

# ENABLING THE FUTURE: FEDERAL TRANSIT INVESTMENTS ACROSS CANADA



Left: Société de transport de l'Outaouais, right: GO Transit

Across Canada, transit systems are benefiting from increasing financial commitments by provincial and federal governments. Nationally, transit ridership is growing quickly—advancing 15% over the five years ending in 2007—which is requiring greater support from senior levels of government for transit infrastructure renewal and expansion.

The Government of Canada has a particularly important role in providing financial resources for transit investments. Federal contributions motivate complementary investments by provinces, territories and municipalities (see Figure 1). They raise transit's public profile, and confirm its vital role in building more sustainable communities with a better quality of life.

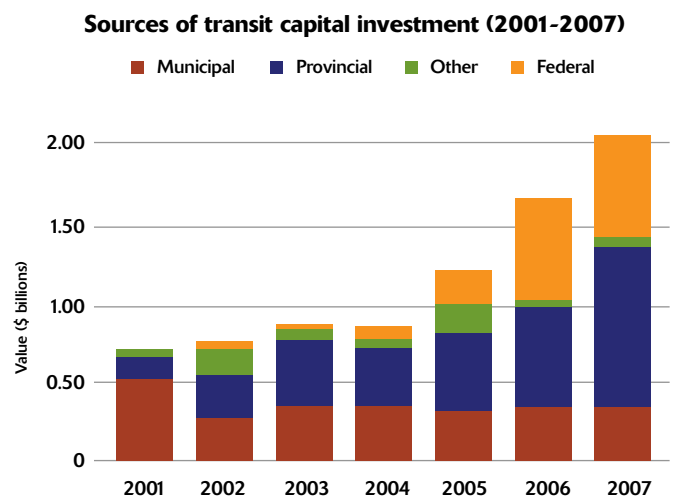
This issue paper explores the various ways that the federal government supports transit, and highlights some examples of how federal support has made important transit projects possible in Canadian communities.

## Investment mechanisms

In the federal government's Budget 2009, it announced several infrastructure investments of relevance to public transit. They include a \$4-billion **Infrastructure Stimulus Fund**, covering up to half the cost of infrastructure rehabilitation projects that begin construction in 2009 or 2010, as well as a five-year, \$1-billion **Green Infrastructure Fund**. Within the existing **Building Canada Fund**, the budget also committed an extra \$500 million for the small communities component over the next two years, and

specified accelerated payments under the base funding initiative over the next two years as well as accelerated funding for longer-term infrastructure projects. Public transit is eligible within all of these initiatives.

Figure 1



Note: This CUTA issue paper is a follow-up to Issue Paper 27, *An Evolving Picture: Federal Transit Investments Across Canada* (February 2008).

In 2007, the **Building Canada Fund** replaced several other infrastructure funds that had been in place since as early as 2001 (namely the Canada Strategic Infrastructure Fund, the Highways and Border Infrastructure Fund, and the Municipal Rural Infrastructure Fund). Building Canada will offer \$8.8 billion from 2007 through 2014 for a variety of eligible investments including public transit projects. Provincial and territorial governments and municipalities are expected to match federal contributions, and projects are selected for funding through both collaborative and competitive processes.

In 2005, the federal government committed to transfer a portion of federal gas tax revenues to municipalities for environmentally sustainable infrastructure, including transit. Through the federal **Gas Tax Fund**, those revenues are now helping to build transit infrastructure wherever provinces and cities have made it their priority. Annual gas tax transfers have risen from \$600 million in 2005-2006 to \$2 billion in 2009-2010 and remain constant thereafter. The funds are allocated on a per-capita basis, and spending decisions rest with municipalities.

Two **Public Transit Capital Trusts** and an earlier **Public Transit Fund** have committed \$1.3 billion in federal funding for transit capital projects (rapid transit expansion or renewal, transit stations, rolling stock and transit technologies) from 2006 through 2010. Funds are allocated on a per-capita basis to provinces and territories, and then on a ridership or negotiated basis within provinces.

Several smaller federal initiatives also provide more targeted support to Canada's transit systems. The **Transit-Secure Program** has contributed \$80 million from 2006 through 2009 to enhance passenger rail and urban transit security. The \$40-million **Urban Transportation Showcase Program** has supported eight multimodal demonstration projects in Canadian communities, each of which has highlighted innovative transit improvements. The federal **tax credit for public transit passes** represents yet another form of federal support for transit.

Despite these advances, critical needs remain. In a recent survey, Canadian transit systems reported \$20 billion in currently unmet requirements for infrastructure expansion, replacement and renewal over the five years from 2008 through 2012.<sup>4</sup> Without greater investment, the ability of communities to maintain transit systems and respond to growth will be at risk. Canada remains the only OECD nation without a federal policy of predictable, long-term support for transit—a situation that will only be remedied through a permanent program of direct federal investment in transit infrastructure expansion and renewal.

The transit industry does acknowledge, however, the federal government's greatly expanded and very effective efforts in transit investment over the last few years.

### *Gatineau, Quebec*

#### **Showcase project battles climate change**

Transport Canada's Urban Transportation Showcase Program has supported eight multimodal projects in Canadian communities. The Société de transport de l'Outaouais (STO), in partnership with the Société de transport de Montréal (STM), is leading a project to test several greenhouse gas reduction measures.

### *Annapolis Valley, Nova Scotia*

#### **New buses help rural transit service grow**

Kings Transit Authority has introduced new routes serving Hants County residents, thanks to the acquisition of two new buses made possible through \$260,000 from the federal Public Transit Fund. The fuel-efficient vehicles have special features to accommodate seniors and people with disabilities, as well as an external rack for two bicycles.

A further \$50,000 contribution from the Public Transit Fund has enabled the installation of a new video surveillance system on all Kings Transit buses to ensure the safety and security of riders.



Kings Transit Authority

### *Saint John, New Brunswick*

#### **New operations centre to "go green"**

With funding from the federal Public Transit Capital Trust and the City of Saint John, Saint John Transit has begun construction of a new \$20-million operations centre. The current facility, built in 1982, is beyond its capacity and cannot support growing services. The new centre includes an 80-bus garage, maintenance area, staff offices and bus operator facilities. The centre will be built to LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) standards.



Saint John Transit Commission

The STO has developed a "Ligne verte" (green route) featuring two hybrid buses, 3.2 kilometres of high-occupancy vehicle lanes, an enhanced park-and-ride facility, improved bus shelters and passenger amenities, and traffic signal priority measures. The STM has led an evaluation of eight hybrid buses, applying criteria such as purchase and maintenance costs, fuel consumption and mechanical reliability.

Mississauga, Ontario

## Campus expansion will serve future needs

The federal Gas Tax Fund has provided \$83.9 million to the City of Mississauga for expansion of its main transit campus to meet growing operational requirements. This project is underway with completion slated for early 2010 and includes a new body shop, a new storage garage for 120 buses, a new bus repair garage, and much-needed renovations to the existing Central Parkway West Campus. Mississauga Transit has also applied Federal Gas Tax funds to the \$2.4-million expansion of its satellite garage in Malton to accommodate another 30 buses.



City of Mississauga

Greater Toronto Area, Ontario

## Building a brighter future for commuter rail

GO Transit's \$1-billion Rail Improvement Program is supported by federal, provincial and local governments through the Canada Strategic Infrastructure Fund. The measures improve the capacity of rail infrastructure, and include more than 82 kilometres of new or upgraded track in seven corridors, 14 widened bridges and overpasses, platform extensions at 15 stations to support longer trains, and rail-to-rail grade separations to reduce congestion and improve reliability in busy corridors. The program also includes revitalization and redesign projects at Union Station, that will help preserve one of Canada's finest transportation hubs.

Together, these improvements will help Toronto maintain a strong central business district, achieve transit ridership targets, and preserve an important part of the city's transportation heritage.

London, Ontario

## New technologies revolutionize the rider experience

London Transit's implementation of "smart bus" technologies will play a critical role in improving service delivery and the experience of customers. The federal government's Public Transit Capital Trust and the Province of Ontario are providing equal support to this \$6.5-million capital improvement program.

The program's first phase was launched in 2008 and included on-board "next stop" announcements and displays, external announcements of route name, direction and destination, GPS-based bus location tracking for dispatch and on-road inspectors, automatic passenger counters on 25 buses, and real-time bus arrival information displays at eight key locations including shopping malls, downtown, the University of Western Ontario and Fanshawe College.

Winnipeg, Manitoba

## Taking bus service to the next level

Winnipeg's Quality Corridor Initiative is a multi-year transit improvement program supported by three levels of government, with federal contributions from the Public Transit Capital Trust, Public Transit Fund and Gas Tax Fund. Started in 2007, the initiative aims to improve the speed, reliability, comfort and accessibility of transit service along a number of major arterial roads.

A transit priority program will improve the speed and reliability of service in key corridors through traffic signal priority measures, new queue jumps and bypass lanes, new diamond lanes for buses and cyclists, and removal of bus bays. New vehicles with the latest features will replace older buses. A new fleet management system will include GPS-based vehicle tracking, real-time schedule monitoring, automated next-stop announcements and displays, on-board security cameras, and many other features. Access to real-time passenger information will be provided by phone, wireless and Internet, and at some bus stops.

Major stops and stations are being upgraded to create a distinct image and offer passenger amenities including heated shelters at busy stops, illuminated signs, information displays, benches, bike lockers and streetscaping. Express bus routes will serve new park-and-ride lots that hold 200 vehicles and provide block heater plug-ins, passenger information and shelters, and segregated bus access and egress.



City of Winnipeg

The second phase will include an interactive voice response system for telephone access to real-time arrival information and travel planning, and real-time schedule information on the London Transit website. It will also implement measures to give buses priority at area traffic signals.



London Transit Commission

Edmonton, Alberta

## Investing in light rail and greater security

A major expansion of Edmonton's light rail system is being enabled by federal investment. The Gas Tax Fund is supporting an eight-kilometre extension from Health Sciences Station to Century Park with four new stations, 26 new light rail vehicles and expanded maintenance facilities. The Gas Tax Fund is also funding a program to extend the life of 37 light rail vehicles up to 20 years by replacing new electrical panels, refurbishing interiors, upgrading electronics, repairing corrosion and repainting. With support from the Public Transit Trust Fund, Edmonton is upgrading the Northeast LRT line's electrification to enable operation of four-car trains on the line, adding capacity to meet rapid ridership growth.

Funds from the third round of the Transit-Secure Program have let Edmonton undertake three projects to enhance its anti-terrorism capabilities. The first is the installation of a computer-aided dispatch system to help the ETS Control Centre track emergency events and resources, and to coordinate operations with other stakeholders. The second project is to equip security personnel with mobile data terminals, GPS and automatic vehicle location systems. This enables controllers to track security personnel and access critical information in real time,

and also enables pre-planned responses to specific events. The third project integrates alarm and video monitoring inputs into the dispatch console, giving dispatchers faster access to information and improving their ability to make rapid decisions in emergency situations.

Earlier funding from the Transit-Secure Program supported the creation of Transit Watch, a public awareness and education campaign that encourages individuals to report suspicious activity using a special phone number. ETS now receives about 15 Transit Watch calls every month.



Edmonton Transit System

Lethbridge, Alberta

## Improving accessible service with new buses

With \$200,000 from the federal Gas Tax Fund, LA Transit has acquired three new fully accessible buses for its Access-A-Ride specialized transit operation. The replacement of outdated vehicles has led to meaningful improvements in service and reliability for customers with disabilities.



Lethbridge Transit

### Reference:

- a) Canadian Urban Transit Association, *Transit Infrastructure Needs for the Period 2008-2012*, 2008 (available at [www.cutaactu.ca](http://www.cutaactu.ca))

Kelowna, British Columbia

## Highway widening to aid RapidBus BC service

In the City of Kelowna, transit riders will soon benefit from a four-kilometre highway widening through the urban core. The addition of two high-occupancy vehicle lanes to Highway 97 will facilitate operation of the new RapidBus BC service through a highly congested area. The Building Canada fund is contributing toward the project's cost of \$14.6 million.



City of Kelowna

The Canadian Urban Transit Association (CUTA) is the voice of Canada's public transit industry. For additional information including research reports, industry updates, news bulletins and more, please contact us or visit our website.



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