



**For immediate release:**

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## **Provincial Funding for Transit Would Help Solve Transportation Crisis and Global Warming**

**February 13, 2006, Vancouver** – A local environmental organization is strongly urging the provincial government to greatly increase funding for transit as part of today's announced initiatives to tackle global warming. Better Environmentally Sound Transportation (BEST) asserts that the chronic shortage of funding for transit by both senior levels of government has increased reliance on personal vehicles throughout the province, and especially in Greater Vancouver where transit demand vastly outstrips supply.

Bus drivers in the Vancouver region reported an astounding 19,000 pass-bys in 2006. This represents the number of times drivers of full buses have had to pass by bus stops with would-be riders left waiting for another bus. The shortage of buses system-wide has meant that people are often left waiting long periods before a bus with room for passengers is able to pick them up. In suburban parts of the region with already infrequent service, a pass-by can mean waiting at a bus stop for up to another hour.

BEST Executive Director, Marion Town states that the shortage of transit vehicles is symptomatic of years of under-funding for transit by senior levels of government. "By just about any measure, Greater Vancouver is undersupplied for transit and as a result we have the lowest rate of ridership of any large metro area in the country" said Town. She further notes that of the 5 largest metropolitan areas of Canada, Vancouver's public transit mode share (11.5%) continues to lag well behind Toronto (22%), Montreal (22%), Ottawa-Hull (18%), and even Calgary (13.2%). "This is not because people in those other cities happen to be any more prone to using transit than we are in the GVRD", Town said, "but rather indicates that transit has historically been better funded and supplied in these other regions. It's time for B.C. to look after the transit needs of its cities."

"It's not like people in this region don't want to use transit", said Town. "Hundreds of people line up on SkyTrain platforms every morning and afternoon waiting to board overcrowded trains while 2-3 fully packed trains pass them by." Town also notes that students at colleges throughout the Lower Mainland have been asking for a U-Pass program similar to that provided to UBC and SFU students, but there simply aren't enough buses in the system to launch this program. TransLink recently announced it would not be expanding U-Pass in for the foreseeable future because of a shortage of buses.

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Beyond the inconvenience of the transit shortage on students and other daily transit users, the region's severe shortage of transit is hampering the opportunity to make a significant reduction in greenhouse gas emissions. Emissions from light duty vehicles account for approximately one-third of GHG emissions in the region. "Providing stable and predictable funding for transit in our cities is one of the fastest and easiest ways of accomplishing emission reductions", said Town. "If the government of B.C. is sincere about its commitment to reducing greenhouse gas emissions, meeting existing transit needs would seem to be the logical first step. We are disappointed that today's Throne Speech makes no mention of new funding for public transit in our cities."

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