

Effective public transportation has important environmental and economic benefits. NEIA supports the development and use of public transportation.

- Effective public transportation networks reduce the number of vehicles on the road, and thus are an important tool in reducing air emissions, fuel usage and congestion.
- Strong public transportation infrastructure discourages urban sprawl, or the continued development of lands on the fringes of a municipality. Urban sprawl forces municipalities to stretch their limited resources to provide services over a greater area of land – meaning increased costs per household.
- A robust public transportation system makes regions more competitive in the global economy. Efficient transportation links resources, contributing to the ease of knowledge transfer and idea sharing – and is a factor in the innovative potential of an economy.
- Strong public transportation encourages economic development along frequently used routes and corridors.
- Public transportation is an important factor in labour mobility; it contributes to inclusion and the lessening of inequality among urban residents.
- Inefficient transportation can produce congestion and disconnection, both of which are harmful to an economy.
- Efficient public transportation systems enable individuals to make a practical decision to change their “means of transportation” or “driving habits” based on convenience.
- Public transportation is an important service for the elderly, which is becoming increasingly important in jurisdictions with aging populations, such as Newfoundland and Labrador.

NEIA supports the development of a policy and regulatory framework which supports the growth and use of public transportation systems province-wide. NEIA contends that current Government of Newfoundland and Labrador policies inhibit the development of public transportation systems.

- Metrobus is the primary public transportation service provider for the City of St. John's, and services portions of Mount Pearl on a contractual basis.
- Metrobus receives no core funding from the Government of NL.
- The majority of Canadian provinces provide some level of funding to public transportation providers.
- Some provinces in Canada provide exemptions (QC) or rebates (NB and NS) on the provincial portion of sales taxes. Newfoundland and Labrador does not.
- Metrobus pays some of the highest registration fees in Canada. Its \$833 per bus compares to \$33 (NB); \$30 (NS); ~\$400 (ON); \$13 (MB); and \$65 (AB). Only QC and BC have higher registration fees. (Fees accurate to 2010).
- In 2013, Metrobus paid \$312,000 in provincial fuel taxes and \$40,000 in licensing fees for buses.
- HST is paid on the provincial road tax which compounds the taxation on fuel used to operate a city public transit service on city maintained streets.
- Other municipalities contracting Metrobus services are required to pay PST on this service.
- The taxes, fees, and lack of provincial financial support all combine to create a uniquely challenging environment for public transportation operators such as Metrobus to operate in. These burdens, which are comparably worse than those faced in the rest of Canada, hinder Metrobus' capacity to improve its operations and positively contribute to the greenhouse gas problem.

Public Transportation Systems help slow climate change.

- According to the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador’s Climate Change Action Plan (2011), transportation is responsible for 31% of the province’s carbon emissions.
- Emissions from road transportation such as passenger vehicles and heavy trucks, account for approximately 70% of all transportation emissions (Climate Change Action Plan, 2011)
- *“GHG reductions in the transportation sector will largely depend on individual decisions concerning means of transportation, vehicle purchases, driving habits and distance traveled, for the foreseeable future”* (Climate Change Action Plan, 2011). Despite “means of transportation” and “driving habits” being cited as some of the most important factors in reducing greenhouse gasses with respect to transportation, the Climate Change Action Plan failed to mention public transportation in its actions going forward.
- With over 50% of the province’s population residing on the Avalon Peninsula, and 38.7% residing in the City of St. John’s, it is likely a significant contributor to passenger vehicle emissions. Thus it is also an area where the provision of stronger public transportation services could have significant impact on overall greenhouse gasses.

NEIA encourages its staff and members to utilize public transport.

- NEIA is working with Metrobus to promote employee use of public transportation, and in the development of a corporate buspass system.
- NEIA is supporting the development of a local car sharing co-operative (CarShareNL), which will allow individuals to join an organization and pay-per-use of its vehicles. Car sharing programs can reduce the number of vehicles on the road.
- During Canadian Environment Week (first week of June) NEIA encourages its members to participate in the “Commuter Challenge” – a nation-wide event that promotes getting employees out of single occupancy vehicles and into healthier and cleaner modes of commuting such as walking, cycling, transit, carpooling, etc.

The development of a regional transportation systems requires initiative by the government. NEIA encourages the provincial government to spearhead discussions on the development of regional transportation systems. NEIA also encourages the active participations of municipalities in these discussions.

- A significant portion of the Avalon Peninsula’s population resides outside of St. John’s.
- Most of the region’s government, educational, economic, and recreational infrastructure is located within St. John’s city limits.
- With the exception of a limited-service contract between Metrobus and the City of Mount Pearl, there are no public transportation services for those residing outside of St. John’s.
- Those living outside of St. John’s city limits with no public transportation options within the region require access to a personal vehicle to meet their needs.
- This is a burden for low-income families, an inhibitor to labour mobility, and an obstacle to regional economic growth.
- A lack of public transportation increases the number of passenger vehicles on the roads, which in turn contributes to climate change and congestion.
- Road congestion puts more wear and tear on public infrastructure, increasing maintenance costs and reducing life spans.
- Employee time lost in traffic reduces economic productivity.
- More passenger vehicles on the roads force municipalities to provide more parking spaces in prime urban locations. Use of land for parking is a lost opportunity for economic development.
- The lack of adequate public transportation is a deterrent to business and individual relocation to the region.
- Municipalities are the critical stakeholders in the development of a regional transportation system, however it is unrealistic to expect individual cities and towns come together on their own accord. Provincial leadership is required to bring all stakeholders together with common purpose.