

# Vancouver, BC Transportation Fact Sheet

## Basic Statistics:

- ✓ Current Vancouver metro area population is approximately 2.1 million.
- ✓ Downtown Vancouver is roughly 1,250 acres in size.
- ✓ Downtown population is approximately 70,000; downtown employment is approximately 124,600.
- ✓ Vancouver has 21,675,000 square feet of office space downtown.<sup>1</sup>
- ✓ In the 1960's, Vancouver decided to rely on local streets and transit to access downtown, rejecting freeways on the downtown peninsula.
- ✓ In 1996, the Vancouver region adopted the Liveable Region Strategic Plan. The plan has four goals:
  - \* Protect the Green Zone
  - \* Build complete communities
  - \* Achieve a compact metropolitan region
  - \* Increase transportation choice
- ✓ In 1998, TransLink (officially Greater Vancouver Transportation Authority) was created so that all regional transportation planning and operations would be managed by one entity with several operating subsidiaries. TransLink's strategic transportation plans must be approved by the metropolitan planning organization. TransLink is also able to review and comment on major land use plans.
- ✓ Currently there is discussion about the long-term impacts of residential uses outbidding office uses for remaining downtown land.

## Land Use Controls:

- ✓ All large scale developments are reviewed by a four-member development services board made up of department heads whose departments must permit the development. A nine-member advisory panel provides input on all proposals. The advisory panel includes development interests, urban design and architectural expertise and the general public.
- ✓ Downtown has districts with different mixes of uses.
  - \* Retail: In the shopping district, retail must be continuous at ground level with display windows. Building density is lower in the shopping district and roofline restrictions are imposed to ensure sunny streets. In the remainder of the commercial core, retail is optional. In the neighborhoods, retail is required within community shopping districts and forbidden in other neighborhood areas.
  - \* Residential: Housing is permitted in the retail core and in the mixed use district on the edge of the office district. Housing is forbidden within the office core. The density of residential uses within the retail and mixed use districts is controlled through floor area bonuses for social housing in some districts and limitations in the amount of floor area that can be put to a residential use in other districts.
  - \* Office is permitted in the residential neighborhoods downtown only in a heritage building.
- ✓ Building density is encouraged. Vancouver uses a combination of floor area ratios, height and view cones to plan for density.
  - \* FAR's range from 3.0 to 9.0. However, facilities such as public libraries, day care centers, hobby/game rooms, gymnasiums, indoor tennis courts, etc. are not included in FAR calculations. (This is equivalent to a 1:1 FAR bonus.) Additionally, FAR bonuses may be granted to buildings containing public facilities for physical fitness, general recreation, or other services identified by planning studies.

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<sup>1</sup> Avison Young/Grugg & Ellis Global, Research Reports, [www.avisonyoung.com](http://www.avisonyoung.com)

- \* Underground parking is not counted towards the floor area ratio for a site; space devoted to structured parking is counted at 70% of the actual square footage.
- \* Heights range from 70' to 450' in the downtown core. Permitted building heights can be as high as 190' in the downtown residential neighborhoods with design review. FAR's in the residential neighborhoods are low (1.0 to 2.75) which results in tall buildings set back from property lines, thus preserving light and views.
- \* Views of noteworthy landmarks are protected with view cones which reduce the allowed height closer to the object of interest. Objects of interest include bridges, shoreline, and mountains.
- ✓ Several large parcels of publicly owned land have been sold for development after a competitive selection process. In these cases, the densities, heights, uses, etc. are determined by a negotiated development plan.

### Parking:

- ✓ 39% of trips to the Vancouver Central Business District are made in an auto.<sup>2</sup>
- ✓ On-Street parking in the commercial core is managed for the short-term user.
  - \* Meters are enforced from 9 a.m. to 8 p.m., every day of the year.
  - \* Meter rates vary depending on location (from \$1 to \$4 per hour). Policy goal is to have metered spaces cost the same or slightly more than off-street public parking.
  - \* On some arterial streets, on-street parking is not allowed during rush hour when the parking lane is converted to a travel lane.
  - \* In residential areas, the City manages on-street parking with residential permits.
- ✓ In 1948, the downtown business community created the Parking Corporation of Vancouver which purchased six parkades and gave them to the City of Vancouver to be used for public parking.
  - \* The Parking Corporation is jointly owned by the City of Vancouver and the Downtown Vancouver Association. Their parking is operated under the name EasyPark.
  - \* EasyPark manages owned and leased parking in 38 facilities, totaling over 9,300 parking spaces. EasyPark manages approximately 15% of the downtown parking supply.
  - \* Net revenues at each facility go to the owners of the facilities. Net revenues from the Parking Corporation facilities are used to upgrade and add to the publicly owned parkades.
  - \* The EasyPark lots accept EasyPark tokens which are sold to local businesses at face value with a volume discount if more than 500 are purchased at one time.
- ✓ Vancouver has a number of privately owned and operated parkades downtown.
  - \* Commercial parking structures are limited to the retail core.
  - \* Outside of the retail core, parking must serve the on-site use.
- ✓ Vancouver has a narrow range of both parking minimums and maximums for new private development.
  - \* Minimums for commercial development range from 0.80 to 1 space/1,000 sf
  - \* Maximums for commercial development range from 0.93 to 1.16 spaces/1,000 sf
  - \* Housing developments typically provide 1 stall per unit, but the requirement may be more or less depending on unit size and proximity to transit.

### Streets:

- ✓ Streets are 66 feet wide.
- ✓ Downtown streets are classified as either arterial or local.
- ✓ Many downtown arterials have lanes which switch from parking mid-day to travel lanes during rush hour.
- ✓ The signal cycle length is about 65 seconds and signal coordination is the rule.

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<sup>2</sup> Translink Trip Diary, 2004.

- ✓ Within the downtown area, Level of Service standards are not applied.

#### **Pedestrian Environment:**

- ✓ Blocks in downtown Vancouver are typically 450 feet long.
- ✓ 27% of all trips to downtown Vancouver were made by walking in 2004.<sup>2</sup> The City's Strategic Transportation Planning Engineer states that ≈65% of downtown circulation trips are made on-foot.
- ✓ The 1991 Central Area Plan proposed a "walkable central area" where pedestrians move safely, easily and comfortably on all streets.
- ✓ The 1997 Transportation Plan identifies pedestrian priority areas in downtown.
- ✓ In 2001-2002, Vancouver conducted a pedestrian study which included pedestrian counts and an opinion survey about pedestrian facilities. They found:
  - \* On the major retail streets, the pedestrian counts were 4,000 to 5,500/hour from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.
  - \* Over half of the pedestrians surveyed had started their trip within downtown.<sup>3</sup>
- ✓ The 2002 Downtown Transportation Plan aims to improve the connectivity between neighborhoods and major destinations by making a high level of investment in pedestrian facilities, including:
  - \* Developing a system of pedestrian greenways on streets downtown
  - \* Adding mid-block crosswalks, pedestrian bulges at corners, curb ramps, and wayfinding signs.
  - \* Encourage pedestrian weather protection in building design on retail streets
  - \* Increase number of turn signals that give pedestrians priority over turning traffic
  - \* Limit above-grade and below-grade street crossings which take people off the street
- ✓ Vancouver has a Sidewalk Task Force to address issues related to use of sidewalks

#### **Bicycle Environment:**

- ✓ 3% of all trips to downtown were made by bicycling in 2004.<sup>2</sup> This represents 8,000 trips per day.
- ✓ Vancouver has a combination of bicycle/pedestrian shared routes along the waterfronts, and bicycle/auto shared routes on the downtown streets.
- ✓ The 1988 Bicycle Master Plan proposed the integration of cyclists into the transportation network via shared use of existing roads.
- ✓ In 1997, the Vancouver (citywide) Transportation Plan recommended investing in downtown bicycle lanes as the top bicycle priority for the city.
- ✓ The 2002 Downtown Transportation Plan proposes that the city provide striped bicycle lanes (rather than a wider curb lane) on a network of streets downtown. Other bicycle facilities to be explored include: color differentiation of bicycle lanes, bike "boxes" at intersections; signal progression timed for bike speeds; continuation of providing wider curb lanes when possible on all other streets.

#### **Transit and Downtown Circulation:**

- ✓ 40% of commuters access downtown on transit. 30% of all trips to downtown are via transit.<sup>2</sup>
- ✓ The Granville Street Mall is a five-block (≈2,500 foot long) pedestrian and bus thoroughfare considered the center of downtown Vancouver's retail and office core. Electric buses providing service to neighborhoods within the City of Vancouver are the only buses on the Mall (≈2,000 bus trips/day).
  - \* Bus Rapid Transit parallels the Mall. (Will be replaced by a Skytrain subway in 2009.)
  - \* Regional Trolley Bus Lines either parallel or cross the Mall.
  - \* SkyTrain (an automated, grade-separated train system with 108 second frequencies) subway stop is on the Mall. Average weekday ridership on SkyTrain is ≈220,000.
  - \* During the day the Mall is restricted to pedestrians, local buses, taxis and delivery vehicles.

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<sup>3</sup> 2002 Vancouver Pedestrian Study

- ✓ Waterfront Station is located at one end of the Granville Street Mall. Waterfront Station is served by:
  - \* Commuter Rail (terminus; serving northeastern suburbs)
  - \* Bus Rapid Transit (terminus; serving southern suburbs; will be replaced by Skytrain subway)
  - \* SkyTrain (terminus; serving close-in eastern suburbs)
  - \* SeaBus (terminus; ferry service)
  - \* Local Buses
- ✓ Most local bus routes in Vancouver are routes through the downtown while the regional bus routes serving downtown terminate within the downtown core. Regional bus layovers are accommodated on-street within the downtown area.
- ✓ Vancouver has introduced community shuttles—bus service on smaller buses that connect neighborhoods to close-by commercial centers. The downtown neighborhoods are served by two shuttles that run at 10 to 15 minute frequencies from 6:30 a.m. to 10:00 p.m.
- ✓ Vancouver does not have a transit free fare zone. All of downtown is within one fare zone.
- ✓ Most transit vehicles are accessible to the disabled. But, some of the buses and some of the bus stops are not yet accessible.
  - \* Translink offers handy-cards to the disabled which entitles user to discounted transit fares on regular service and discounted fares for taxi service.
  - \* TransLink provides a paratransit service for those who cannot use regular transit service. Fares are based on distance traveled.

