More than one third of transit riders use transit to connect to the ferries, predominantly the Langdale-Horseshoe Bay route. This route has a high proportion of commuters, primarily those who live on the Sunshine Coast and work in Greater Vancouver. Traffic counts from BC Ferries illustrate this commuter flow, with the heaviest Langdale to Horseshoe Bay traffic on the 8:20 and 6:20 AM trips while the heaviest Horseshoe Bay to Langdale traffic is on the 5:30 and 3:30 PM trips. These trips also have the highest numbers of foot passengers, with a peak of 200 foot passengers on the 5:30 PM Horseshoe Bay to Langdale trip. (BC Ferries does not record foot passengers separately at Langdale, but based on corresponding vehicle counts it is estimated that the first two trips in the morning do carry the greatest number of foot passengers.) The charts below show average weekday travel by trip for March 2002.

**3-10 Average Weekday Ferry Passengers by Trip**



Traffic is higher on weekends, especially Saturdays. There are few commuters Saturdays and Sundays, and most travel is visitors and locals making weekend trips for recreation, shopping, etc. As a result, the highest traffic in both directions is on Saturday mornings and Sunday afternoons. Generally, there are more people travelling to Langdale on Saturday and back to Horseshoe Bay on Sunday. During the summer period, traffic on the route is nearly twice as high due to more tourist and recreational travellers. Commuting traffic remains roughly constant year round, so the impact is proportionately less in the summer than it is in the winter.

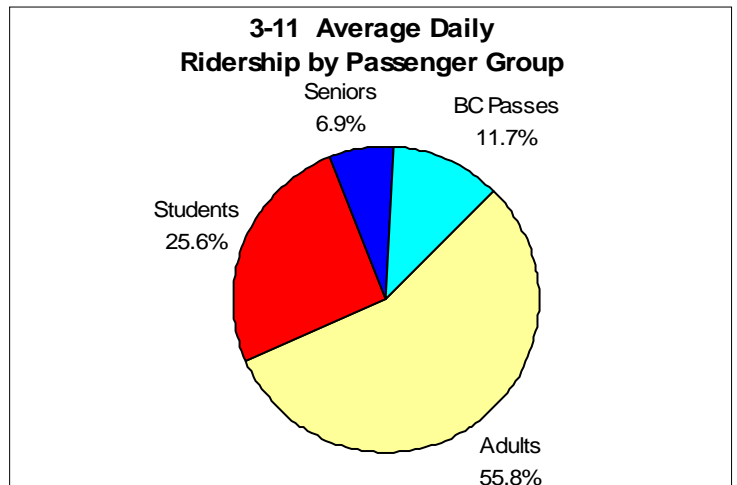
Based on a passenger count taken in September 2001, 144 transit passengers were dropped off and 129 passengers were picked up at the Langdale Ferry Terminal on an average weekday. This represents about 3% of all ferry passengers departing and arriving the ferry terminal. For departing ferry passengers, the percentage is highest on the first trip in the morning (6%), for which an average of 27 passengers were dropped off. For arriving ferry passengers, the percentage is lower in the morning and midday

(2-3%) than in the late afternoon and evening (4-5%). The greatest number of transit passengers (37) were picked up on the 5:30 pm trip. This pattern is indicative of the strong commuter market leaving the Sunshine Coast in the morning and returning in the late afternoon. Roughly 20% of arriving foot passengers use transit on weekdays. The proportion of all ferry passengers using transit is somewhat lower (2%) on Saturdays and Sundays.

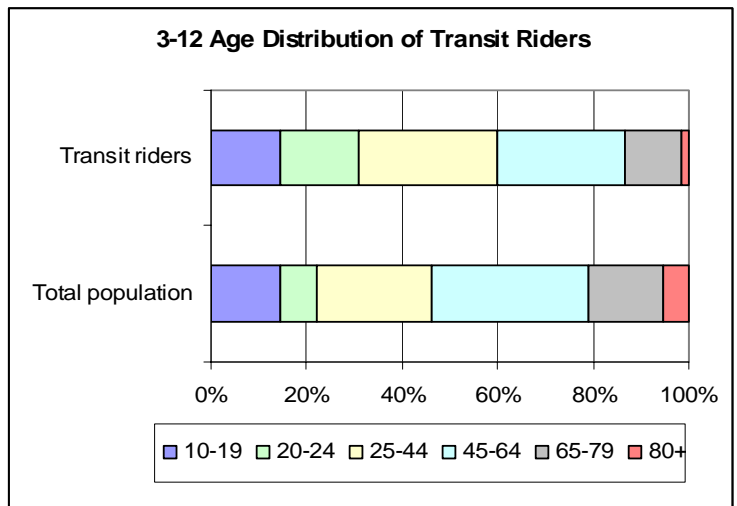
The transit service is timed to connect with both arriving and departing ferries, and it is often possible for the bus to delay its departure slightly when a ferry is late. However, depending on how late the ferry is, it is not always possible to delay the bus. In this case, an announcement is made on the ferry indicating whether or not the bus will be waiting at Langdale. Based on the 2001 passenger count, connections are missed on roughly 9% of weekday sailings and 12% of weekend sailings.

### 3.7 Passenger Profile

The chart to the right shows transit ridership in the Sunshine Coast by passenger group. Adults form the largest group, accounting for just over half of transit riders. This is higher than the average for comparable communities, and indicates the relative importance of work commuter trips, often with ferry connections, in the Sunshine Coast. Students are the next largest group of riders, just under one quarter of the total. Seniors and BC Bus pass holders make up the remaining riders.



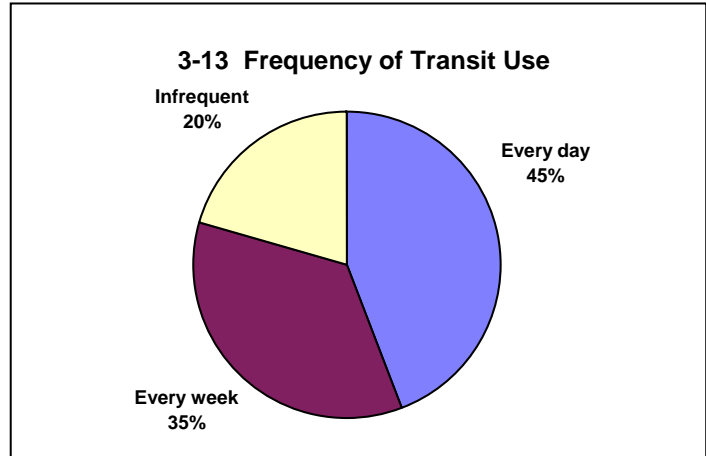
The chart to the right compares the age distribution of transit riders in the Sunshine Coast with that for the overall population. Those aged 20-24 account for less than 6% of the total population in the Sunshine Coast but make up over 16% of transit riders, as a result of high transit use among this age group. Nearly 60% of the population in the Sunshine Coast is between 25 and 64. This group makes up only a slightly lower share of transit riders. Seniors make up 20% of the total



population, but only 13% of transit riders. This is in part because seniors make fewer trips per capita than younger residents. For those trips that they do make, a greater share is made by transit, particularly for older seniors. In addition, older seniors are more likely to use handyDART, which is not included in this data.

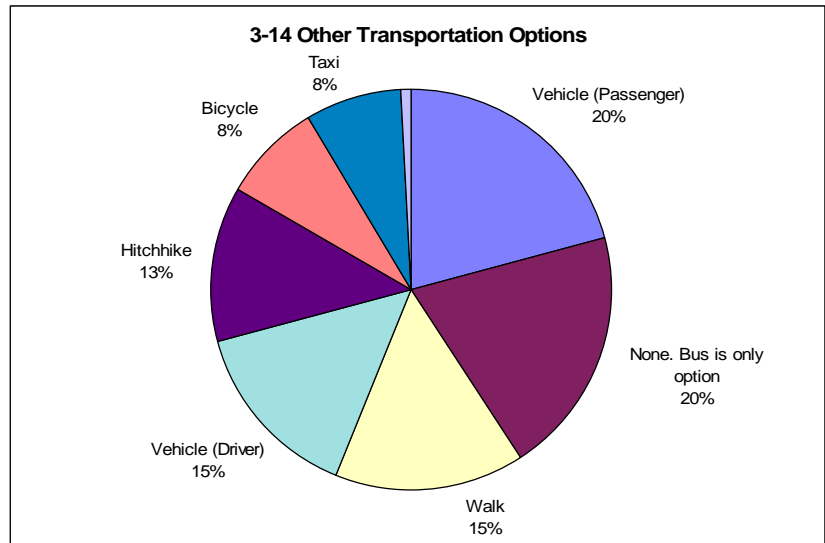
**Frequency of Transit Use**

As the chart indicates, nearly half of transit riders in the Sunshine Coast are regular users who take transit every day or every weekday. This indicates a relatively strong commuter market of people who take transit to work or school each day. A further 36% of transit riders are occasional users who take transit 2-3 times per week. Infrequent users (who use the system less than once per week) make up 20% of all passengers, which is a relatively high proportion.



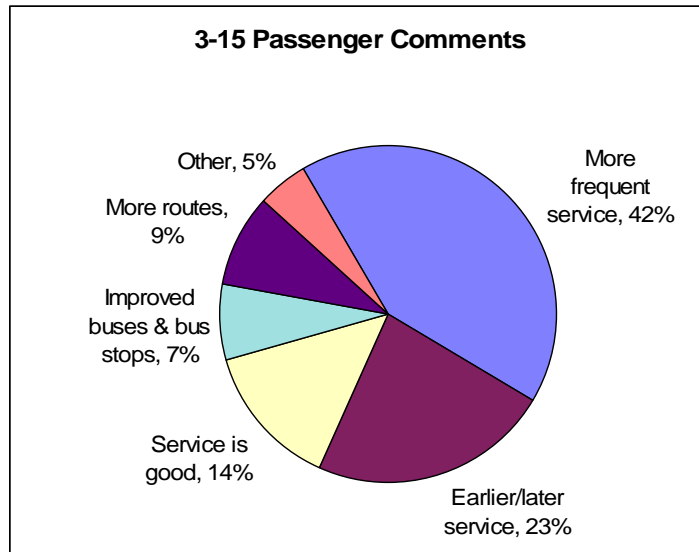
**Other Transportation Options**

Transit passengers can be divided into two groups depending on the other transportation options that they have available. Those who have no or few other transportation options are termed “transit-dependent”. Those who have other options (in particular, the use of a private automobile) but choose to use transit are termed “choice riders”. The chart below illustrates the alternative transportation options available to users of the Sunshine Coast Transit System. About 15% of transit riders reported that they had no alternative to transit; this group represents the core transit dependent group. Those who reported that they would drive as an alternative (20%) represent the core choice rider group. Those reporting other transportation options typically include both transit dependent and choice riders. Along with driving, walking (21%) and vehicle passenger (21%) were the most common alternatives to transit.



### ***Passenger Comments***

In the on board survey, passengers were asked to suggest how the Sunshine Coast Transit System could be improved. Customer satisfaction among current users is obviously an important issue. Requests for more frequent service were most common, accounting for nearly half of all comments. The next most common request was for expanded hours of service, especially later evening and more weekend service.. Other comments related to more routes (increased coverage) and improved passenger comfort on buses and at stops and transit exchanges.



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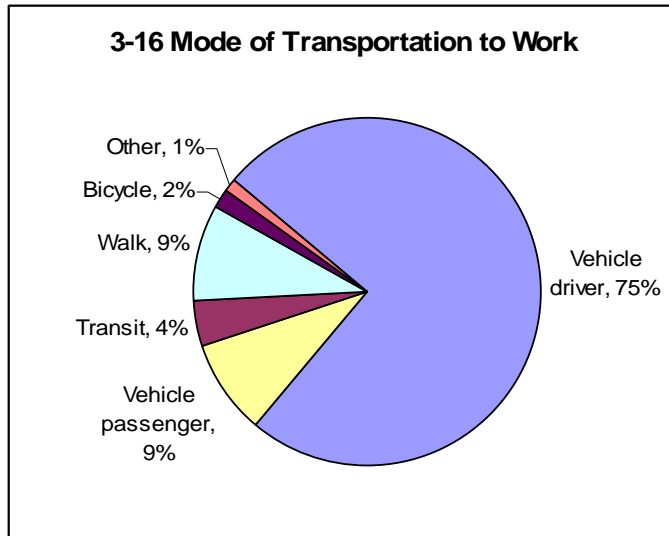
### **3.8 Current Travel Habits**

#### ***Commuter flows***

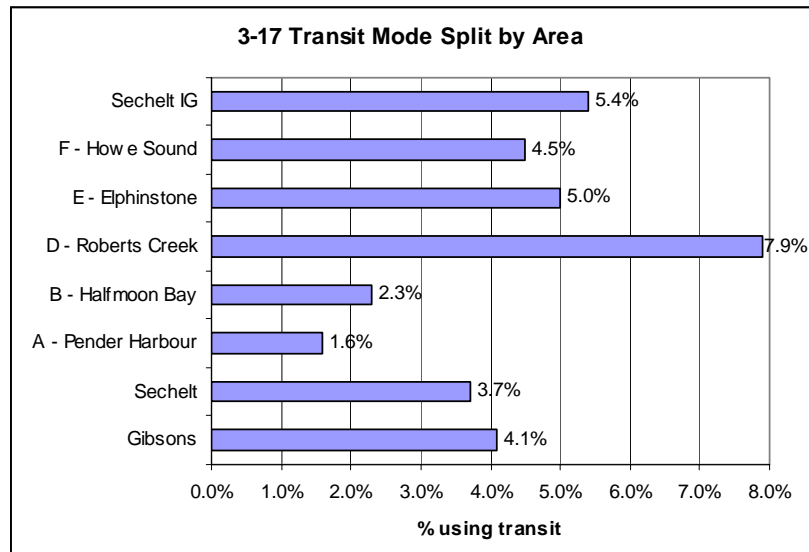
Based on the 2001 Census, nearly half of commuters in the Sunshine Coast work in the same municipality or electoral area where they live. This is particularly true for residents of Sechelt (75% work in Sechelt) and Area A - Pender Harbour (77% work in Area A). Sechelt attracted the most commuters (1,330) and it accounted for 45% of all jobs in the Sunshine Coast. This was followed by Area E - Elphinstone (15%), Area F – West Howe Sound (14%), and Gibsons (14%). Greater Vancouver was the destination for 7% of Sunshine Coast commuters. Not surprisingly, residents of the eastern part of the region, closer to the Langdale Ferry terminal, were most likely to commute to Greater Vancouver. The proportion of Greater Vancouver commuters was highest in Area F – West Howe Sound (15%), Area D – Roberts Creek (11%), and Area E – Elphinstone (10%).

**Transit mode split**

The chart below shows the mode of transportation to work in the Sunshine Coast, based on results from the 2001 Census. Just over 75% of commuters drove to work. While driving is clearly the dominant mode in the Sunshine Coast, this is the second lowest rate for the Municipal Systems (after Whistler). A further 9% of commuters travel as automobile passengers. Transit accounts for 4.2% of work trips. Again, this was the second highest transit mode split among the Municipal Systems, after Whistler. A significant 9% of work trips were made by walking and nearly 2% were made by cycling. In most communities, the transit mode split is significantly higher for female commuters than it is for male commuters – twice as high in some cases. However, in the Sunshine Coast the transit mode split is only marginally higher for females than for males (4.5% vs. 4.0%).



While the overall transit mode share for work trips is 4.2%, this varies for different areas within the Sunshine Coast, as shown in the chart below. Area D (Roberts Creek) has the highest transit mode split in the Sunshine Coast, nearly double the average at 7.9%. Many of these transit commuters are going to the Langdale Ferry. Generally, transit use is higher in the eastern part of the region than in the western part: Gibsons, Area E (Elphinstone), and Area F (West Howe Sound) have average or above average transit use while Sechelt, Area A (Pender Harbour), and Area B (Halfmoon Bay) all have lower transit use. There are several reasons for this. The eastern part of the region, being closer to Langdale, has a greater number of ferry commuters, a significant number of whom use transit to travel to the ferry terminal. Transit service is non-existent in Area A and



Transit service is non-existent in Area A and

very limited in Area B, obviously impacting transit use. Population densities are also generally lower in the western part of the region. The Sechelt IG has slightly above average transit use.

## 4.0 Service Strategies

### 4.1 Funding

The service expansion options have been costed assuming no Provincial contribution. However, there may be a new source of funding available by the time some of these services are implemented. See section 6.1 for further discussion.

### 4.2 Service frequency improvements

Increased frequency was the most requested service improvement in the recent passenger survey (42% of responses). The Langdale-Gibsons-Sechelt route is the obvious candidate for this improvement. Currently, this route is operated with 2 buses providing hourly service throughout the day. A third bus operates during the afternoon peak period. Each round trip takes almost 2 hours.



More frequent service would particularly address the needs of ferry travellers, other commuters, and students. With 30 minute service, making ferry connections would be less of an issue since the waiting time for the next bus would be significantly reduced. Improved service frequencies will also make it easier for transit to provide student transportation since there will be increased travel options for students.

There are two options for improving service on this route. The first option is to increase frequencies on the existing route. The second option is to restructure the service to create two separate routes, one regional and one local.

#### Option 1 – Increased weekday service frequency on the existing route

In option 1, the existing service structure would be maintained, but service would be added on weekdays to improve the frequencies. This service could be implemented in phases, as outlined in Table 4-1 below. Phase 1 involves the addition of one bus while Phase 2 involves the addition of a second bus. Each phase is further divided into sub-phases, with service first being added during the peak times, then extended throughout the day. The table also summarizes the annual service hours, costs, ridership, and revenue. The values in the table represent the net increase for that phase only. For example, the 1,040 hours for Phase 1B would be in addition to the 1,560 hours that would be added in Phase 1A.

#### 4-1 Option 1 – Increased Weekday Service Frequencies

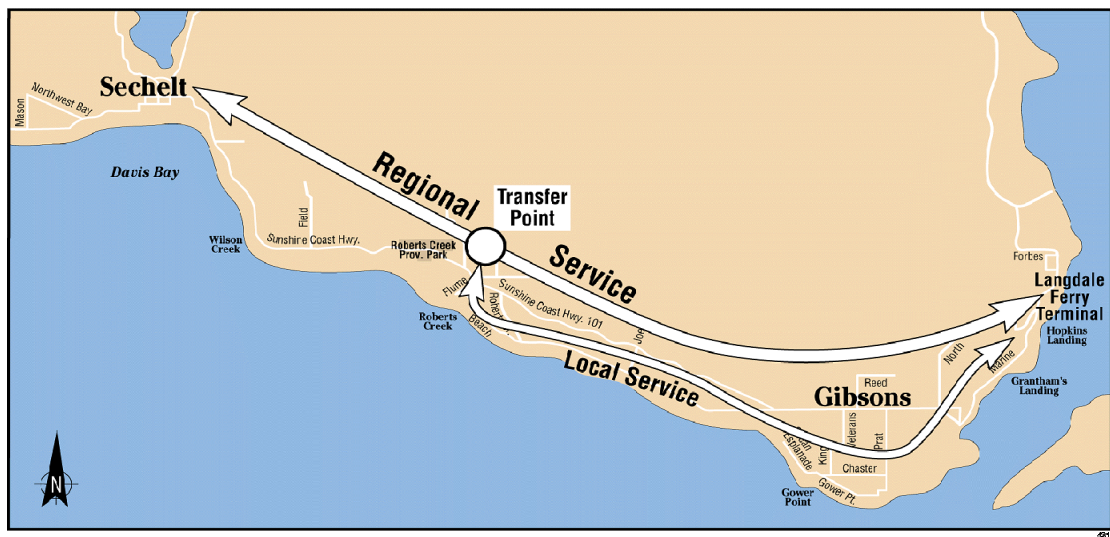
Phase	Service description	Annual hours	Buses	Total cost	Ridership	Revenue	Net local cost
1A	Additional bus during peak periods (6-10 am & 2-6 pm)	1,560	1	\$121,000	37,000	\$44,000	\$77,000
1B	Additional bus all day (6 am to 6 pm)	1,040	0	\$68,000	21,000	\$25,000	\$43,000
2A	2nd additional bus during peak periods (6-10 am & 2-6 pm)	2,080	1	\$155,000	50,000	\$59,000	\$96,000
2B	2nd additional bus all day (6 am to 6 pm)	1,040	0	\$68,000	21,000	\$25,000	\$43,000
<b>Total</b>		<b>5,720</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>\$412,000</b>	<b>129,000</b>	<b>\$153,000</b>	<b>\$259,000</b>

Currently, there is an additional bus in service on the Langdale-Sechelt route from 4 pm to 6 pm. In Phase 1A this additional bus would be expanded to 8 hours each weekday. This would allow for 2 additional round trips during the morning peak period and 1 additional round trips during the afternoon peak period. Phase 1B would expand this to 10 hours of service and 5 round trips each weekday. Phase 2A would add a second additional bus during the morning and afternoon peak periods while Phase 2B would expand the second vehicle to a full 12 hours each weekday. With the full implementation of Phase 1B, there would be 30 minute service frequency on this route throughout the day. This would add a total of 5,720 annual service hours at a total cost of \$412,000. With projected revenue of \$159,000 the net cost would be \$259,000.

#### Option 2 – Separate regional and local service

In option 2, the service would be restructured to create separate regional and local routes. See 4-2 below.

#### 4-2 Option 2 Separate Regional & Local Service



The regional route would operate between Langdale, Gibsons, and Sechelt via the Bypass/North Road and Highway 101. This trip would take 30-45 minutes in each direction. Allowing 90 minutes for the round trip, it would require 3 buses to provide 30-minute service on this route.

The local route would operate between Langdale, Gibsons, and Roberts Creek via Marine Drive, Lower Gibsons, and Lower Roberts Creek Road. Flexible routing could be used to improve service coverage, with the bus diverting off the route for passengers who call in advance. This route would take about 45 minutes in each direction. Two vehicles on this route could provide service every 60 minutes, along with time for off-route diversions.

Passengers on the local route who want to travel to or from Sechelt would be able to transfer to the regional route at Flume Road and Highway 101 in Roberts Creek. The local route would leave Langdale 15 minutes before the express route in order to make this timed connection. This also results in a greater choice of departure times for passengers, with 3-4 trips every hour between Langdale, Gibsons, and Roberts Creek.

#### 4-3 Option 2 – Separate Regional & Local Service

Service description	Annual hours	Buses	Total cost	Ridership	Revenue	Net local cost
Regional service (every 30 minutes) & local service (every 60 minutes)	8,800	2	\$616,000	200,000	\$235,000	\$381,000

Because this option involves a major restructuring of the service, it would need to be implemented all at once, rather than in phases as in option 1. This would require 8,800 annual service hours, which is a more than 50% increase from the current service level. The total cost of \$616,000 would be offset by projected revenue of \$235,000 resulting in a net cost of \$381,000.

*Recommendation - In the longer term, Option 2 is the preferred option since it provides faster, more direct service for the majority of passengers who want to travel regionally, while still providing local service in Gibsons and Roberts Creek. However, Option 1 phase 1 could be used as a temporary step to improve service frequencies until the resources are available to fully implement Option 2.*

#### 4.3 Improved Transit Service Coverage

It is estimated that of a total population of 27,000 on the Sunshine Coast, about 18,000 or 67% of residents live within 400 meters of a transit route, which is considered the maximum distance most people are willing to walk to a transit route in a suburban or rural setting. This leaves roughly one third of the population, or 9,000 residents, who are not served by transit.

Community bus, using smaller vehicles on flexible routing, would likely be the most appropriate form of service for many of the areas in the Sunshine Coast not currently served by transit, as well as some areas which are now served by conventional transit. Many areas of the Sunshine Coast consist of lower density neighborhoods which may not have the population to support conventional, fixed-route transit service using large buses. Narrow roads and steep terrain may also limit the use of large buses in some parts of the Sunshine Coast. Community bus generally follows a fixed route and schedule, but at times it may deviate from the route to provide door-to-door service. In this case, customers would have to telephone in advance if they wanted to be picked up off the usual route. With this ability to provide door-to-door service, community bus is able to serve handyDART clients in addition to the general population.

Community bus could be used in the Sunshine Coast to provide neighborhood service that feeds into the Langdale-Gibsons-Sechelt trunk route. The existing Sechelt Arena route and the Halfmoon Bay route could be provided by community bus. Pender Harbour, East Porpoise Bay and other lower density neighborhoods near Sechelt, Gibsons, and Roberts Creek might also be served by new community bus routes. The drawback to using community bus is that it may result in an increased need to transfer. This should be balanced carefully in order to maximize convenience for passengers.

#### **4.3.1 REALLOCATING CONVENTIONAL TRANSIT SERVICE TO COMMUNITY BUS**

There are some conventional transit routes serving lower density areas with more limited ridership that could be partly or entirely replaced with community bus service. Because of the lower cost of providing community bus service, a slightly greater amount could be provided for the same cost as the conventional transit service that it replaces. This would allow for additional service hours to provide flexible routing and improved service coverage.

**Halfmoon Bay/Redrooffs:** There are about 2,500 residents in the Halfmoon Bay/Redrooffs area. Of these, roughly 600 residents, mostly to north and west of the existing Halfmoon Bay route, are not served by transit. Community bus could replace the existing fixed route service in this area. Flexible routing would allow for more residents to be served. The current Halfmoon Bay route requires about 1,500 hours of conventional transit service annually. This could be replaced with a slightly higher amount of community bus service (allowing for the addition of flexible routing) at no additional net cost.

**West Sechelt:** There are about 800 residents in the West Sechelt area who are not served by transit. This includes the area north and west of the Sechelt Arena route. Currently, the West Sechelt and Sechelt Arena routes require about 1,375 hours of conventional transit service annually, which could be replaced with community bus at no additional cost. This would allow for flexible routing and improved service coverage in the West Sechelt area.

### 4.3.2 NEW COMMUNITY BUS SERVICE

There are several other major pockets of residential development that are currently not served by fixed route transit, but which might be candidates for community bus.

#### Pender Harbour Service

Area "A", which includes the area from Pender Harbour up to Egmont and Earl's Cove, is currently not part of the Transit Service Area. About 2,000 of Area "A"'s 2,500 residents live in Pender Harbour, representing the largest pocket of development on the Sunshine Coast that is currently not served by transit. If transit was introduced, Area "A" would be required to begin contributing to the cost of the service. A study completed in early 2000 found only limited potential for transit in Pender Harbour. A limited community bus service would likely be sufficient to meet the market demand.

As was described above, there is already a private bus service (Malaspina Coach Lines) connecting Pender Harbour with Earl's Cove and Sechelt. This service provides one to two round trips per day, depending on the day of week and time of year. The cost for passengers is \$11.00 each way. It is proposed that a passenger subsidy be provided to make the service more affordable. In addition, a limited community bus service between Sechelt and Pender Harbour is proposed to supplement these trips. A survey of residents conducted as part of the study in 2000 found that the most requested travel times were leaving Pender Harbour at 10 am and returning at 3 pm. Community bus service providing two round trips per day (Monday to Saturday) combined with the existing two round trips per day being provided by Malaspina would provide residents with a good choice of travel times.

#### 4-4 Proposed service to Pender Harbour

	Earl's Cove	Pender Harbour	Arr. Sechelt	Lv. Sechelt	Pender Harbour	Earl's Cove
Malaspina	8:20am	8:45am	9:35am			
Transit				9:30am	10:00am	
Transit		10:15am	10:45am			
Malaspina				11:00am*	11:45am*	12:20pm*
Transit				2:45pm	3:15pm	
Transit		3:30pm	4:00pm			
Malaspina*	4:20pm*	4:50pm*	5:35pm*	7:00pm	7:45pm	8:20pm

\*Operates Friday to Sunday only, except during the summer. Times in the summer are slightly different to meet ferry schedules.

Table 4-4 outlines a possible schedule for the community bus service. Exact travel times would be determined following more detailed planning. The community bus might also route through Halfmoon Bay in order to provide additional service to that area, as well as a direct connection between Halfmoon Bay and Pender Harbour. This service could be implemented within the next three to five years.

**4-4 Pender Harbour Service**

Service description	Annual hours	Buses	Total cost	Ridership	Revenue	Net local cost
Subsidized bus trips	--	--	\$16,000	2,200	--	\$16,000
Community bus to Pender Harbour	900	1	\$45,000	6,000	\$7,000	\$38,000

The community bus service would require 3 hours per day or approximately 900 hours annually. It is forecast to carry about 6,000 passengers. The cost of providing this service would be approximately \$45,000 annually. If the private bus trips were subsidized by \$7 per trip (in order to bring the cost to the passenger down to \$4), 2,200 additional trips could be provided for \$16,000.

**New Community Bus Service in Other Areas**

In addition to Pender Harbour, community bus is appropriate for serving several other areas in the Sunshine Coast. One additional community bus providing about 10 hours of service per day, Monday through Saturday, is proposed. This could be used to provide community bus service to a number of the areas are listed below. The total service hours required to provide service in all of these areas is greater than the 3,000 hours included in the plan, so some prioritization would be necessary. Further market analysis would be required to determine how the service would be allocated among these different areas, and more detailed service planning will also be required.



**4-5 New Community Bus Service**

Service description	Annual hours	Buses	Total cost	Ridership	Revenue	Net local cost
Community bus	3000	1	\$154,000	36,000	\$42,000	\$112,000

**East Porpoise Bay:** There are about 1,000 residents not served by transit in this area along the east side of Sechelt Inlet. Transit service has operated in this area in the past, but it was discontinued due to low ridership. Due to the relatively low density and the terrain, this area would be a good candidate for community bus. Flexible routing could be used to better serve this area. Providing 6 round trips per day from downtown Sechelt would require approximately 1,200 hours annually, including time for flexible routing.

**Gibsons area:** There are about 1,500 residents in the Gibsons/Elphinstone area who are not served by transit, mostly in the area around Gower Point Road/Ocean Beach Esplanade and north of Highway 101. This former area was briefly served by conventional transit several years ago, but community bus would be more appropriate. Community bus could also be used to provide an enhanced local circulator or shuttle service connecting Upper and Lower Gibsons, as suggested in the Gibsons Official Community Plan. Providing 4 daily round trips between Sunnycrest Mall and Ocean Beach Esplanade would require about 1,000 hours annually, including some time for flexible routing.

**Roberts Creek area:** There are about 600 residents beyond the standard walking distance from transit, mostly north of Highway 101. The largest concentration (about 350) is in the Hanbury Rd./Lockyer Rd. area. If the separate local and regional service option (as described in section 4.2) is implemented, the local route with some flexible routing would help to improve coverage to Roberts Creek. In the interim (or as an alternative), community bus could be used to enhance service coverage in Roberts Creek. Providing 2 daily round trips between Gibsons and Roberts Creek would require about 1,000 hours annually.

**Selma Park/Wilson Creek area:** There are about 350 residents in this area not served by transit, mostly along Selma Park Road and Field Road. Field Road is also the location of the Sechelt Airport and the future location of the Regional District offices, which are being relocated from Sechelt. Providing 3 daily round trips between downtown Sechelt and Field Road would require about 700 hours annually. A further possibility would be to extend this community bus service to provide a link with Roberts Creek from Sechelt and Wilson Creek.

**West Howe Sound/Port Mellon:** Although Area "F" is currently in the Transit Service Area, the service does not extend beyond Langdale. While the residential population is small (about 200), the Port Mellon mill is a significant employment node, with many of the employees living in the Langdale/Gibsons area and elsewhere on the Sunshine Coast. However, transit to Port Mellon would likely be provided only if the mill funded the service as a community partner. To date, no interest has been expressed in doing this.

*Recommendation – It is recommended that the Pender Harbour service and additional community bus service be approved in principle for implementation within the next 3-5 years.*

#### 4.4 Summary of Service Options

The table below summarizes the service enhancements proposed for the Sunshine Coast Transit System over the next five years (2005-2010). The phasing for implementation of these services will be determined following more detailed market research and planning, and included as part of the annual budget development process.

Description of Service Options	Vehicles	Service hours	Total cost
Improved service frequency on the Langdale-Gibsons-Sechelt corridor:			
Option 1: Increased frequency on existing Langdale-Sechelt route	2	5,720	\$412,000
Option 2: Separate regional & local service	2	8,800	\$616,000
Improved service coverage			
Pender Harbour service	1	900	\$61,000
Community bus to areas currently not served by transit	1	3,000	\$154,000

#### 4.5 Key Issue: Student Transportation

High school students form a key market for transit. Students make up about one quarter of transit riders on the Sunshine Coast, which is a smaller share than in many similar sized communities. This indicates that there is potential to expand this market.

Increased frequencies on the Sunshine Coast Transit System should make the system more attractive to students, with more trip options to choose from. In addition, there are several initiatives, already used by many communities around B.C., which could be implemented in the Sunshine Coast to encourage students to use transit, and to reduce the overlap in service between transit and school district busing. With changes to Provincial funding for student transportation in recent years, there is greater incentive for cooperation between the school district and transit.



- Several school districts have eliminated some school bus routes, which have been replaced with transit.
- Several school districts purchase or subsidize monthly passes for students who live outside the walk limits (4.8 km for Grades 8-12).
- An Ambassador program, where bus drivers or other transit staff visit area schools, can be used to teach students about the transit system and encourage them to use it.
- The Sunshine Coast already has a student monthly pass. Some communities offer semester passes for high school students by selling a bundle of 4 monthly passes at a further discount. This encourages longer term transit use by students.

The process for reducing the overlap in service between school buses and transit follows three steps:

- The first priority, and the easiest, is to replace school bus service in those areas where students can be easily accommodated on the existing transit service without having to make any changes. There is no additional cost to the transit system and no impact on the existing service.
- The second priority is to replace school bus service in areas where students can be accommodated with minor schedule and routing changes to the existing transit service. This would have minimal to no impact on transit costs or on other aspects of the transit service.
- Finally, in some cases entirely new transit service may be required to replace some school bus trips. This will be the case if the area to be served is outside the current transit service area, or if the trip is at a peak time when all existing transit buses are in use. This is a more costly change to make, and the benefits would need to be examined more closely.

Encouraging greater integration of transit and school busing provides benefits to the school district, the transit system, and to students:

- Transit productivity increases as a result of increased student ridership without any need for significant increases in service. The transit system also receives more revenue.
- The school district can save money as the cost of providing students with transit passes is generally less than the cost of providing a school bus.
- Eliminating the service overlap means a reduction in the overall taxpayer supported cost of providing transportation in the community.
- Transit provides students with a much more flexible service than the regular school buses. Students can choose from a number of trip times to and from school and they can use the transit passes to travel throughout the system at any time. This also encourages students to use transit for other trips in addition to the daily school commute.

*Recommendation - It is recommended that transit and school district staff develop a plan to reduce overlap in the two services.*

## 4.6 Capital Plan

Currently, there are 4 conventional transit vehicles and 4 paratransit vehicles in the Sunshine Coast Transit Fleet. The service options outlined above would require 2 additional conventional buses and 2 additional mini-buses (for community bus service), resulting in an increase in the total fleet from the current 8 to 12 vehicles by 2010. As the fleet grows, expansion of the maintenance facility may also be required, and this will need to be examined.

The Sunshine Coast Regional District has expressed strong interest in alternative fuels to reduce vehicle emissions. BC Transit has been examining cleaner fuel technologies for new vehicles, and is currently managing or participating in four projects promoting alternative energy sources:

- A biodiesel pilot project in the Greater Victoria region from December 2004 to June 2005 involves six transit buses using biodiesel to evaluate the benefits of this fuel, including reduced emissions.
- Three hybrid diesel-electric transit buses were introduced in the Kelowna Region in May 2005. Three more hybrid buses will be introduced in Victoria. These were the first hybrid diesel-electric transit buses to enter regular service in Canada. There is a projected 60% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions as compared to a standard diesel transit bus.
- BC Transit is participating in the Vancouver Fuel Cell Vehicle Program. The program will bring five Ford fuel cell vehicles to B.C. for evaluation over a three year period from April 2005 to March 2008. One of these vehicles will be operated in Greater Victoria by BC Transit.
- BC Transit is also overseeing the development of a feasibility study on how to meet the challenges of introducing a fleet of 15 to 20 fuel cell buses into full-time, regular transit service. The study will develop the management strategy to guide the process from initial project definition to implementation of "on street" service. The goal is to have a proven, functional fleet in time for the 2010 Olympic Games.

Beyond these pilot projects, alternate energy and fuel technologies will be considered for future vehicle purchases. In addition, some existing diesel buses in the Municipal Systems may be repowered to use alternative energy sources. Both of these options will be considered in the Sunshine Coast as the transit fleet is renewed and expanded over the next decade.



## 5.0 Supporting Strategies

The service plan is only one element (although a critical one) of a successful transit system. Supporting strategies can be used to encourage greater ridership and improve transit system performance. Fares, on-street facilities, marketing, and transportation demand management (TDM) strategies can all be a very effective promoting greater transit use and supporting the service plan.

### 5.1 Fare Strategies

There are a number of strategies which can be used when setting fares to encourage greater ridership, target key market groups, and meet cost recovery targets. In order to accomplish this, a package of strategies is required to address pricing, fare products, and improved convenience for passengers. The use of prepaid fares, particularly passes, is a key component of this strategy. Monthly passes are sold at a discount, compared with the price of individual cash fares, giving commuters and other regular transit users a price break and encouraging more frequent transit use. High school and post secondary students represent critical markets that can be targeted with further discounts using special monthly or semester passes. Seniors may be another target market.

#### ***Advantages of Prepaid Fares:***

Prepaid fares currently account for about half of transit ridership on the Sunshine Coast, which is lower than in most other similar-sized communities. While tickets account for a relatively large share of rides (11% in the Sunshine Coast versus 6% for the Municipal Systems as a whole), monthly passes account for a much smaller than average share of rides (12% in the Sunshine Coast versus 36% overall in the Municipal Systems). Use of prepaid fares should be encouraged since it provides a number of advantages for both passengers and the transit system:

- ease of use for passengers, since exact change is not required each time the passenger boards the bus;
- there are no direct, out of pocket costs to use the bus which puts transit on more equal footing with the private automobile;
- regular users receive a price break which encourages greater commuter travel on transit;
- since prepaid fares are paid up front, they encourage passengers who typically buy passes for commuting, to use transit for other non-commuting trips as well

Use of prepaid fares can be encouraged by discounting the cost compared with the equivalent cash fare. Monthly passes are typically set at no more than 30 times the cash fare in order to provide regular users with a discount and provide an incentive for using the pass. This can have very positive impacts on ridership. In many communities, increased use of passes over the past decade has been

accompanied by large increases in overall ridership. The current fares for the Sunshine Coast Transit System are outlined below.

***Fare Structure for the Sunshine Coast Transit System (April 1, 2006)***

<b>Current Fares</b>	
<b>Cash Fares</b>	
Adult	\$2.25
Student/Senior	\$1.75
<b>Monthly Passes</b>	
Adult	\$55
Student/Senior	\$35
<b>Tickets</b>	<b>books of 10</b>
Adult	\$20.00
Student/Senior	\$15.00

Given the increased focus on the student market, introduction of a semester pass for high school students would help to further encourage this market. This would consist of a bundle of 4 monthly student passes that could be purchased for a discount, typically 20-25% off the cost of 4 individual passes. In the Sunshine Coast, this would be approximately \$110. This would provide students who are regular transit users with a price break, and would encourage them to make a longer term commitment to using transit.

*Recommendation - that a semester pass for high school students be introduced into the tariff.*

***Integrated Fares***

Ferry passengers form an important market for the Sunshine Coast Transit System, with 37% of transit passengers making a ferry connection according to the latest on-board survey. According to the 2001 Census, roughly 500 Sunshine Coast residents have jobs in Greater Vancouver. This represents about 7% of the total workforce on the Sunshine Coast. Most of these commuters travel to Horseshoe Bay by ferry, and many of those use transit either on the Sunshine Coast side or on the Vancouver side. An integrated fare product would encourage more commuters to use transit.

Introduction of an integrated fare product will require cooperation between the SCRDC, BC Transit, BC Ferries, and Translink. A monthly pass for the Sunshine Coast Transit System currently costs \$55 while a two-zone monthly pass for Translink costs \$95. Foot passenger tickets for the Langdale-Horseshoe Bay route cost \$72 for a book of 10 prepaid tickets. Purchasing all these passes would cost about \$300 per month.

*Recommendation - that discussions with BC Ferries and Translink be initiated to develop a lower cost integrated fare product.*

## 5.2 On-street Facilities

On-street facilities form a critical component of the transit system. They are highly visible and are usually the first points of contact that people have with the system. For the general public, on-street facilities form a critical component of the overall image of the transit system, and the community's level of commitment and support for transit.

On-street facilities include bus stop signs, benches, shelters, and transit exchanges. Good facilities help to make the overall experience of using transit safer, more convenient, and more comfortable. By doing so, they good facilities can encourage greater use of the transit system. There should be an on-going plan to maintain and upgrade on-street facilities.



## 5.3 TDM Strategy

Transportation Demand Management (TDM) measures are used to encourage people to make more efficient use of the transportation system. This is achieved by reducing the number of trips, shifting the time of travel, and (most relevant to the discussion here) shifting the demand to other modes of travel by making these other modes more attractive relative to the automobile. By encouraging greater transit ridership, TDM could be a very effective means of improving transit performance on the Sunshine Coast. Promotion of TDM is a key way that transit can broaden its role in the region's transportation system, which is one of the community objectives of the Business Plan.

While TDM measures could play a key role in reducing the Sunshine Coast's dependence on single occupant private vehicles, it can often be difficult to organize. TDM can involve a large number of players including different levels of government and government agencies, along with institutions, major employers, and major property owners. There are no clearly defined roles concerning which of these groups provides the different components of a TDM strategy and who pays for these components. This will require discussion among these groups to determine how the various strategies will be administered. Although many TDM strategies can be implemented with little or no cost, the issue of funding for those strategies, where it is required, must also be addressed. Funding should be pursued with a number of public and private sector groups in the region with an interest in efficient transportation system use. Proposals for the development of a regional transportation plan should include consideration of TDM strategies.

### ***Inventory of Common TDM Measures***

TDM measures can either be punitive “sticks” that discourage automobile use or “carrots” which encourage use of alternative transportation modes. Examples of common TDM measures are listed in the table below.

<b>Transportation Demand Management Measures</b>	
<b>HOV Priority Measures</b>	<b><i>Facilities to encourage the use of high occupancy vehicles</i></b>
Signal priority measures	Priority for transit vehicles at signalized intersections.
Queue jumper lanes	Allow HOV's to bypass congestion at traffic bottlenecks.
HOV lanes	Highway or arterial lanes that are dedicated for HOV use only.
HOV toll exemption	Exemption from tolls for HOV's.
<b>Ridesharing</b>	<b><i>Measures to increase average vehicle occupancy</i></b>
Car pools	Ridesharing in private vehicles.
Van pools	Ridesharing in van provided by employer or agency.
<b>Intermodal Trips</b>	<b><i>Provide flexibility to use transit for part of trip</i></b>
Park-and-Ride	People drive and park at transit stops at key feeder locations.
Bike-and-Ride	People cycle to transit stops provided with bicycle storage.
<b>Parking Management</b>	<b><i>Measures to manage supply and demand for parking</i></b>
Reduced requirements	Reduces the supply of parking in town centres.
Increased parking costs	Reduce current subsidy for parking and apply to other modes.
Preferential parking for HOV's	Reserve the most desirable parking spaces for car and van pools.
<b>Promotion of Cycling</b>	<b><i>Measures to promote cycling as an alternative to driving</i></b>
Bicycle facilities at destination	Provide secure storage, showers, and changing facilities.
Bicycle racks on buses	Gives cyclists the choice of taking bikes on the bus.

<b>Employer Programs</b>	<b><i>Measures administrated by employers or institutions</i></b>
Employee Transportation Administrator	Coordinates all TDM programs to reduce single occupant vehicle trips to the work site or institution.
Employee transportation allowance	Employer provides transportation allowance (for any mode) to all employees to replace free parking.
Employer bus passes	Annual bus passes purchased through payroll deduction.
Guaranteed ride home	Employee is guaranteed a ride home when leaving early or late.
Flexible work hours	Allows employees to adjust schedule to car pool or transit.
Telecommuting	Allows employees to work at home one or more days per week.

### ***TDM Measures for the Sunshine Coast***

Not all TDM measures are suitable for the Sunshine Coast. For example, many strategies such as HOV lanes require a high level of traffic congestion in the region as an incentive for drivers to abandon their cars. Currently, there is relatively little traffic congestion on the Sunshine Coast. The following measures are most likely to succeed given the conditions on the Sunshine Coast.

*Promotion of cycling* - the Sunshine Coast is well-suited to the promotion of cycling, given the climate and geography. This can be accomplished by providing cyclists with the proper facilities, including safe and convenient cycling routes, secure storage areas, showers, and changing rooms at their destinations. Sunshine Coast Transit vehicles are equipped with bike racks. Providing bicycle storage facilities at major transit exchanges can also encourage greater integration of transit and cycling. This strategy should be coordinated with the development of cycling trails on the Sunshine Coast.

*Park & Ride facilities* - Park and Ride is typically best suited to serving low density areas where there is a relatively long commute into a major centre. Since commuters begin their trips by automobile, there needs to be a strong disincentive to convince them to switch modes part way through their commute. On the Sunshine Coast, ferry commuters would be the most likely market for this. The cost of taking cars onto the ferry, as well as congestion and high parking costs in Vancouver, provide the disincentive to driving the whole way. A Park & Ride facility in Sechelt, for example, would allow commuters from parts of the Sunshine Coast not served by transit to drive to the Sechelt then transfer onto transit for the trip to Langdale.

*Ridesharing Programs* - Ridesharing, which includes vanpooling and carpooling, provides an additional option for commuting trips that are not served by transit. It is usually impractical for transit to serve long commutes from low-density residential areas, and ridesharing can often be a good solution for such trips. Ridesharing is usually most attractive to people who have long commutes, by allowing them to share commuting costs. In the Sunshine Coast, ridesharing is particularly attractive for those who commute via the ferry to Greater Vancouver.



BC Transit, in partnership with the Jack Bell Foundation, coordinates vanpools in several regions throughout B.C., including the Sunshine Coast. Commuters participating in ridesharing typically pay the full cost of their travel, so the cost to the individual is higher than a transit fare. Currently, there is only 1 vanpool operating strictly on the Sunshine Coast. However, there are an additional 10 vanpools operating between the Sunshine Coast and Greater Vancouver. Half of these vanpools take the vehicle onto the ferry while the remaining half leave the vehicle at Horseshoe Bay. The Jack Bell Foundation also administers a ridematching service that can be used for both the organized car and vanpools, as well as private ridesharing. Currently, there is likely a significant amount of informal carpooling happening on the Sunshine Coast.

## 5.4 Marketing Strategies

Marketing strategies can be used to identify and target key transit markets, and raise the profile of transit in the region through enhanced public information and promotion. The components of a Marketing Strategy include market research, public information, education, public awareness and promotions.

### ***Market Research:***

This is a critical component of the marketing strategy that involves gathering information about the market. This information is used to determine who rides the system, how the system is being used, and what can be done to make the system more attractive for non-users. Market research is required to determine how best to position other components of the marketing strategy.

The sources used to gather market information include the following:

- Passenger counts
- On board passenger surveys
- Stakeholder meetings
- Focus groups - potential for future use.
- Consumer attitude surveys - potential for future use.

***Public Information:***

This is information required to allow the public to use the transit system. Lack of knowledge about the system and about how to use the system is often a major barrier that prevents people from using transit, a barrier which public information can help to overcome. Public information is a non-discretionary component of the marketing strategy that must be developed and maintained on an on-going basis. Components of public information include:

- Riders guides - which provide route, schedule, and other information
- Signage for bus stops, kiosks, bus interiors
- Website ([www.busonline.ca](http://www.busonline.ca)) and Telephone information

***Education:***

This involves telling the public about the community benefits of transit, including environmental and accessibility issues. It is aimed at raising awareness about these issues and changing attitudes so that people are more likely to support and to use transit. The "Go Green" campaign, which has been used in various parts of the province, is an example of this.

***Special promotions:***

These promotions are used to raise local awareness of the transit system. These can take the form of special events or on-going campaigns. Partnerships with public or private groups can be important in these types of promotions. For example, the event or promotion may focus on specific partner such as a recreation or shopping centre. Examples of special promotions include the following:

- Anniversaries and ridership milestones can be celebrated with special events that involve the public in order to raise awareness.
- Special fare discount promotions such as 2 for 1 Tuesdays or weekend family passes can be used to encourage new users to try out the system.
- Holiday promotions such as Santa bus and free New Years Eve service can also encourage new users.
- The McGruff safety program is a partnership with the RCMP.

## **6.0 Implementation Process**

### **6.1 The Funding Challenge**

The most significant implementation issue facing the SCR D and BC Transit will be finding the resources to protect core transit service levels and to fund service expansion in order to meet community needs.

The cost of providing transit service on the Sunshine Coast is cost-shared between the Province and SCR D. In the past, the Province has paid a fixed share of total costs, approximately 47% of conventional transit service and 67% of custom transit service, as specified in BC Transit legislation. The SCR D is responsible for the remainder of costs, but also receives all transit revenue to offset its share of costs. However, some of the SCR D's costs have not been included in the cost-shared budget, so BC Transit's effective share of costs is lower than officially stated.

Provincial funding for transit has been restricted for the past several years. While the Province has increased funding to maintain core services in the face of rising costs, there has been no Provincial funding available for the operating cost portion of service expansion since 2001. The corporation's three-year service plan for the period April 2006 – March 2009 includes initiatives to enhance service quality and provide support for many of the priorities of local government partners. However, the provincial contribution to BC Transit is maintained at the 2006/07 level for 2007/08 and 2008/09. Cost pressures in the subsequent two years will result in a provincial funding shortfall for existing service under historic cost-sharing assumptions.

Beginning in May 2003, the province initiated "flexible funding" by offering local government partners the option of electing to fund a higher share of costs in order to meet local needs. The SCR D was one of the local government partners that agreed to flexible funding in order to avoid cutting transit core services and to expand service.

BC Transit has been actively working with the Ministry of Transportation to support the work of the provincial government in developing new, sustainable long-term funding and governance structure for public transit in BC. The Province has contracted consultants to review these issues, with a report expected later in 2006. However, implementation of any recommended changes may not occur until 2008. BC Transit has been in discussion with the Province to provide some interim funding to cover cost increases in core services and to fund service expansion. If this funding becomes available, service expansion in the Sunshine Coast would be eligible.

## 6.2 Service Implementation

Once the Transit Business Plan has been approved, it becomes a guiding document for making future transit decisions on the Sunshine Coast. The specific service changes outlined in the Transit Business Plan will be reviewed on an annual basis. Service changes identified for the upcoming year will be further refined through detailed planning work. These may then be reviewed in a public consultation process conducted through the website and public open houses. The final detailed service proposal would then be approved as part of the annual budget development process.

The following table outlines the proposed service changes over the next 5 years. The Regional District has approved a financial plan that supports this implementation schedule. However, as noted above, the actual implementation schedule may be modified due to changes in the market or in local priorities.

Year	Improvement	Service Hours	Annual total
2006	Annualization of Halfmoon Bay service improvements	220	1,080
	Implement Langdale-Sechelt service frequency phase 1 (September)	860	
2007	Annualization of Langdale-Sechelt phase 1	1,740	3,690
	Implement community bus (June)	1,950	
2008	Annualization of community bus	1,950	3,510
	Implement Langdale-Sechelt phase 2	1,560	
2009	Annualization of Langdale-Sechelt phase 2	1,560	3,100
	Implement Regional/Local service strategy (June)	1,540	

## 6.3 Update Process

The Transit Business Plan is not a static document. The plan will be updated on an annual basis to reflect actual service implementation to date, and to respond to changes in transit performance levels, markets, and demand. Adjustments to future service expansions may be made each year to reflect these changes in market demand and to reflect changes in local priorities.

### *Market Research and Monitoring*

Many of the service proposals and strategies included in this plan are based on an assessment of key transit markets. On-going market research will ensure that these strategies continue to meet the market demand and will respond to changes in key markets. Passenger counts, on-board passenger surveys, public opinion surveys, and population forecasts can all be used to monitor performance and assess the changing transit market. This

information allows the market profile and the overall market trends for the Sunshine Coast to be updated annually.

### *Key Performance Indicators*

Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) are used to monitor implementation of new services and overall system performance. KPIs can be used to assess the viability of individual service proposals, aiding in the decision-making around implementation of these services. KPIs can be used to compare the Sunshine Coast Transit System with other benchmark communities. Passengers per hour of service (productivity), cost per passenger, and cost recovery are commonly used KPIs.

## **7.0 Recommendations**

It is recommended that the Sunshine Coast Regional District approve this plan as a guide for transit service planning and delivery for the Sunshine Coast.

### **Service Strategies**

4. Approve Phase 1 of the Langdale-Sechelt service frequency improvement and direct staff to proceed with more detailed planning work.
5. Approve in principle the service strategies for implementation over the next 5 years. These proposals will further evaluated as part of the annual budget development process.

### **Supporting Strategies**

6. Approve in principle the Supporting Strategies, including the introduction of a high school semester pass and the development of an integrated fare product in cooperation with BC Ferries and Translink.