

Symposium on Public and Community Transportation in New Brunswick

March 22-23, 2023
Fredericton, N.B.

Final Report



June 19, 2023

N.B. Economic and Social Inclusion Corporation
Vecteur 5 – Mobility of persons

Ensemble Pour vaincre
la pauvreté
Overcoming Poverty Together

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Economic and Social Inclusion Corporation welcomed more than 160 persons with an interest, mandate, knowledge, or experience in the field of passenger transportation on March 22 and 23, 2023, in Fredericton, where they participated in a symposium for sharing experiences and innovations to inspire decision makers, actors, and stakeholders in the development of public and community transportation services.

On the first day of the symposium, an overview of the current state of passenger mobility in New Brunswick was presented, along with inspiring models used in various jurisdictions in other Canadian provinces to effectively meet the needs of residents. Three provincial ministers – the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure, Jeff Carr; the Minister of Social Development and Minister responsible for the Economic and Social Inclusion Corporation, Dorothy K. Shephard; and the Minister of Local Government and Local Governance Reform, Daniel Allain – expressed their interest in and support for the development of public and community transportation solutions.

On the second day, various best practices and a review of previous experiences in the different regions of the province were shared, followed by an overview of urban public transportation services and the development vision of the authorities that manage them. The financial resources available for organizing and operating public and community transportation services were then presented, along

with the legal framework governing passenger transportation activities. The participants were also made aware of actions and principles that promote the inclusion of persons with disabilities.

Last of all, effective practices to be adopted for the governance of passenger transportation services were presented so the participants, grouped together by region, could take stock of how passenger transportation services are organized and identify actions for promoting the development of public and community transportation services within their respective jurisdictions.

The symposium was therefore able to mobilize the province's dynamic forces and lay the foundation for the harmonious development of public and community transportation services adapted to the needs of New Brunswick's different communities.

BACKGROUND

The Symposium on Public and Community Transportation in New Brunswick was organized by the Economic and Social Inclusion Corporation (ESIC) in connection with the plan [*Overcoming Poverty Together: The New Brunswick Economic and Social Inclusion Plan*](#). It brought together a variety of groups and individuals with an interest, mandate, knowledge, or experience in public or community transportation on March 22 and 23, 2023. The event was attended by approximately 160 participants in Fredericton, with an additional 50 or so virtual participants. Representatives from five Canadian provinces shared their respective experiences, innovations, and projects to inspire decision makers, actors, and stakeholders in the field of passenger transportation.

This report presents, in a succinct manner, the highlights of the various presentations and activities that took place during the Symposium.

This was the second provincial meeting on passenger transportation.

ESIC held a first symposium on public transportation in 2012. Experts from New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Quebec, Ontario, and Maine shared their experiences and knowledge with the participants, who then discussed ways to improve the transportation system in New Brunswick.

[Dialogue session examines public transportation](#)

OVERVIEW OF PASSENGER MOBILITY IN NEW BRUNSWICK

Trevor Hanson, Coordinator, UNB Transportation Group

Yves Bourgeois, Dean of Studies, Université de Moncton, Shippagan campus

Nathalie Dubois, Senior Director, Department of Environment and Local Government of New Brunswick

Like other North American jurisdictions, New Brunswick's development since the 1960s has been strongly based on the automobile and its supporting infrastructure. Living environments and transportation habits have changed as a result, considerably increasing the rate of personal vehicle ownership. Now that New Brunswick has achieved its automobile-based vision of mobility, we can see that this creates challenges, particularly in terms of access



Nathalie Dubois

to services, economic and social inclusion, and the impact of greenhouse gases on the environment.

In view of the interest generated by the release of the report [*From Surfaces to Services: An inclusive and sustainable transportation strategy for the province of New Brunswick, 2017-2037*](#), there seems to be a need to shift the vision of provincial mobility away from the model that relies entirely on the ability of households to travel by automobile. To do this, there must be a change in behaviour and thinking.

Since households underestimate the costs of car ownership by 50%, and car use is the default transportation model, the challenges are considerable. To facilitate a modal shift among residents, mobility decisions must be simplified and alternative transportation options must be promoted at the time when citizens are making these decisions.

At the urban planning level, accessibility must be central to decisions about the built environment and land use. Transportation must remain a tool for promoting access to services and opportunities. There must be an entity responsible for thinking about and planning passenger mobility on an appropriate scale. Whether at the municipal, regional, or provincial level, several mobility-related planning exercises and actions are required.



Trevor Hanson

Yves Bourgeois

In this context, the [local governance reform](#) implemented in New Brunswick in 2022-2023 lays the foundation by designating regional service commissions (RSCs) as the entities responsible for thinking about, in cooperation with ESIC, the planning and organization of public and community transportation services in their respective regions. The RSCs have been given the task of developing an integrated regional transportation strategy based on the transit needs of their communities, with the support of a regional transportation committee to be established by the RSCs and ESIC.

In exercising their new responsibilities, the RSCs will have the independence and flexibility they need to establish the services they believe are required to adequately meet the needs of the residents of their coverage areas.

PROMISING MODELS IN CANADA

In the Maritimes

Greg Sewell, Director, Active Transit and Community Transportation, Department of Transportation and Active Transit, Government of Nova Scotia

Mike Cassidy, President and Owner, Maritime Bus

The provincial governments of Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island have both encouraged the development of rural public transportation services in their respective provinces.

In Nova Scotia, the government has set up [various assistance programs](#) to support local organizations and community groups in establishing and operating community-based transportation services. These programs are designed to support the mobility of citizens who live outside urban centres. As a result, community transportation services are now established in almost every region of the province.



Greg Sewell

On Prince Edward Island, the development of public transit services in rural areas has emerged as a result of a policy initiative. The government has expressed a desire to see affordable transportation services established across the province. To this end, it has entered into an agreement with Maritime Bus to have the company develop and manage various [intraprovincial routes](#). The approach taken by the Government of Prince Edward Island is more centralized and has resulted in the deployment of very affordable fixed-route services across the province.



Mike Cassidy

Although they have adopted very different methods, the two provinces show that, when the political will is there, it is possible to set up structuring transportation services, even in rural areas.

In Quebec

André Lavoie, President, Association des transports collectifs ruraux du Québec

Marie-Andrée Pichette, Executive Director, Régie intermunicipale de transport – Gaspésie – Îles-de-la-Madeleine

Valérie Bellerose, Executive Director, Corporation de transports collectifs de la MRC de Maskinongé



In Quebec, the government has put in place a [complex legal and regulatory framework](#) to provide support and structure for the public transportation ecosystem. As a result, a large number of authorities and players are involved in the management, organization, and operation of public transit services.

The framework has led to the emergence of structuring services in several rural areas of Quebec, including Gaspésie, the Magdalen Islands, and the MRC de Maskinongé.

In Gaspésie, services are available across the peninsula. The issue of distance and low population density are major factors in determining routes, some of which are over 100 kilometres long. Despite the challenges, the [Régie intermunicipale de transport – Gaspésie – Îles-de-la-Madeleine](#) has set ambitious goals and

continues to diversify its service offer, such as through car and bicycle sharing.

In the [MRC de Maskinongé](#), the area to be served is also vast, which forces the organization to be proactive and to establish routes that allow for the pooling of transportation needs. Partnerships, cooperation, and communication have secured success for the MRC de Maskinongé, which provides close to 100,000 trips per year.

In short, Quebec is a province where several rural regional authorities have set up public transit services that, several years later, are successful despite a complex territorial reality.

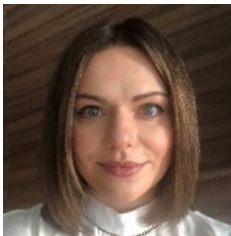
In Ontario

Melissa Djurakov, Director, Municipal Programs Branch, Ontario Ministry of Transportation

Stephanie Stewart, Manager, Grey County Community Transportation

Kimberly Earls, Executive Director, South Central Ontario Region Economic Development Corporation

Kevin Lee, Manager, Ontario Ministry of Transportation



Melissa Djurakov



Kevin Lee

The Ontario provincial government supports, through various means, municipalities and organizations that provide transportation services. Municipalities offering public transit services receive financial support through a gas tax. Another program that supports community transportation projects in underserved areas is the [Community Transportation Grant Program \(CTGP\)](#).

One of the initiatives supported by the assistance program is being carried out by [Grey County](#). With funding and the commitment of elected officials, the county is establishing six fixed routes within the region and with Toronto. Customer experience is the main reason for the success of this approach.

Another fine example of coordination and collaboration is the initiative backed by the South Central Region Economic Development Corporation. Under the [Southwest Community Transit](#) banner, it brings together all transportation services offered in the region.



Participants in the symposium

SPEECHES BY NEW BRUNSWICK PROVINCIAL MINISTERS

On the first day of the symposium, the following three New Brunswick government ministers gave speeches expressing their interest in and support for the development of public and community transportation solutions:

- **Jeff Carr**, Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure;
- **Dorothy K. Shephard**, Minister of Social Development and Minister Responsible for the Economic and Social Inclusion Corporation;
- **Daniel Allain**, Minister of Local Government and Local Governance Reform.



Jeff Carr, Dorothy K. Shephard, Daniel Allain

EXHIBITORS' LOUNGE

Throughout the symposium, various organizations closely involved in the passenger transportation sector could set up booths in the Exhibitors' Lounge. The [Kent, Acadian Peninsula, Restigouche](#), and [Chaleur](#) regional service commissions, [Infrastructure Canada](#), the [New Brunswick Energy and Utilities Board](#), the [Regional Development Corporation](#), [Urban/Rural Rides](#), and the technology companies [Blaise Transit](#) and [YHC Environment](#) were able to present their respective activities and initiatives and discuss them with the participants. The latter two companies were also able to present their technology platforms in a lunch-and-learn format.



Exhibitors' Lounge

BEST PRACTICES AND LESSONS LEARNED IN NEW BRUNSWICK

Paul Lang, CEO, Kent Regional Service Commission

Mélanie Thibodeau, CEO, Acadian Peninsula Regional Service Commission

Kelly Taylor, Executive Director, Urban/Rural Rides

Chantal Bernard, Coordinator of Community Development & Community Transportation, Restigouche Regional Service Commission

Briana Cowie, Climate Change Program Manager, Eastern Charlotte Waterways Inc.

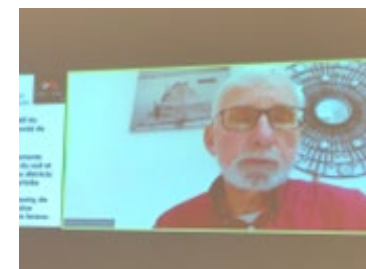
Jennifer Pitre, Community Development Coordinator, Chaleur Regional Service Commission

Stanley Choptiany, Southwest NB Transit Authority (Rural Lynx)

During this discussion block, stakeholders discussed successes and lessons learned in relation to various initiatives across the province.

The initiatives discussed by the stakeholders included the following:

- Rural Lynx pilot project in 2017-2019 in partnership with Maritime Bus, the Southwest Regional Service Commission, and the Regional Development Corporation;



Stan Choptiany

- Greenhouse gas emissions study of on-demand transportation services in New Brunswick;
- Implementation of community transportation services in the Kent, Chaleur, and Restigouche regions;
- Purchase of a paratransit vehicle for the community transportation service in the Chaleur region;
- Implementation of a public transit service that includes fixed routes and on-demand transportation on the Acadian Peninsula;
- Establishment of a community transportation non-profit organization (NPO) in the southeast (Urban/Rural Rides) and



Paul Lang, Mélanie Thibodeau, Kelly Taylor, Chantal Bernard, Briana Cowie, Jennifer Pitre

expansion of its activities to other parts of the province.

Highlights from the discussion include the following:

- Community transportation services organized by the RSCs, while necessary and appreciated by customers, are fragile, because they rely on volunteer drivers.
- Several regions are experiencing a significant influx of newcomers. It is essential that transportation services be put in place to ensure the vitality of the regions and retain these residents in the long term.
- Cooperation among regional actors is fundamental to the success of the initiatives discussed.
- Non-municipal funding must be available to support the RSCs in deploying and maintaining transportation alternatives, whether they be public transit, community transportation, or car sharing.
- Car ownership is a significant cost to households in rural New Brunswick communities. Alternatives must be found to reduce this financial pressure.
 - RSC access to paratransit vehicles is necessary to ensure service for certain seniors or persons living with a disability.

To sum up, the various initiatives presented point to the proactivity of players in different regions of the province. They have put in place various structuring projects in their respective regions and hope to have the support of higher levels in order to fulfill their new responsibilities regarding public and community transportation.

OVERVIEW AND VISION OF URBAN PUBLIC TRANSIT SERVICES IN NEW BRUNSWICK

Jason Babineau, General Manager, Miramichi Transit

Charlene Sharpe, Manager, Transit and Parking Services,
Fredericton Transit

Jérémie Aubé, Director – Urban Mobility, City of Dieppe

In Miramichi, an NPO has been providing an [urban public transportation service](#) since 2009. Available six days a week, it is seeing an increase in ridership and is an essential service for the community. Local governance reform is prompting the organization to think about service development and to consider on-demand transportation in order to serve the more rural parts of its coverage area. While committed to optimizing local service, the organization would like to see improved provincial connectivity of public transportation services.

In Fredericton, the [urban public transit service](#) has been in operation since 1957 and consists of 12 fixed routes served six days a week by city buses. The organization hopes to optimize its services through dynamic scheduling software, improved passenger counting, real-time vehicle tracking, and a modernized payment system. In addition, its long-term strategy is to diversify the fleet of vehicles and better serve the city's outlying suburbs.

The municipality of Dieppe works with the City of Moncton and is



Jason Babineau, Charlene Sharpe, Jérémie Aubé

therefore served by [Codiac Transpo](#). The city has implemented an [on-demand transit pilot project](#), which has been very successful and has seen a steady increase in ridership. A paratransit service is available as well. Also, the municipality wants citizens to opt for active transportation, and it maintains a network of 70 kilometres of trails and bike paths. The city's goal is to encourage multi-

modality and to ensure that each household needs no more than one car to get around.

PLATFORM PROVIDERS FOR TRANSIT SERVICES

Two companies offering adaptive management platforms – YHC and Blaise – were at the symposium. Participants were able to speak with representatives of these companies and learn more about what they can offer to public transit services during an early bird breakfast. Blaise and YHC also had a booth in the Exhibitors' Lounge.

RESOURCES AND REGULATIONS

Kathleen Mitchell, Chief Clerk, New Brunswick Energy and Utilities Board

Christophe Ingeri, Marc Vachon, and Andrew Thistle, Infrastructure Canada

André Laplante, Director, Regional Development Corporation

The [New Brunswick Energy and Utilities Board](#) is responsible for regulating several sectors of activity, including road transportation. Under current legislation, all motor carriers must be licensed by the Board, with the exception of certain types of services such as cabs, school buses, and locally operated transit vehicles. The Board may revoke or amend a licence if the carrier is not providing proper service, and it may decide that the service should be expanded in terms of frequency or points serviced. The carrier may not abandon or discontinue service without an order from the Board.

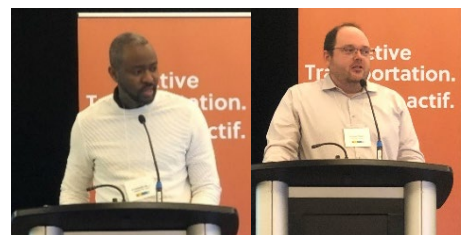


Kathleen Mitchell

The stakeholders from Infrastructure Canada presented the [Rural Transit Solutions Fund](#). This fund provides organizations with financial support for the planning and design of initiatives and capital projects. Several types of organizations are eligible for this

fund, and capital projects can be submitted at any time. After the agreement is signed, funded projects must be completed within two years. Webinars are offered to explain the fund and its criteria to potential applicants.

The [Regional Development Corporation](#) (RDC) provides funding for municipalities, Indigenous communities, RSCs, and NPOs in support of certain projects. The RDC can generally cover up to 40% of the



Christophe Ingeri, Andrew Thistle



André Laplante

costs of eligible projects submitted. In regional transportation, the RDC offers three types of assistance, the first for feasibility studies, the second for capital projects, and the third for pilot projects.

ACCESSIBLE TRANSPORTATION IN NEW BRUNSWICK

Bradley McPherson, Board member, [CNIB Foundation](#)

Ken Pike, Director of Social Policy, [Inclusion NB](#)

Many New Brunswickers live with disabilities that limit their ability to travel independently. Whether they have a visual, intellectual, motor, or other disability, lack of access to transportation has a significant impact on their independence and ability to participate in society. Indeed, transportation is one of the factors mentioned most frequently by people with disabilities as a barrier to their social, community, and professional integration.



Bradley McPherson

Three pillars – accessibility, affordability, and availability – must be incorporated into transportation strategies to enable people with disabilities to access transit services. It is also important to think about accessibility along the entire transportation chain, including customer service, planning, access to stops, waiting infrastructures, vehicles, and payment.

There are a number of strategies for improving mobility for people with disabilities, including training for service providers, easy access to clear information, and preferential pricing.



Ken Pike

BEST PRACTICES IN THE GOVERNANCE OF PASSENGER TRANSPORTATION SERVICES

Guillaume Lafrenière, Analyst and project manager, [Vecteur5](#)

Ariane Ste-Marie, Analyst and project manager, Vecteur5

Getting around without owning or having access to a vehicle is a challenge. From a public perspective, mass transit services are therefore one of the most inclusive ways to foster mobility in a region. However, these services must be adapted to residents' needs. To encourage the implementation of structuring services and their use by members of the public, five elements must be considered.

1- First, it is important for municipal organizations that develop public transit services to put in place processes for ongoing cooperation and collaboration within the community and with residents, service providers, and economic, educational, and health care stakeholders. Also, entering into partnerships with certain

authorities encourages certain target clientele to make use of the services.

2- Second, it is imperative that the deployment of a service be preceded by a rigorous planning process aimed at establishing service modalities that meet people's transportation needs. Community consultation is particularly important at this stage. It is also important to consider the area to be served and to implement the type of service that will best meet needs.



Guillaume Lafrenière, Ariane Ste-Marie

3- The service to be implemented must be accompanied by fare measures that are geared towards the target clientele. It is important that the fee schedule developed be in line with the municipal organization's goals and allow for affordable access to the service. Options for doing this include preferential pricing, monthly passes, or providing services for free.

4- It is also necessary to remember that implementing a service does not guarantee that people will use it. Ongoing

communications and promotional efforts will enable residents to learn about and consider using the service. A strong brand image, visibility on several media, and promotional campaigns are strategies that should be used to make the service known to the general public.

5- Last of all, it is becoming increasingly necessary to implement technological solutions to support both managers and users of the service. A smart transportation system enables managers to optimize the service, facilitate dispatch and vehicle tracking processes, and generate vital statistical data. From the user's perspective, this tool enables them to plan trips, make reservations, track vehicles assigned to the service in real time, and make electronic payments.

In short, these best practices make it possible to implement services that are in line with citizens' needs and to encourage their use by the greatest number of people, thus optimizing the social benefits of the public service deployed.

REGIONAL DISCUSSIONS

The table on the following page presents the highlights of the regional discussion exercise.



Question	Highlights
<p>1. What transportation services are currently in place in your region?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RSCs that serve a larger city benefit from public transit services organized by that city. • RSCs that serve a larger city have access to paratransit services for persons living with disabilities. • Most RSCs have a community transportation service. • Most RSCs have taxi companies in their coverage area. • Certain active transportation infrastructures are present in the RSC coverage areas. • Intercity services provided by Maritime Bus are available in most RSCs, with the exception of Kedgwick/Saint-Quentin and the southwest (Charlotte County).
<p>2. What needs are not being met by existing services in your area?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The needs of youth and students, both in terms of getting to their place of study and participating in extracurricular activities or work, are cited by several RSCs as not being fully met by existing services. • The transportation needs of residents with reduced mobility are not fully met by existing services in several regions. Even regions with access to paratransit services admit that these services are not sufficient to meet all the transportation needs of this clientele. • Public or community transportation services are limited or non-existent in most Indigenous communities. • Few public transit services in the RSCs allow for efficient, frequent, and affordable inter-municipal transportation, particularly in the more rural communities. • Most regions have large cohorts of newcomers who are often unable to acquire and/or drive a car. While employers often provide the transportation required to get to work, public services enabling these workers and their families to make independent trips are very limited in many areas. • There is little interconnection between services to meet transportation needs requiring access to two service providers (e.g., between a city and a neighbouring RSC).

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Even though some community transit and paratransit services facilitate transportation for medical reasons, the lack of volunteer drivers, the increase in needs, and the long distances between communities and medical facilities mean that current services are not able to meet all needs.
<p>3. What actions could be taken to improve the service offer in your region?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A number of RSCs view the development of a regional strategic transportation plan or a regional study as a useful and necessary action for improving the service offer: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Consulting with residents and regional stakeholders appears to be fundamental to the development of such a plan. • Establishing partnerships between the different entities that provide transit services in a region (city, RSC, Maritime Bus, etc.). • Ensuring continuity of services from one region to another through an integrated vision at the provincial level. • Ensuring better promotion of the transit services available. • Implementing more flexible services to serve rural areas. • Improving conditions for volunteer drivers to encourage recruitment and retention of drivers for community transportation services. • Developing new transit services (on-demand transportation, car-sharing, bike-sharing, etc.). • Centralizing dispatch and management of transit services and using a single software program across all regions and service providers. • Ensuring ongoing collaboration among the different decision-making levels (local, regional, provincial, federal). • Developing continuous improvement processes by having access to reliable data and by conducting surveys to ensure that service users are satisfied.

4. Who should carry out each of these actions in your region?

- Service planning and organization should be done by the RSCs through regional transportation committees.
- Partnerships should be established between RSCs and employers to facilitate employee transportation.
- Partnerships should be established between RSCs and educational institutions to facilitate student transportation.
- The provincial government should play a leadership role in financially supporting the RSCs in the fulfillment of their transportation responsibilities.
- Users and residents should be involved in the decision-making processes.
- Municipalities need to work with one another and with the RSCs to determine equitable cost-sharing mechanisms to support transportation initiatives.
- Community organizations need to be involved, particularly in promoting and educating people about transit services.





CONCLUSION

The Symposium on Public and Community Transportation in New Brunswick, organized by the Economic and Social Inclusion Corporation (ESIC), provided interested stakeholders with a forum for sharing and learning about practices in other parts of Canada and initiatives that have been developed by various New Brunswick organizations.

Participants were able to see the many resources available – human, technological, financial – that can facilitate the improvement of existing transit services and the development of new services in unserved communities. The symposium also provided a forum for initiating regional discussions on transportation issues and the work to be done to develop integrated regional transit strategies. Service development and alignment, both within and between RSCs, appears to be essential to improving the mobility of New Brunswickers.

This event has given impetus to interested stakeholders and will pave the way for many development initiatives and new collaborative transit-related activities at the provincial level.

It is important to ensure continuity of the symposium by providing venues for discussion, exchange, and the development of multi-sector partnerships at the community, municipal, regional, and provincial levels.