



Prince Edward Island **PUBLIC TRANSIT COALITION**

Public Transit Feasibility Study by **ENTRA Consultants**

SUMMARY

In 2007, ENTRA Consultants, a firm specializing in transportation planning, was hired to investigate the transportation needs of Prince Edward Islanders and to develop a proposal for an Island-wide transit system. They started by organizing a series of private and public consultations with individuals, business people and community organizations from all corners of the province, offering P.E.I. residents an opportunity to describe the particular transportation issues they faced and the benefits of a public transit system.

Participants in the consultations spoke of the needs of Senior citizens, people with disabilities, and others who don't have access to a private vehicle and currently depend on friends and neighbours to get them to stores, work, health appointments and community events. A public transit system, they said, would reduce their isolation, increase their independence and offer new opportunities for participation in community events and programmes. Other benefits were identified by the consultants:

Employment: Employers as well as employees would benefit from a public transit system, especially in the case of industries such as seafood processing and aerospace, that employ large numbers of people and are located outside of the two main urban centres.

Cost-Savings: Public transit has been shown to be more cost-effective than automobile travel; the implementation of an Island-wide system would create the possibility of increased availability of funds for say, education, health care and social services.

Health and Safety: An Island-wide system would reduce the numbers of vehicles on the roads of P.E.I. and increase highway safety. Because the incidence of injuries and deaths due to motor vehicle accidents would decrease, health care costs would also go down.

Environment: Public transit is promoted as a strategy to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, as eventually there would be far fewer private vehicles on the road. Considering the benefits of an Island-wide public transit system, ENTRA has proposed

implementing a system that would depend on fixed bus routes linking communities from Tignish to Souris. The authors recommend putting the system into effect in two stages over a five-year period. They distinguish between two types of service: Commuter Connector Routes, designed to connect employees to their jobs, with fast, convenient and direct service and Community Connector Routes, designed to connect communities to each other.

Stage One: Scheduled bus routes (Commuter Connector Routes) will be established between Tignish and Summerside; Summerside and Charlottetown; Charlottetown and Montague. The number of people who would ride the bus was estimated at 360 passengers per day.

Stage Two: Commuter Connector Routes would be added, between Charlottetown, Souris and Montague. Community Connector Routes would be established between Tignish and Alberton and O’Leary through Tyne Valley in the West; through East Point and Souris; and through Montague Murray Harbour, Wood Islands and Belle River in the East. Seasonal service would be added between Charlottetown and Cavendish. The number of people who would ride the bus was estimated at 1,050 passengers per day.

Fares would be approximately \$6.00 per one-way trip. The schedule for the main routes would include nine trips per day in each direction, with three of these happening at peak hours. The “Community Connector” routes would provide less frequent service but would link with the main connector routes.

The report recommends using smaller, wheelchair-accessible buses (15-30 passengers) and developing car parking and bus stop facilities in the latter phases of implementation.

A breakdown of the capital and operating costs associated with implementing an Island-wide system over a five-year period is included in the report. Briefly, the total capital costs would be highest in Year 1 (\$2.6 million) and diminish to \$500,000.00 in Year 5. Operating costs would range from \$1.2 million in Year 1 to \$3.2 million in Year 5, reflecting the development of the service and addition of new routes. Revenues from fares would range from \$546,000.00 in Year 1 to \$1.5 million in Year 5, leaving a need for an operating subsidy of \$622,000.00 in Year 1 which would rise every year to \$1.6 million in Year 5 (due to the costs associated with operating a more comprehensive service). The report contains several options for funding the system, including a “green levy” from gasoline sales. Based on current data, a 1% green levy would generate approximately \$2 million annually, which when added to fare revenue, would be enough to cover both capital and operating costs.