Shifting Gears

Steering Canada's Urban Centers Towards a Sustainable Transportation Future

ACTION CANADA
BUILDING LEADERSHIP FOR CANADA'S FUTURE
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About the authors

Japman Bajaj is an award-winning entrepreneur, a Global Shaper Alumni of the World Economic Forum, and past Board Member of the Trans Canada Trail. He is a thought leader and published author on topics relating to the Future of Work, and regularly contributes to conferences and media on this topic. He could have been a professional athlete, if not for his general lack of physical fitness, hand-eye coordination, and athletic skill.

Sophie Hamel holds a doctorate in cellular and molecular medicine. She currently serves as a senior clinical evaluator at Health Canada. She joined the Federal public service under the Management Training Programme where she gained experience in international health policies, risk management, emergency drug access and health crisis management.

Daria Hobeika is trained as a lawyer and strategic advisor and enjoys working on complex societal issues and steering organizations towards sustainable models. At Clearsum, she focuses on transition risks and opportunities, climate law, and climate governance. Prior to founding Clearsum, Daria was Chief of Staff to a minister of the Government of Quebec. In her free time, she enjoys learning, traveling, and dancing.

Justine Lalande is currently a PhD candidate and lecturer in the Department of Social and Public Communication at the Université du Québec à Montréal. Her thesis focuses on social representations of the ecological transition and their effects on the social acceptability of this transition.

Madison Rilling is Executive Director of Optonique, a non-profit supporting the enabling sector of light-based technologies that is Québec's photonics industry. Holding a PhD in Physics, she serves as a knowledge-broker between industry, academia, and government, frequently involved in innovation, trade and workforce policy development, as well as diplomatic efforts at both the provincial and federal levels. As an ultra-trail runner, Madison loves to be outdoors, no matter the weather.

Tesicca Truong is a Program Manager at Environment Funders Canada, a Dialogue Associate with SFU Morris J. Wosk Center for Dialogue and a Vancouver Global Shaper. She is the co-founder of CityHive, a non-profit on a mission to transform the way that young people are involved in the planning and design of their cities and communities. For her work, she has received the Vancouver's Greenest City Leadership Award and SFU President's Leadership in Sustainability Award.

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Executive Summary

"Show me any social or economic challenge, and I can link it back to transportation."[1]

— SHOSHANNA SAXE, PHD, UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO ASSOCIATED PROFESSOR AND CANADA RESEARCH CHAIR IN SUSTAINABLE INFRASTRUCTURE

Focused on consumption, linearity, and short-term value, the current economic model has set the stage for urban transportation systems that manage environmental consequences only by reducing environmental harm. With Canadian cities growing rapidly and transportation consisting in the second most important source of emissions in Canada, urban transportation has become an important source of environmental degradation that brings us closer to exceeding planetary boundaries.

This policy report explores the possibility of adopting a sustainable economic model–focused on purpose, return, circularity, resilience, equity and inclusion, co-creation, and long-term value–for urban transportation in Canadian cities of over 100,000 people.

With the aim of actively contributing to ecological and community vitality, it proposes a multi-pronged strategy with reinforcing recommendations applicable to governance, community, and individual levels. At the governance level, the proposed recommendation aims to enshrine the voice of a broader set of stakeholders, including nature, in urban transportation decisions. At the community level, proposals aim to recenter land use planning and zoning around collective well-being rather than automobile use, resulting in reduced social costs. Building on these changes, recommendations at the individual level serve to catalyze car sharing, public transportation, and active transportation in a context in which this would become possible. These recommendations are meant to be considered holistically, a combination of interconnected initiatives, each reinforcing the other, enabling a holistic transformation that steers Canada towards a truly sustainable era in transportation, aligned with the vision of a resilient, equitable, and sustainable future.

Governance Level

To address the shortcomings of the current governance system, the report proposes embracing emerging governance approaches, such as the commons trust model. Inspired by Nobel laureate Elinor Ostrom's work on common resources, the commons trust assigns trustees the responsibility of prioritizing depleting natural and social resources for future generations. Commons trusts have a successful track record in North America, protecting resources like fish, forests, and renewable energy development. Adapting the commons trust model to urban transportation infrastructure, the report recommends entrenching the consideration of the need to sustain and regenerate natural resources in the decisional process. To do so, peer groups would elect trustees for environmental and social priorities –such as «soil,» «air,» and «land»– to governance committees formed to review urban transportation projects. Public records of decisions would reflect the trustees' positions, increasing transparency and accountability.

Community Level

The way cities are built—determined by zoning and land use policies—matters. Urban sprawl and single-use zoning have led to overreliance on cars, inefficient public transit, and decline in active transportation methods. Studies demonstrate this effectively subsidizes car use when social and economic costs such as air pollution, traffic congestion, and road safety are considered. The report offers recommendations inspired by Transit-Oriented Development (TOD), which is defined as"the creation of compact, walkable, pedestrian-oriented, mixed-use communities centred around high-quality transit systems," as a solution. It advocates for comprehensive land reform that would enable residents to meet their daily needs without relying on private vehicles, building more sustainable, accessible, and equitable communities in Canada. This is done through upzoning (increasing allowable density in areas where it matters most, e.g., converting vacant office space into housing), mixed-use zoning (allowing shops and services in higher density neighbourhoods), and prioritizing public transit and active transportation solutions from the conception of urban development projects.

Individual Level

Car ownership is deeply ingrained in the fabric of Canadian society and eliminating cars entirely in our vast Nordic country is both impractical and implausible. Yet, to optimize the efficiency and reliability of our transport systems, reduce the numerous challenges of car-centric development—including traffic congestion and environmental degradation—and ultimately facilitate mobility for Canadians, the number of cars on the roads must be decreased.

To achieve this, collective and active transportation modes must become more accessible. Electric vehicles do not offer a complete solution to the issues, and perpetuate the ongoing reliance on individual car ownership, reinforcing the demand for extensive infrastructure like parking facilities and road networks.

To incentivize Canadians to adopt collective transportation options, licensed drivers living in car-free households would be eligible for a fund to reimburse qualifying transportation expenses such as support for biking, car-sharing services, and public transit passes. This recommendation is inspired by successful programs in British Columbia and Scotland, aiming to empower car-free individuals to diversify their mobility choices. Considering the benefits of car sharing, the report also calls for strengthening policy and program coordination to support the growth of car-sharing options, including addressing licensing, parking, and insurance requirements through government incentives and partnerships with private entities.

Conclusion

In summary, this policy report highlights the urgent need for transformative action in Canadian urban transportation policy. The proposed recommendations provide a path forward for policymakers to reimagine transportation as a force for good, capable of enhancing the environment, the economy, and the quality of life for all Canadians. By prioritizing nature, community, and sustainability, we can create a brighter and more resilient future for Canada's urban transportation. The vitality and resilience of ecosystems and communities depends on it, and the time for a sustainable reset in Canadian transportation policy is now.

Recommendations

Level	Recommendations
Governance Level: A New Approach for Sustainable Transportation Development	Recommendation 1: Establish governance committees for new transportation infrastructure development, with voting rights given to natural resources and priority communities
Community Level: Using Land Reform to Return Cities to the People	Recommendation 2: Reform land use and zoning practices to enable and promote urban infill and mixed-use zoning. Recommendation 3: Require that all urban development projects on public lands prioritize development of public transit and active transportation.
Individual Level: Driving Toward a Future Beyond Car Ownership	Recommendation 4: Introduce a cash rebate program for licensed drivers without a registered car in their households to invest in sustainable mobility options. Recommendation 5: Strengthen policy and program coordination to foster the development and growth of car-sharing options.

It is time for a new vision

The current "extractive era" economic model puts primary value on profit, consumption, linearity, efficiency, accumulation, competition, and short-term value.[2] It manages environmental consequences only by reducing environmental harm. As a result, it has brought us perilously close to exceeding planetary boundaries. What if, instead of cyclically extracting, consuming, and disposing of the finite resources of our planet, we adopted a truly more sustainable approach? How could this be made possible in the context of urban transportation? Canadian cities, home to over 80% of the population,[3] are growing rapidly[4]—as is their environmental footprint. Transportation is one of the main culprits, causing nearly 28% of national emissions, the second most important source of emissions in Canada.[5]

This paper aims to shed light on the possibility of applying an economic model focused on purpose, return, circularity, resilience, equity and inclusion, co-creation, and long-term value, to urban transportation, i.e., to transportation in Canadian cities of over 100,000 people.[6] This idea extends beyond reducing harm or achieving net zero; it is about investing in transportation that is designed to contribute actively to the vitality and resilience of ecosystems and communities—a transportation system inspired by regeneration. This system would aim to improve, both actively and intentionally, the state of ecosystems and the environment in such a way that the people of tomorrow inherit a world better than the one in which we currently live and work.

To do so, we are proposing a multi-pronged strategy with reinforcing recommendations applicable to governance, community, and individual levels. At the governance level, the proposed recommendation aims to enshrine the voice of a broader set of stakeholders, including nature, in urban transportation decisions. At the community level, proposals aim to recenter land use planning and zoning around collective well-being rather than automobile use, resulting in reduced social costs. Building on these changes, recommendations at the individual level serve to catalyze car sharing, public transportation, and active transportation in a context in which this would become possible. These recommendations are meant to be considered holistically, a suite of interconnected initiatives, each reinforcing the other, enabling a comprehensive transformation that steers Canada towards a truly sustainable era in transportation, aligned with the vision of a resilient, equitable, and sustainable future.

"If our current operating system is the cause of our ills, we can hardly expect it to fix them. Tinkering at the edges—a new regulation here, a new law there—won't make much difference. What will make a great difference is new algorithms in the cells. This isn't as big a deal as it might seem. It doesn't require abolishing the present algorithms, expropriating any property, raising taxes or expanding government. Nor does it mean replacing the existing operating system in one fell swoop.

Rather, it means gradually elevating some currently under-used algorithms to greater strength so they can counter-balance the currently dominant ones. If this is properly done, our economic machine on its own—without persistent government intervention—will, over time, respect nature, reduce inequality and increase our personal well-being."

– PETER BARNES, AUTEUR, CAPITALISM 3.0[7]

Governance Level

A New Approach for Sustainable Transportation Development

Look around. In Canada, today, the wealth gap is widening,[8] developers have biased public decision-making processes[9,10], and Canadians are more unwilling to spend time in major cities than ever before.[11] In cities, many of the decisions made regarding demographics, land use, and transportation systems reinforce a car-centric culture that negatively impacts municipalities,[12] and result in unhealthy outcomes from stress and sitting caused by traffic and congestion.[13]

This is in part the result of the oversized role of a narrow set of economic outcomes and indicators in our current governance system. Just like elections are more often won and lost over job creation and investment attraction than education and natural conservation, or performance is often measured by GDP, seldom through well-being indicators, urban development is assessed by economic indicators that exclude the value of nature.

This governance model falls short of creating the conditions that will enable Canada to achieve sustainable transportation outcomes, healthy and vibrant societies, and contribute to a healthier planet. Proposed solutions to the environmental, climate, and biodiversity crises—such as the electrification of car fleets, the focus on reducing harm in new developments, or the multiplication of facade public consultations for development projects that are approved behind closed doors—do not address this broader governance issue.

The pathway to sustainable urban transportation lies in part in ensuring that the discussions and decisions within boardrooms, council chambers, and legislative assemblies are representative of larger interests and more transparent. Our models and processes must consider natural resources integral to decisions, and better integrate economic, but also environmental and social objectives. This requires enhanced stakeholder involvement to fully involve all relevant parties and ensure the successful implementation of initiatives.

To achieve this objective, alternative governance approaches such as the commons trust should be considered. Based on the work of Nobel Prize of Economics winner Elinor Ostrom on the optimization of common resources, the commons trust is a unique legal entity and structure that assigns trustees with the fiduciary responsibility for ensuring that the preservation of depleting natural and social resources are prioritized for generations to come. Commons trusts address "what opponents of public lands specifically get wrong when they say those lands are "owned" by the federal or state government." As author Antonia Malchik put it: "They're not. Legally, they're "owned" by the people and held in trust for the people by the government."[14]

Commons trusts have successfully been used in conservation and rights of nature cases across North America.[15] In Canada, they have been used to protect fish resources,[16] forests,[17] and renewable energy development,[18] often with the involvement of various orders of governments across partisan stripes.

Governance models that include commons trusts constitute a compelling option for modern sustainable transportation development in Canada. These models improve upon the "reducing harm" check-box approach to conventional stakeholder engagement by giving environmental and social interests a stronger voice in the decision-making process. In entrenching the consideration of the need to sustain and regenerate natural resources through this voice, the models also better embody the multivariate relationships between people and depleting environmental and social resources in decision-making activities. Finally, they help achieve greater policy coordination and more transparent and auditable decision-making. As a result, approved projects more often meet the larger set of criteria that reinforce a healthier planet and healthier communities, while those that fail to do so are rejected.

Adapting the commons trust model to urban transportation infrastructure, as per the following recommendation, would help achieve sustainability outcomes.

Recommendation 1: Establish Governance Committees for New Transportation Infrastructure Development, With Voting Rights Given to Natural Resources and Priority Communities

Most lands used for urban transportation infrastructure are publicly owned or pending expropriation.[19] Whether land is owned privately, publicly, or is set to be expropriated, projects that affect land are also subject to a permitting process.

Under the commons trust approach, urban transportation infrastructure projects such as road and highway expansions, as well as other types of projects related to land use like housing development or subdivisions, would be reviewed by a governance committee. This committee would be composed of municipal councilors and appointed representatives, or trustees, whose mandate it would be to advocate for selected social and environmental priorities such as «soil,» «air,» and «land,» other r natural resources, disadvantaged groups, unhoused people, at-risk youth, and seniors. These representatives—and their advocacy mandates—would be chosen by their peer groups, an approach employed successfully in Quebec by the *Commission des partenaires du marché du travail.*

With regard to transparency, public records of decisions would reflect the trustees' positions, thereby increasing accountability, feedback, and public discourse on urban development initiatives. One elected municipal councilor would serve as "Councilor of the Commons" and play the role of Ombudsperson for accountability purposes. Citizens and political opponents alike would be able to see how various elected councilors voted, and more importantly, have the requisite information to hold councilors to account when they vote against nature or community. As a result, future decisions would more appropriately consider the environmental and societal value of land, which are currently unaccounted for, in decisions to develop highways or urban parking lots, for example.

In the next section, we will go one level deeper into the application of new governance models fostering sustainable transportation through municipal land use and zoning strategies.

Community level

Using land reform to return cities to the people

"Bad urban planning decisions are responsible for our transportation problems.[20]"

– DR. CATHERINE MORENCY, TRANSPORTATION ENGINEERING PROFESSOR AT POLYTECHNIQUE MONTRÉAL AND THE CANADA RESEARCH CHAIR IN THE MOBILITY OF PEOPLE.

How cities are built is inextricably linked to how people move around within and beyond their boundaries. City development is determined by zoning and land use policies, which in turn determine population distribution and set the stage for urban transit. Urban sprawl, defined as the uncontrolled expansion of urban areas, and single-use zoning, have led to the increased dependency on cars, less efficient public transit, and reduced use of active transportation methods.

Tableau 1

TABLE 1 SOCIAL COSTS OF INVESTMENTS IN TRANSPORTATION[21]

Investment of 1$ in...	Social costs
Support for transportation by foot	$0.01
Support for biking	$0.08
Support for bus transit	$1.50
Support for driving	$9.20

According to transport engineer George Poulos, available transportation modes—or lack thereof—can have substantial social costs that may never be recovered and constitute either a benefit or a pitfall of this intrinsic interplay. Table 1 estimates the social costs of different modes in Vancouver and demonstrates that prioritizing car infrastructure in urban development, relative to transit or active transportation infrastructure, is highly subsidized by society when you account for social costs such as air pollution, traffic congestion, and road safety.

Unfortunately, in Canada's nine largest urban centres, urban sprawl has increased in the past two decades, with population growing on average by 26% while urban coverage increased by 36%, resulting in a decrease of 6% of their population density. Canadians now each occupy more space (60% of the population occupying single-family homes[22]), while living farther away from the denser core of the city. This results in highly subsidized car use, as shown in Figure 1 and Figure 2, below[23].

Figure 1

RESIDENTS COMMUTING BY CAR[24]

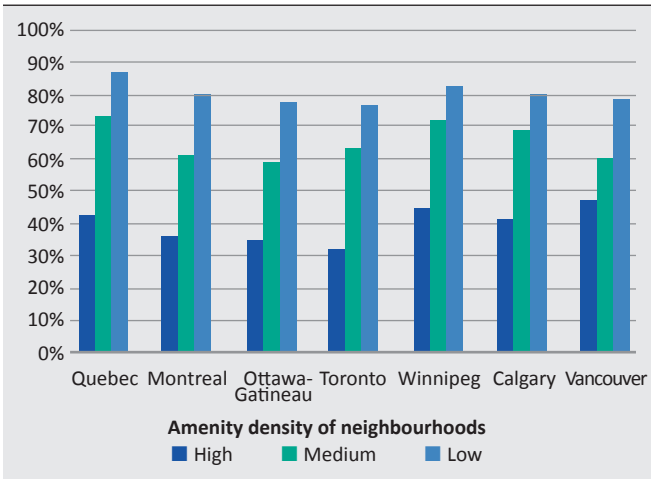
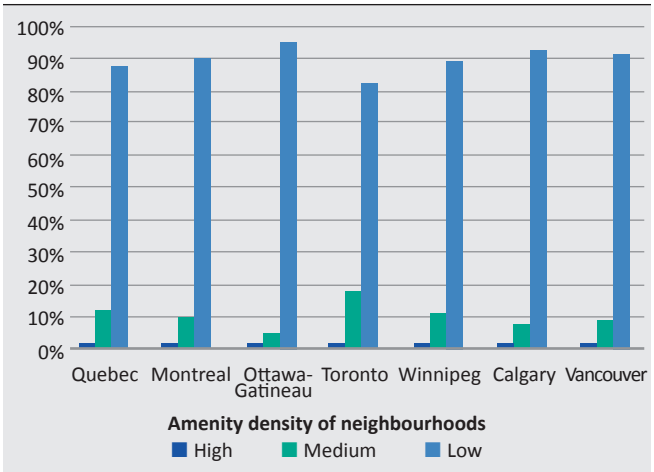


Figure 2

TYPE OF NEWLY BUILT NEIGHBOURHOODS BETWEEN 2001-2021.[25]



Transit-Oriented Development[26] ("TOD") is "the creation of compact, walkable, pedestrian-oriented, mixed-use communities centred around high-quality transit systems by creating viable, livable, and sustainable communities. It comprises high-density affordable neighbourhoods around major transit hubs, to reduce dependence on private vehicle use and promote public transportation."

Most North American urban centres are not transit oriented. In the U.S.A., an estimated 25% of high-value urban real estate is dedicated to cars, not people.[27] reallocates street and parking space dedicated to cars and inherently limits the expansion of road networks in favour of non-motorized transportation and public transit. It assures that new housing is developed near transit. Positive strides have been made to advance TOD and to increase density. For example, recent legislation in British Columbia will reshape residential neighbourhoods by increasing density near transit hubs and allowing up to six units on a single-family lot.[28]

Recommendation 2: Reform land use and zoning practices to enable and promote urban infill and mixed-use zoning.

Developing low-density suburban neighbourhoods below a certain population threshold is economically and socially unsustainable, as new infrastructure financial costs exceed anticipated revenues for municipalities.[29] In 2021, the City of Ottawa estimated that "low-density subdivisions built on greenspace" cost $465 per person while "real estate developments with a higher population density, built close to already-urbanized areas" generated $606 per resident annually.[30]

TOD thus requires cities to offer higher-density and affordable neighbourhoods which dually serve as transit nodes. To do so, municipalities must be able to pursue upzoning, i.e., to increase the allowable density in an area to build new infrastructure where it matters most—socially, environmentally, and economically. Concretely, upsizing existing infrastructure like strip malls with urban infill could be more cost-effective than developing on new land and exacerbating urban sprawl. The shift towards remote work created by the COVID19 pandemic, for example, is an opportunity to convert vacant office space into housing,[31] something that has been accomplished through policy reforms in New York, Los Angeles and Calgary, among other places.[32]

Mixed-use zoning is critical to servicing citizens' various needs within walking, rolling or public transit commuting distance from their homes. In many Canadian urban areas, single-use zoning separates commercial from residential areas, preventing increased density, lengthening commute time, and increasing unaffordability. Mixed-use zoning would allow the establishment of shops and corner stores in higher density neighbourhoods, enabling people to live in communities with access to more of the amenities they need daily, while enabling critical ridership levels in a more concentrated area for public transit.

Recommendation 3: Require that all urban development projects on public lands prioritize development of public transit and active transportation.

"Think of how grossly inequitable it is right now that someone who is sitting in a bus occupying a tiny fraction of the road space than say someone sitting in a Cadillac Escalade is, is effectively moving at the same speed."

– RUSHAD NANAVATTY, MANAGING DIRECTOR AND LEAD OF THE ROCKY MOUNTAIN INSTITUTE'S URBAN TRANSFORMATION PROGRAM[33]

Whether it's during the hot summer days or the freezing winter months, Canadians want to get to places as conveniently, quickly, and comfortably as possible. In current, low-density Canadian neighbourhoods, the lack of efficient public transportation and cycling infrastructure[34] often makes single-occupancy vehicles the only viable transit option. Indeed, an average of 81% of residents drive to their workplace,[35] leading to congestion, increased greenhouse gas emissions and negative health impacts. In other words, urban planning practices that diminish the number of Canadians presented with convenient transit alternatives make reversing or slowing down urban sprawl in Canada more difficult.

To make sure that alternatives to one-person cars—whether motorized or electric—are an attractive option, restricting space allocation initiatives, like dedicated bus lanes or lower emission zones, are insufficient. Public space must be allocated so that urban residents are able to meet their needs without a vehicle. A mix of services must be available within walking distance from home or easily accessible by public transit. This in turn requires concentrating buildings in neighbourhoods, so that increasing ridership lowers operating costs. It is essential that such transit-focused urban space allocation be universal to all future urban development projects in Canada.

"We cannot buy ourselves more time by purchasing hybrid and electric vehicles. The problem needs to be addressed at the source. We need to revitalize our downtowns and mature suburbs to keep families there. We need to bring urbanists, construction entrepreneurs, transit planners and environmentalists together to begin to do the right things."

– SASHA TSENKOVA, PROFESSOR OF ARCHITECTURE, PLANNING AND LANDSCAPE AT THE UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY

Prioritizing public transit and active transportation means redesigning cities so that citizens can meet most of their daily needs by accessing services within walking or rolling distance from their homes. Where that is not possible, cheap, efficient, and accessible public transportation must be in place to ensure that citizens are not dependent on car ownership to get around. This means coordination between urban planners and developers with transportation planners and agencies to ensure that when new developments are being built, transportation solutions are being planned out from the start.

Individual level

Driving toward a future beyond car ownership

Car ownership is deeply ingrained in the fabric of Canadian society, with 84% of Canadians owning at least one car, and 37% possessing two or more vehicles in 2019. And even among the 16% of Canadians who don't currently own a car, a large percentage dream of owning one one day.[36] And yet, cars remain stationary for 96% of their useful life,[37] which begs the question: does everyone need their own individual car?

Eliminating cars entirely in our vast Nordic country is both impractical and implausible. First, historically and for many people still, the possession of a personal vehicle symbolizes autonomy and success.[38] Plus, there are valid reasons why cars will always be required to meet certain needs. This convenience of possessing a personal vehicle is in turn reinforced by urban sprawl, inadequate public transportation, and insufficient active transportation infrastructure.

Yet cities predominantly centred around automobiles present numerous challenges, including traffic congestion, environmental degradation, large urban parking areas causing heat islands, elevated road infrastructure maintenance costs, and underutilized public transit systems. For example, car-centric urban landscapes disproportionately disadvantage the most vulnerable citizens—including individuals with lower incomes, the young and elderly, women, people with disabilities, and specific minority ethnic groups who are less likely to own a car.[39] In Canada's eight largest cities, nearly one million individuals reside in lower-income households in areas with limited access to public transit, further exacerbating their disadvantage and their transportation difficulties.[40] Socio-economic disparities associated with car ownership are also demonstrated by the correlation between stated intentions to purchase a vehicle (68% of Canadians express an intent to purchase a vehicle, within the next decade[41]) and income and education.

In recent years, electric cars have emerged as a solution to the environmental impact associated with traditional combustion engine vehicles. However, while electric vehicles offer potential emission reductions in transportation, they also contribute to environmental challenges (i.e., mining of minerals, the production and disposal of components, etc.) and amplify broader issues embedded in our transportation paradigm. Furthermore, the viability and value proposition of electric vehicles hinges on clean electricity generation, which remains an unrealized goal in many Canadian communities, as a quarter of the megawatt/hours consumed in 2023 originated from combustible sources.[42] Perhaps most significantly, presenting electric vehicles as a solution perpetuates the ongoing reliance on individual car ownership, reinforcing the demand for extensive infrastructure like parking facilities and road networks. As a result, electric vehicles do not resolve the aforementioned challenges.

To optimize the efficiency and reliability of our transport systems, and ultimately facilitate mobility for Canadians, the number of cars on the roads must be decreased and alternatives that do not rely on individual car ownership must be incentivized. Efficient and reliable transportation is vital for inclusive economic prosperity, enabling individuals with or without car access to travel safely. Shifting towards collective and active transportation modes, and encouraging Canadians to reconsider personal car ownership, will serve this purpose.

For a strategy involving a reduction in car ownership to be compelling, alternative modes of transportation must offer a level of accessibility comparable to that provided by private vehicles, enabling individuals to access amenities, services, and social connections without needing to rely on private vehicles. This requires offering flexibility through a combination of modes rather than only one.

In this context, the following recommendations recognize the diverse nature of transportation needs and provide individuals the autonomy and flexibility to tailor the proposed approach to their unique circumstances while contributing to a more sustainable and accessible urban mobility landscape.

Recommendation 4: Introduce a cash rebate program for licensed drivers without a registered car in their households to invest in sustainable mobility options.

To further incentivize Canadians to adopt sustainable transportation options, driver license holders living in a household without a registered car would become eligible for a fund to reimburse qualifying transportation expenses, such as a new or second-hand bike, bike maintenance costs and cycling accessories, membership for a car-sharing service, public transit passes, reimbursement for train or inter-regional bus usage, among other possibilities.

This recommendation is inspired by established programs. For example, under the Scrap-It Program, a not-for-profit organization funded in British Columbia,[43] registered owners who decide to scrap their cars can choose between a direct $300 cash return, a rebate on different monthly public transit passes, or a $500 car share credit with chosen organizations. By September 2023, over 54,000 vehicles had been scrapped through this program. Evaluations demonstrated these vehicles had been taken off the road 9.4 years sooner than their typical lifespan, resulting in positive environmental impacts.[44] An even more generous program has been set up in Scotland. The Mobility and Scrappage Fund[45] offers a £2,000 (±CAD 3500) cash return for disposing of a vehicle and a second grant up to £1,000 (±CAD 1700) towards mobility costs that can be used as a reimbursement of other mobility options.

Our recommendation goes beyond the act of scrapping an old vehicle by promoting a car-free lifestyle. It not only encourages the transition to mobility alternatives, but also offers additional financial support to an already car-free population, typically less affluent, empowering them to diversify their mobility options.

Recommendation 5: Strengthen policy and program coordination to foster the development and growth of car-sharing options.

Finally, to complement the reimbursement of eligible transportation expenses for driver license holders living in car-free households, we propose to strengthen policy and program coordination to foster the development and growth of car-sharing options.

This recommendation recognizes, and aims to expedite, the gradual process of transitioning away from cars by easing constraints on individuals parting with, or choosing to continue living without, a personal vehicle. Well-coordinated car-sharing services provide a practical alternative, offering a level of convenience that is closer to that of private cars, while reducing the overall number of vehicles on the road. They also increase mobility and reduce environmental impacts, by making better use of existing cars. A 2015 Communauto study[46] revealed that a single shared vehicle replaces 10 private vehicles. Furthermore, initiatives combining car sharing and public transportation have demonstrated an increase in the use of monthly transportation passes in the cities of Montreal and Quebec.[46]

To ensure the success of car-sharing initiatives, robust policy and program coordination are needed. This involves a supportive and flexible regulatory environment, including addressing licensing, parking spaces and insurance requirements. Government incentives and partnerships with private entities could further facilitate the expansion of car-sharing programs.

The challenges in different cities are multifaceted and require different solutions. In some major cities, giving car-sharing companies priority in the purchase of new electric vehicles could alleviate the shortage of available cars for sharing. In other cities, strategies to encourage participation, such as the reimbursement of registration fees, could be explored to increase the currently insufficiently large pool of drivers willing to share their vehicles. Lastly, efforts could be directed towards introducing and promoting car sharing to establish, or better establish this concept for residents. By addressing these aspects comprehensively, the recommendation aims to create an environment where car sharing can thrive, providing a viable and attractive alternative to private car ownership and contributing to more sustainable and efficient urban transportation systems.

These initiatives do not represent an impediment to mobility; instead, they aim to serve as catalysts for individuals to explore alternative, eco-friendly options, and embrace active transportation methods. The goal is to reduce the number of cars on the road, lower societal costs associated with individual car use and stimulate demand for sustainable transportation options.

Conclusion

In the face of the unprecedented environmental challenges and the unsustainable practices of the past and present, there is an urgent need for transformative action in the realm of urban transportation policy in Canada. This paper has explored the pressing issues surrounding urban transportation, and the potential for a truly sustainable approach to revolutionize our current paradigm.

Making this shift in Canadian urban transportation policy will require a broad group of policymakers and stakeholders to work together in new ways that establish the common good of a city as its core goal. This transition represents an opportunity to not only reduce harm but to actively contribute to the vitality and resilience of ecosystems and communities. Transportation can be used as a force for good, capable of enhancing the environment, the economy, and the quality of life for all Canadians.

To achieve this, policymakers must exhibit the ambition to take bold steps. Applying sustainability principles to governance and decision-making systems, such as the commons trust, can lead to a more considerate and inclusive policy development that prioritizes the well-being of natural and communal resources. Addressing the historical car-centric focus of land use policies is crucial, necessitating transformative urban planning that encourages densification, active transportation, and the revitalization of public spaces connected to sustainable transportation networks.

The shift towards a truly sustainable transportation model empowers citizens to make sustainable choices, reducing individual car ownership and embracing alternatives like car sharing, public transportation, and active mobility. This fosters healthier, more connected communities prioritizing the well-being of the environment and society, resulting in more resilient, long-term economic value creation.

The proposed recommendations offer a forward path, guiding Canadian policymakers to reimagine urban transportation as a force that actively contributes to a brighter and more sustainable future. It transcends the notion of merely reducing harm, emphasizing positive contributions to the planet, the economy, and our communities. This is urgent – the time for a sustainable reset in Canadian transportation policy is now.

Endnotes

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613-238-7858