



# GOAL THREE

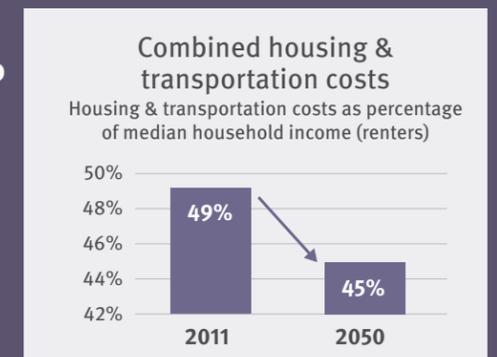
Affordable Choices for Everyone

## ? WHERE WE ARE TODAY

“In this expensive region, I’m forced to spend more than I can afford on housing and transportation. In areas with more affordable transportation choices, housing is too expensive. In places further from urban centres where housing is a bit more affordable, I need to rely on my car, taxis, or rideshare services for most of my trips, which is more expensive.”

## 📍 WHERE WE WANT TO BE

We all have affordable choices, allowing us to easily live and move in this region such that, by 2050, none of us — but especially those of us with less ability to pay — need to spend more than 45% of our household incomes<sup>12</sup> on housing and transport combined.



Metro Vancouver is an unaffordable region to live in by Canadian and North American standards, particularly for people of lower income. According to Metro Vancouver’s 2015 Housing and Transportation Cost Burden Study, nearly half of renter households in Metro Vancouver — making up 31% of all households — make \$50,000 or less per year. In this expensive region, this group ends up spending nearly 70% of their household income on rent and on getting around. These households are particularly struggling under the weight of a heavy housing and transportation cost

burden, leaving them with difficult choices about what to spend on food, clothing, childcare, and other expenses.

Keeping the two major interrelated household costs of shelter and transportation to the more manageable level of below 45%<sup>13</sup> of household incomes is critical to ensuring that we can all afford to live in this region; that we can connect to the opportunities we need to thrive, participate fully in our communities, and be productive contributors to the region’s economy; and that we can live rewarding, dignified, and independent lives.

<sup>12</sup> Metro Vancouver, “The Metro Vancouver Housing and Transportation Cost Burden Study”, 2015, <http://www.metrovancouver.org/services/regional-planning/PlanningPublications/HousingAndTransportCostBurdenReport2015.pdf>

<sup>13</sup> Numerous agencies, including the U.S. Department of Transportation and U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, are replacing the conventional housing affordability threshold (30% of household incomes spent on housing) with a new combined affordability threshold of 45% of household incomes spent on the interrelated costs of housing and transport.

### Affordable Access for Everyone: Bridging the Digital Divide

Transport 2050 envisions a future where everyone can easily connect to opportunity. There are three ways to facilitate this access:

- By helping people move around between destinations more easily (mobility)
- By bringing destinations closer together (land use)
- By moving more opportunities online to avoid the need to travel altogether (digital)

Our vision of *Access for Everyone* means that everyone has a range of affordable mobility options — the focus of Transport 2050; everyone has the chance to live in affordable housing near their work, shopping, and services to reduce the distances they need to travel — the focus of *Metro 2050*; and everyone has affordable access to a basic level of internet connectivity in order to take advantage of e-learning, e-health, e-services, and e-commerce opportunities — all of which reduce the need to travel altogether.

Affordable digital access is the focus of the Government of Canada's *Connecting Families initiative*.

Goods movement also plays a key role in supporting affordability, as the cost of transporting goods impacts the cost of consumer goods. Actions that impact the cost, efficiency, and reliability of moving goods will require analysis and monitoring to understand the impacts on affordability for households and businesses.

The following pages describe what it will take to create a future where **none of us — especially those of us with less wealth and lower incomes — need to spend more than 45% of our household incomes on housing and transport combined:**

- Increasing the supply of new — and protecting existing — **transit-oriented affordable housing** and community-serving retail so that people can live nearby and make use of the most affordable transportation options
- Investing in the most cost-effective modes, in particular, **walking, rolling, cycling, and transit** in areas with higher proportions of lower-income households to help make these, the **most affordable modes**, especially convenient for people with the most to gain from them
- Guaranteeing everyone a **universal basic level of mobility** with any fares, fees, and tolls on any urban transportation service (including transit, shared mobility, parking, and driving) to be set at a price that each household can afford and that is linked to each household's ability to pay
- Regional transportation taxes — most of which today are weakly connected to household wealth and income — will also be adjusted to be **more progressive**, linking them as closely as possible to one's **ability to pay**
- Supporting **regional prosperity and quality economic growth** that is equitable, with benefits shared broadly by everyone

## \$ On Resilience & Affordable Choices

Increasing affordability supports resiliency by allowing households enough resources to buffer against shocks and stressors. Households that are dealing with poverty or that are financially strained are less resilient. This same principle applies to the transportation system as a whole — focusing on lower-cost transportation options that involve less capital-intensive infrastructure requires fewer resources to rebuild or repair in the event of a shock or stressor. For these reasons, transportation affordability supports regional resiliency at both the household and system-wide levels.

To better understand what tomorrow might bring, Metro Vancouver and TransLink partnered to develop the *Regional Long-Range Growth and Transportation Scenarios* report. This report examines four plausible futures for Metro Vancouver, which can help us identify measures to ensure that both transportation and the region are more resilient.



*Walking, biking, rolling, and transit are the most economical modes of transportation — both for travellers and for the region*



## Strategies and Actions

### **Strategy 3.1: Make living close to frequent transit more affordable.**

Living next to fast, frequent, and reliable transit and community-serving retail allows many households to live comfortably without needing to own a car — saving upwards of \$10,000 in expenses per year for each forgone automobile. However, housing next to frequent transit is typically also in high demand, and so is the least affordable.

To address this challenge, bold and deliberate measures to increase housing affordability near transit are necessary to realize more equitable, mixed-income transit-oriented communities. The status quo alternative, which has played out in Metro Vancouver over the last 30 years, is that announcements of major transit investments have spurred land speculation, which has driven up real estate prices, which in turn has harmed affordability and accelerated gentrification and displacement.

That major transit investments, so important in helping us reach most of our other goals, have contributed to worsening housing affordability in this region is one of this region's significant policy failures. This requires bold new approaches by land use, development, and taxation authorities.

To make up for this past failure, the provincial, regional, and local governments need to step up our collective efforts to build transit-oriented affordable housing, including affordable rental housing, at a much more ambitious pace and scale. Currently, municipalities have been leading this effort, but there is a need for provincial and federal support to achieve a more ambitious expansion and retention of affordable housing near transit. We also need to actively cool speculation around existing and proposed transit investments in order to ensure that existing residents aren't displaced to more auto-oriented areas where housing costs might be lower, but where higher transport costs often negate these savings.

Parking is a major cost associated with development, so taking a regionally co-ordinated, affordability-focused approach to parking management and requirements in zoning bylaws can help bring down housing costs by avoiding an oversupply of parking, and by not forcing potential residents to purchase parking along with their units if they don't require it.

Even if housing and transport are made more affordable, living can't be truly affordable if all of the amenities and local retail in your neighbourhood are oriented to a wealthy clientele, focusing on luxury goods. Faced with rapidly rising rents and stiff competition from international e-commerce giants, local retailers are in jeopardy, particularly small family businesses, many of whom are best positioned to effectively serve disadvantaged individuals and communities. We need to encourage policies that actively support these local businesses, which form the foundation of commercial main streets at the heart of equitable, affordable, walkable, and complete communities.

### Actions

- 3.1.1. Encourage land use planning authorities and affordable housing organizations to **expand, retain, and renew rental housing supply** adjacent to frequent transit stops and stations, especially within Urban Centres and Frequent Transit Development Areas, at a much more ambitious pace and scale than today, through measures including: 
- a. Coordinate across municipalities and with Indigenous Nations to align the land use planning, policy, and investment measures needed to achieve agreed-upon affordable housing targets along the length of major transit growth corridors. Document these commitments as part of Partnership Agreements to be approved by the Mayors' Council on Regional Transportation concurrently with regional approval of major transit investments. 
  - b. Engage Indigenous Nations on new transit-oriented affordable housing targets concurrent with approval of major transit investments. 
  - c. Coordinate across public agencies to secure land for non-market housing and supportive services along with decisions on major transit investments, ensuring that land purchased for transportation facilities is also assembled in ways that optimize development potential for regional objectives. 
  - d. Encourage public agencies with land holdings in the vicinity of frequent transit to partner with non-profit housing developers to deliver affordable housing. 
  - e. Encourage public agencies to develop procurement, disposition, and development plans and actions for land holdings that support the goals of the Regional Growth Strategy and include the provision of affordable rental housing (M2050 1.2). 

### Transit-Oriented Affordable Housing

*Metro Vancouver's Transit-Oriented Affordable Housing study proposes a suite of strategies to ensure that transit investments benefit all residents, irrespective of wealth or income. Read more about the study findings [here](#).*

- 3.1.2. Support Provincial, First Nation, and municipal efforts to protect and expand the existing supply of transit-oriented affordable housing through measures to **cool land speculation** along major transit corridors. 
- a. At the earliest stages of planning for a major transit project, implement policies aimed at preventing residential and small business displacement, to slow the pace of speculation and to increase opportunities for affordable housing and services, including expansion of affordable and non-market rental housing, as noted in Action 3.1.1. 
  - b. Adopt Development Contribution Expectation policies for each corridor identified in the Major Transit Network to ensure that owners, realtors, and developers are made aware of the significant expectations to preserve and grow affordable and rental housing along these corridors, even in advance of further community planning processes.
  - c. Where possible, preserve, protect, and reinvest in existing older, more affordable market and non-market rental housing around transit, in order to minimize the displacement of existing residents. 



*Pedestrian image courtesy the City of Vancouver*

3.1.3. **Advance parking management solutions** to increase housing affordability and reduce demand for driving:

- a. Encourage developers to unbundle parking costs from housing costs so that individual vehicle parking spots can be purchased separately by residents as needed.
- b. Eliminate parking minimums in new developments so that developers are not forced to add to the cost of housing units by oversupplying parking, most of which today remains underutilized across Metro Vancouver. This action should be delivered in concert with Action 2.3.8. to avoid increased pressure on street parking.
- c. In new developments adjacent to frequent transit stops and stations, explore concepts such as car-free developments, mandated parking for shared mobility (e.g., carsharing), investment in shared mobility infrastructure or services, parking maximums, and shared district parking.
- d. Develop area-wide parking management plans, including on-street parking meters and permits and shared off-street lots, to effectively manage any spillover impacts from reduced on-site parking.
- e. To avoid turning underutilized parking into expensive stranded assets, ensure that new structured and underground parking is built in ways that allow the space to be easily repurposed should demand continue to decline, especially considering the coming introduction of more shared and potentially automated vehicles.

3.1.4. Increase **community-serving retail** and other local amenities in Frequent Transit Development Areas so that residents living around frequent transit can easily walk to a wide selection of affordable goods and services.

### **Strategy 3.2: As a priority, invest in the most cost-effective and most affordable modes.**

Cost-effective modes of transportation are those that are lowest cost/most affordable for residents to use to move around the region. Investing in cost-effective and affordable modes will have significant benefits for people with low incomes as well as for Indigenous communities, which are some of the most underserved by transportation options in the region.

#### **Actions**

3.2.1. **Prioritize investment** in transit service improvements and active transportation across the region, but especially to neighbourhoods with high populations of households with **low income**. These investments should be accompanied by measures to prevent community displacement (see Strategy 3.1 on affordable housing).

3.2.2. Make **micromobility devices** such as bicycles, and mobility aids such as walkers, wheelchairs, and scooters, more widely available to more people **at low cost** through:



- a. Public ownership of shared micromobility as a utility and extension of the public transportation system.
- b. Rebates for micromobility devices, repairs, or accessories, and mobility aids for low-income individuals.
- c. Refurbishment and redistribution programs.

3.2.3. Implement minimum requirements for **secure, safe, and convenient bicycle parking** in all new developments and encourage/incentivize retrofitting existing multi-family and rental buildings; places of employment, education, and care; and retail centres to accommodate more secure bicycle and micromobility parking and charging infrastructure.

3.2.4. Prioritize **subsidies and rebates** for electric vehicles, electric bicycles, and bicycles to those residents with the least ability to pay, particularly to those who require that transportation mode in order to conduct their jobs (e.g., gig couriers, mobile care aids).



3.2.5. Per Action 1.3.5., leverage the abilities of **autonomous vehicles** to support the needs of people with **low incomes living in more remote locations** that are far from rapid transit service. 

### Strategy 3.3: Ensure that transportation fees and taxes are affordable for everyone.

Urban mobility benefits individuals who enjoy being able to move around and connect to opportunities, property owners whose land values go up with increased access, and businesses and the broader society, who share in the benefits of increased economic activity that comes with good urban mobility. Given the value enjoyed by each of these groups, the approach our region has long taken to funding regional transportation is to share the cost-burden between user pay (e.g., transit fares, fuel tax) and indirect beneficiary pay (e.g., property tax).

Usage charges are important to help avoid the inefficiency and high cost involved with free public goods; however, high usage charges create a heavy cost burden, especially for lower-income residents. Making usage charges more progressive by linking them to a household's wealth and income ability to pay will ensure that a basic level of mobility is affordable to all; this will be necessary to achieve the region's social equity goals.

#### Actions

- 3.3.1. Fund the regional transportation system through a diverse and resilient mix of **taxes and fees** that reflect both the value enjoyed by different beneficiaries and their ability to pay.
  - a. Establish electronic mobility accounts from which users can pay for all transportation modes and services within the region — with the fares and fees charged for any given user linked directly to their ability to pay. Users with the lowest incomes and wealth should pay a very low discounted fare or fee, and users with higher incomes and wealth should pay the full fare or fee. 
  - b. Make adjustments to each of the region's transportation taxes to make them more progressive, ensuring they are closely linked to the ability to pay.
  - c. Develop mechanisms that ensure that owners of all motor vehicles, regardless of fuel source, pay a fair share towards funding the regional transportation system.
  - d. Include a clear analysis of costs and benefits for any fees that impact passenger and commercial vehicles, including costs and benefits for businesses, consumers, and carriers as appropriate.
  - e. Coordinate with private sector goods movement stakeholders to ensure that pricing schemes meet their mobility needs and enhance the region's economic competitiveness.

### Strategy 3.4: Help people and businesses connect to more economic opportunities.

The first three strategies in this section focus on improving affordability by reducing expenses. This fourth strategy focuses on improving affordability by growing household incomes through equitable economic growth. In addition to the transportation and logistics sector itself providing many good household-supporting jobs in our region, a well-managed transportation system is an essential ingredient for any region's economic development and overall prosperity. Good transportation and supportive land use increase access to employment and educational opportunities for people, and increase access to employees, markets, suppliers, and end customers for businesses. Providing convenient, reliable, affordable, safe, and carbon-free mobility choices (per the strategies set out in Goals 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5) is a major contributor to high quality of life and is valuable for talent attraction and retention in a competitive global environment.

#### Actions

- 3.4.1. Provide consumers with **better access to more local shopping opportunities** by enhancing access to businesses through active transportation, transit, and other shared mobility options — especially to local street commerce and main street shops (as described in Strategies 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, and 3.1).
- 3.4.2. Provide workers with **better access to more local jobs** by:
  - a. Enhancing access to employment opportunities through active transportation, transit, and other shared mobility options (as described in Strategies 1.1, 1.2, and 1.3).
  - b. Providing flexible services like vanpools that improve access to jobs in lower-density business and industrial parks that are otherwise challenging to serve with fixed-route transit.

3.4.3. Ensure businesses have **better access to more markets, suppliers, customers, and workers** by:

- a. Helping them set up in the right location, per the location-efficiency framework described in Action 1.2.1, to minimize distances that customers, workers, goods, and services will need to travel.
- b. Enhancing access to businesses by active transportation, transit, and other shared mobility options (as described in Strategies 1.1, 1.2, and 1.3).
- c. Improving travel-time reliability for commercial vehicles and services that rely on the road network, in order to help businesses consistently and predictably bring their products to market (as described in Strategies 2.2 and 2.3).
- d. Including, in any evaluation of transport interventions, a robust assessment of impacts on the region's trade and economic competitiveness, and impacts on cost for goods movers, businesses, and households.

3.4.4. Support **safe and efficient operations for the region's agricultural sector** by:

- a. Discouraging non-agricultural trips on local roads within the Agricultural Land Reserve.
- b. Taking the unique transportation needs of this industry into consideration in road infrastructure design and network planning.
- c. Ensuring adequate education and enforcement of safe speeds and vehicle operation around farm vehicles (see Action 4.1.8.).

3.4.5. Develop proactive strategies to **attract, train, and retain a skilled and qualified transportation workforce** that:

- a. Is representative of Metro Vancouver's diverse population. 🌍
- b. Includes strong representation from local Indigenous Peoples. 🍃
- c. Is ready and able to monitor, model, analyze, plan, build, operate, and maintain the highly automated, connected, electric, and shared transportation system of tomorrow.

3.4.6. Collaborate across the transportation sector, with industry and labour partners, to proactively navigate an orderly, planned, and **gradual transition for transportation workers** whose jobs will be affected by automation and other technological changes. 🌐

3.4.7. Support a thriving **ecosystem of businesses** in Metro Vancouver and British Columbia oriented around transport automation, digitization, electrification, and shared mobility by:

- a. Fostering active partnerships between entrepreneurs, industry, and academics to collaborate, prototype, pilot, demonstrate, and evaluate new mobility technologies, product concepts, and innovations that promise to advance Transport 2050 goals.
- b. Establishing transportation innovation zones to facilitate trials by industry and academic partners in real-world environments within Metro Vancouver in order to better understand emerging transportation technologies and approaches, and how they might advance or hinder progress towards Transport 2050 goals.

