

# City needs new ticket to ride

By Julie Hawrishok

**OTTAWA — With Ottawa expected to grow by more than 400,000 residents and 200,000 vehicles in the next 20 years, after clean water and clean air, public transportation is vital to the city's future.**

"Our neighborhoods, our air, and our city budget can't afford to keep on building roads to respond to congestion problems," says Clive Doucet, councillor for the city's Capital ward.

"I believe that the only way to respond to growth is a transit-first approach — it's the cheapest, most effective, community-sensitive, and equitable choice."

The city is projected to become more densely populated, with up to an estimated 15 per cent increase in downtown residents. That means public transportation is important for commuting and can even save the city money while moving more people.

One bus lane can carry the same number of people as in eight lanes of traffic and two rail lines can take sixteen lanes of expressway traffic. That is important as it costs \$8,000 per kilometer to maintain Ottawa's road system. For instance, Ottawa is paying \$47 million to widen 7.7 kilometers of Innes Road by two lanes.

Public transportation is already popular in Ottawa. The latest numbers available,



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**The City of Ottawa hopes to increase OC Transpo ridership in the next decade.**

## Love your car?

For many, the idea of giving up their vehicles is unappealing. People love to drive, and often it is the only feasible way to get around. Luckily, you can keep driving while still remaining environmentally friendly.

## Electric Vehicles

The Electric Vehicle Council of Ottawa says:

"An electric vehicle, or EV, is a vehicle driven by an electric motor instead of by an internal combustion engine ( ICE ), and fueled by electricity from a battery instead of by a tank of gasoline. As such, there are only three major components: the motor, the battery, and a controller of energy between the two. These three major components, in their simplest form, have been around for decades in machinery that is used for months on end without rest."

There are currently over two-dozen EVs in Ottawa, including a Chevrolet Cavalier, Chevrolet S10 pickup, Ford Ranger, Geo Metro, Volkswagen Beetle and Volkswagen Jetta.

There are three charging stations in the area: Sydenham, Nepean and Centretown.

for 2001, show that OC Transpo's fleet of 900 buses ran a total of 2.2 million hours to provide 85 million trips for the city's over one million residents, with bus service reaching most of those in Ottawa-Gatineau.

## Modal split system

Rosemarie Leclair, General Manager of Transportation Utilities and Public Works for the City of Ottawa, says another important consideration used in transportation planning is how people travel around the city. An analysis of the system breaks down all trips made on a daily basis within a city by transportation modes: pedestrian, cycling, cars and public transit and it calculates a percentage of all people movements for each.

Currently, roughly 18 percent of all trips made by Ottawa residents are on public transit, compared to 15 per cent in the mid-90s. The city's population is growing concurrently, but so is public transportation ridership. "By comparison," says Doucet, "Los Angeles has modal split of around 2 to 3 per cent while Helsinki, Finland is up at around 70 per cent."

"The city's objective is to increase transit's share of the daily trips to at least 20 per cent of all modes of travel by the year 2021. We are making progress in making transit a more attractive choice — our growth in ridership is growing at a greater rate than our population," says Leclair.

## Future considerations

The future of public transportation in Ottawa is changing as well. Doucet says the city staff will soon unveil a long-term strategy for substantially expanding rapid transit in Ottawa.

"The City's blueprint for sustainable growth calls for an integrated system of light rail, street cars, and busways that together would deliver fast and comfortable commuting choices to Ottawa residents from east to west to south," he says.

This plan comes with added costs.

"The plan represents some \$2.5 billion of investment over a 20-year period and depends on significant transit infrastructure investment from the federal government," Doucet says. The latest federal budget released in February could help Doucet's plan, delivering \$3 billion over 10 years for infrastructure support.

## Transitways

While OC Transpo has not announced any long-range plans, the company is in the midst of making buses more user-friendly.

As part of its TransPlan, service will be extended and improved in suburban

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## VirtuCar

VirtuCar is a car sharing service that gives its members 24-hour access to 11 vehicles that are located around the city core. Members pay a one-time fee when joining and are then given access to a vehicle. The company covers insurance, parking and even gas.

Similar car sharing services have been in place in other areas of Canada, as well as the United States and Europe.

growth areas. It will also build a new Transitway station for Kanata residents in the city's west-end, located centrally between the Kanata Centrum and Highway 417. The new station will have a park and ride lot — the fifth in the city — with space for 500 cars.



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**Kanata residents already make good use of the Park and Ride lot at Eagleson, but a new lot in the area will help ease congestion.**

The station will serve as a second transit hub for the community, offering improved and enclosed bus shelters for customers, timed transfers and a transit information center. OC Transpo hopes this new station will encourage many residents to leave their cars at home and take public transit instead.

From an economic and environmental standpoint, Ottawa would thrive if more people took public transportation to get around, but vehicles will never be eliminated in the city says Doucet.

"Of course some people, because of personal choice or the type of work they do, will always need or want to drive to work. Our goal is giving residents a real option between efficient, comfortable public transit or taking their cars."

### Related Links

[OC Transpo's TransPlan](#)

[City of Ottawa's Guide to Transportation, Utilities and Public Works](#)

[Transport 2000 — a non-profit pressure organization interested in the future of public transit in Canada](#)