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Releases

New report sets out bold 10-year plan for integrated public transit throughout BC

Within the next decade, British Columbia's local transit systems could be united into an upgraded province-wide public transit network, offering safe, reliable, affordable service for riders travelling within and between communities throughout the province.

That's the vision set out in *Connecting BC*, a new report released today by the BC Federation of Labour (BCFED) and the BC office of the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (CCPA-BC). It's a comprehensive plan for investing in buses, rail, rapid transit and passenger ferries.

"No matter where you live in BC, you should be able to get where you need to go quickly, safely and affordably. And by meeting that need, we can confront some of the most critical challenges working people are facing, like affordability, housing and the climate crisis," said BCFED president Sussanne Skidmore.

"After years of neglect and privatization, BC's transit system is plagued with overcrowding, delays and big gaps in service," said report author Marc Lee, a CCPA-BC senior economist.

"Our current provincial government has made important new transit investments, and now it's time for the next step: a province-wide vision, uniting local and regional transit into an integrated whole."

The report lays out a 10-year program of investment, with a call for immediate action on three key priorities:

- an inter-community express bus service connecting BC communities that were left stranded by the end of BC Rail passenger service and the departure of Greyhound.
- eliminating privatization throughout BC's public transit systems to ensure better, more reliable services for riders, and fairer benefits and wages for transit workers.
- extending the provincial government's free transit program to cover all British Columbians 18 and younger.

In the longer term, the plan includes a dramatic expansion and electrification of BC Transit's bus and HandyDART fleet, new regional rail and passenger ferry connections, accelerating Metro Vancouver's transit plans and integrating transit systems to allow seamless travel throughout BC.

The plan would mean approximately 16,800 direct and spinoff jobs per year from construction, and 23,700 direct and spinoff jobs from ongoing operations. Much of the plan's costs would be recovered from economic growth and revenue generated through increased density near new and expanded transit hubs.

BC's economy would also see a boost from reductions in traffic congestion, while employers and employees alike would benefit from shorter, more reliable commutes. Communities would see cleaner air and less sprawl, and BC would make crucial progress toward the province's climate reduction targets.

Stronger transit connections across BC would also have a big impact on tourism and lead to a cleaner province, making a central contribution to dramatically reducing the one-third of BC's greenhouse gas emissions that come from transportation.

As well, affordable, viable transit options would allow many BC families to save on vehicle costs — with annual savings potentially reaching $10,000 for those choosing to quit driving altogether.

Connecting BC is part of the BCFED's Climate Justice and Jobs Plan for BC, currently under development in consultation with unions, working people and communities throughout BC. The full report and additional quotes are available at bcfed.ca/connecting-bc or policyalternatives.ca/connecting-bc.

Quotes:

This plan would reverse years of decline and privatization under past BC Liberal governments, and build on investments made by the NDP to build a modern, reliable province-wide public transit system." — *Sussanne Skidmore, President, BCFED*

"This plan is an opportunity for BC to build local economies and make life more affordable right across our province. And by creating thousands of highly-skilled jobs while helping to meet our carbon goals, we're showing the world what climate justice can look like." — *Hermender Singh Kailley, Secretary-Treasurer, BCFED*

"This plan would mean smarter growth for an expanded transit network in BC. This includes reshaping development patterns, orienting them toward transit and increasing density to spur the transition of suburban areas into more complete communities and help revitalize town centres." — *Marc Lee, CCPA-BC*

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Attached:

- Connecting BC full report
- Connecting BC executive summary(582 KB)
- Connecting BC plan overview (86 KB)
- What the community is saying: Additional quotes(243 KB)