

INVESTING IN FREE PUBLIC TRANSIT

The Nova Scotia Liberal Party has announced that an elected Liberal Government will make necessary investments to make public transit free across the province for all riders. Legislation outlining the plan will be introduced during the upcoming fall session of the House.

This plan **will represent a total investment of \$65.6M** to eliminate existing transit fares, account for expected increase in ridership, fund expansion to create additional capacity, and support community transit organizations.

Within this plan, municipalities and transit agencies will be given \$53.6M to offset the per-ride costs for end-users. As a per-ride subsidy, it will keep up with any increases in ridership. It's expected that this policy would result in up to a 20% growth in ridership, which has been accounted for in this costing. We are also including an additional 10% top-up to support increasing capacity (\$4.6M).

By eliminating the cost barrier for public transit, this plan provides significant financial relief for individuals, especially those from lower-income backgrounds who depend on public transportation for their daily commutes. Free transit also enhances mobility, including for those who might otherwise struggle to afford regular fares, ensuring equal access to transportation services.

The plan will save current adult daily commuters up to \$1080 per year, and seniors who buy a monthly pass will save approximately \$800 per year. It will help alleviate traffic congestion and help reduce carbon emissions.

Additionally, we will invest \$12M to improve community transit options across the province. This money will go to over 20 non-profit community transit organizations in every county of Nova Scotia, representing the largest-ever provincial investment in Nova Scotia community transit.

To execute this plan, we will work with our municipal partners and will leverage the Federal Government's \$3B Canada Public Transit Fund.^[1]

Quick Facts

- In HRM, an adult rider who buys a monthly pass would save \$1,080 per year. A senior would save \$792.
- In CBRM, an adult or youth rider who buys a monthly pass will save \$900 per year. A senior would save \$720.
- Users of Kings Transit Authority in Kings, Annapolis, and Digby counties, an adult rider who buys a monthly pass will save \$1,080 per year.
- Commuters who switch to transit from driving could save over \$5,000 a year in gas, maintenance, and parking.^[2]
- Commuting by bus reduces a commuter's greenhouse gas emissions by approximately 43%, and even more for electric buses.^[3]
- More than 30 million trips are made on Halifax Transit per year.^[4]
- According to Statistics Canada, 25,300 Nova Scotians commute every day via public transit.^[5]
- In 2022, three years after Kansas City made public transit free in 2019, 90% of surveyed riders said they rode the bus more often as a result of the free fare. About 92% said it allowed them to shop for food more often, 88% said they could see healthcare providers more easily or often, and 82% said it allowed them to get or keep a job.^[6]

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Cost Breakdown

	Current fare revenue	Increased capacity	System expansion	Total investment
Halifax Transit	35,000,000	7,000,000	4,200,000	46,200,000
Transit Cape Breton	2,500,000	500,000	300,000	3,550,000
Kings Transit Authority	840,000	168,000	100,800	1,108,800
Other jurisdictions ^[7]	–	–	–	3,000,000
Community organizations ^[8]	–	–	–	12,000,000
Total	38,340,000	7,668,000	4,600,800	65,608,800

1. <https://housing-infrastructure.canada.ca/cptf-ftcc/index-eng.html>

2. The Nova Scotia Government estimates the cost of fuel and vehicle depreciation is \$0.5838/km (<https://beta.novascotia.ca/documents/reimbursement-rates-and-transportation-allowances-employees-government-and-public-sector-bodies>). A 10 km commute (from Portland Estates or Spryfield to downtown Halifax) means a commuter drives 20km a day, 250 working days a year, at an estimated cost of \$2919. Parking in downtown Halifax is an additional \$2400/year (<https://metropark.ca/halifax/>).

3. Hannah Ritchie (2023) - "Which form of transport has the smallest carbon footprint?" Published online at OurWorldInData.org. Retrieved from: <https://ourworldindata.org/travel-carbon-footprint>

4. Based on Halifax Transit's 2023/2024 Year End Performance Measures Report available at <https://www.halifax.ca/transportation/halifax-transit/plans-reports>

5. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/230822/t002b-eng.htm>

6. <https://nextcity.org/urbanist-news/kansas-city-zero-fare-free-transit-program-shows-major-success>

7. Pictou County Transit, Bridgewater Transit, Town of Yarmouth Transit

8. Annapolis: Trans County Transportation Society; Antigonish: Antigonish Community Transit Society; CBRRM: Eskasoni Transit Service; Colchester: Colchester Transportation Cooperative Ltd; Cumberland: Cumberland County Transportation Services; Digby: Transport de Clare Society; Guysborough: Transit Association of Guysborough; Hants: East Hants & Area Community Rider, West Hants Dial-a-Ride; HRM: MusGo Rider, BayRides; Inverness: Strait Area Transit Cooperative, L'Acadie; Kings: Kings Point-to-Point; Lunenburg: Chester Community Wheels, Lunenburg County Wheels; Pictou: CHAD Transit; Queens: Queens County Transit; Richmond: Strait Area Transit Cooperative; Shelburne: Sou'West Nova Transit Association; Victoria: Victoria Country Transit; Yarmouth: HOPE dial-a-ride; Provincewide: VON