
MANITOBA INTERCITY BUS PROJECT:

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
PUBLIC CONSULTATION
REPORT

Manitoba Intercity Bus Project
June 2011



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Figure 1: Participants at the Minnedosa public workshop

CONSULTATION OVERVIEW

CONSULTATION FORMAT

The consultation was designed to include everyone interested in intercity bus and freight service in Manitoba. The consultation process included: public workshops, stakeholder focus groups and surveys (online and paper).

PUBLIC WORKSHOPS AND SURVEYS

- The public workshops and surveys were open to the general public and designed to capture the same information in different formats.
- Participants were asked to consider:
 - personal and community transportation needs
 - personal experience using bus service
 - ideas for increasing bus use
 - economic and social implications of bus service for their communities

STAKEHOLDER MEETINGS

- Focus groups were used for specific stakeholder groups. Most groups had less than 10 people and used a traditional focus group format.
- Each meeting had an agenda, but the discussions were largely driven by the stakeholders themselves.
- The basic questions used in each group were similar to the questions in the public meetings.

PARTICIPATION

- In total, individuals and groups representing more than 43,000 Manitobans participated in the public consultations.
- Public workshops were held in Minnedosa, Thompson, The Pas, Swan River, Powerview-Pine Falls and Morden. An average of 14 people (86 total) came to each workshop, including Greyhound representatives.
- There were 272 individual surveys submitted.
- Nine organizations did group surveys, representing more than 12,300 Manitobans.
- Approximately 125 groups and organizations were invited to come to one of the 14 stakeholder meetings.
- Of the 53 groups who participated in the stakeholder meetings, those who completed the evaluation form self-identified as representing over 30,000 Manitobans.
- There were 33 people who made telephone comments or wrote submissions, emails or letters.

TRANSPORTATION PATTERNS AND USE OF INTERCITY BUSES

PROFILE OF A TYPICAL TRIP

The surveys asked for details about frequent trips people made that were more than 50 kilometres from home. Results showed:

- A personal vehicle was used for these trips about 80 per cent of the time.
- People spend less than eight hours at their destination (57 per cent).
- People make this trip two or three times a month.
- Most travelled to visit friends and family (27 per cent), for work (19 per cent), shopping (16 per cent) and medical visits (14 per cent).

TRANSPORTATION PATTERNS

- Transportation patterns show most Manitobans prefer to use a personal vehicle, but northern residents choose the bus for one out of every three trips they make – more than southern residents.
- Most people travel mainly in their own regions, but trips to larger centres (ex: Brandon, Thompson, Winnipeg) were also common.
- The survey also showed that 27 per cent of trips are for social and recreational reasons. While many of these trips were to urban centres, they also indicate a much more varied travel pattern than trips made for medical appointments or shopping. (See Figure 2)
- Trips made by bus show a pattern more like the pattern for social and recreation trips than the pattern for shopping and medical reasons. (See Figure 3).

- Trips where the traveler stays at the destination for eight hours or less are defined as commuting trips. These trips also show more varied patterns, but trip distances are typically 200 kilometres or less. (See Figure 4)

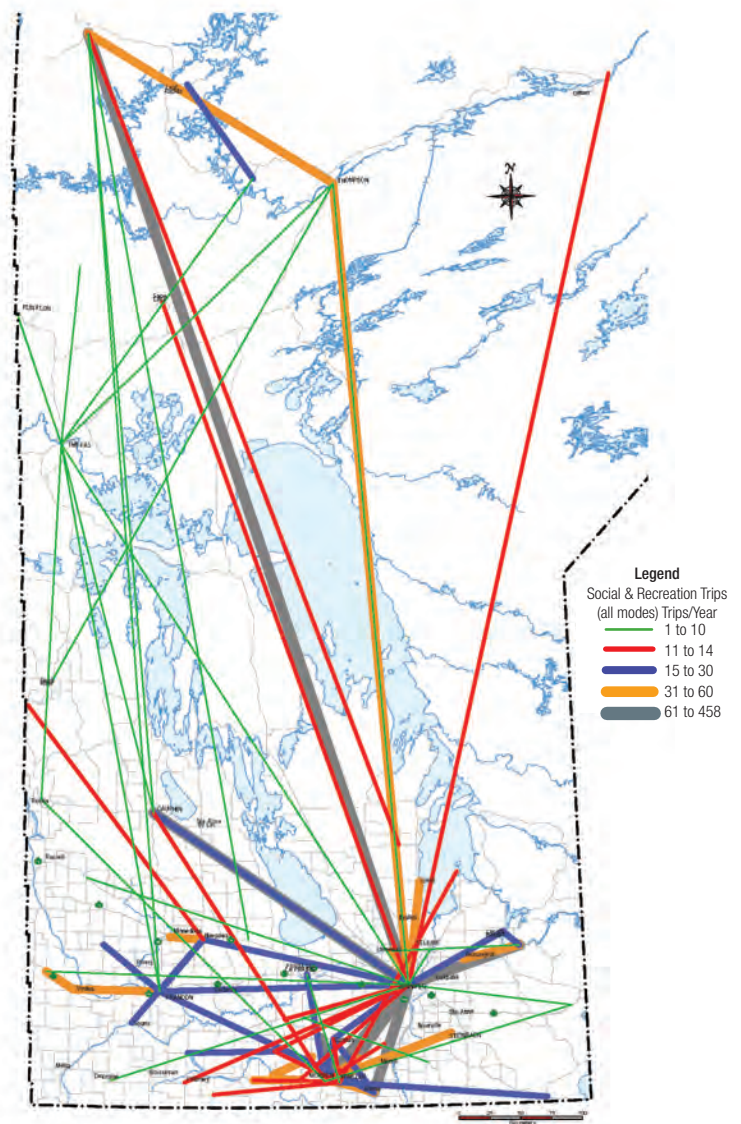


Figure 2: Social and recreational trips (all modes)

PERSONAL ACCOUNTS OF USING BUS SERVICE

- Reasons for using the bus:** People often had several reasons for using the bus, including: general affordability for single passengers (but not when more than one person is traveling), comfort, convenience, independence, and lack of other travel options. They also chose the bus to keep up social contacts and to go to medical appointments.
- Barriers to bus use:** The main reasons people do not choose the bus as their first travel option include: inconvenient bus schedules, length of trips, concerns about personal safety, poor condition of buses, and bus depot locations and hours.

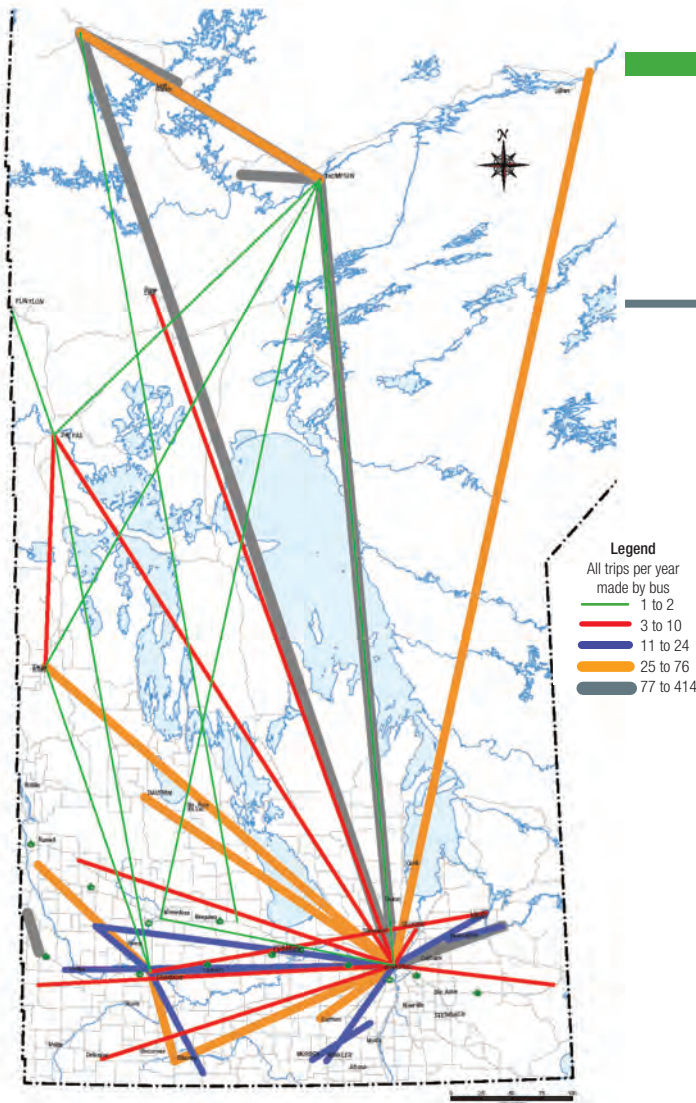
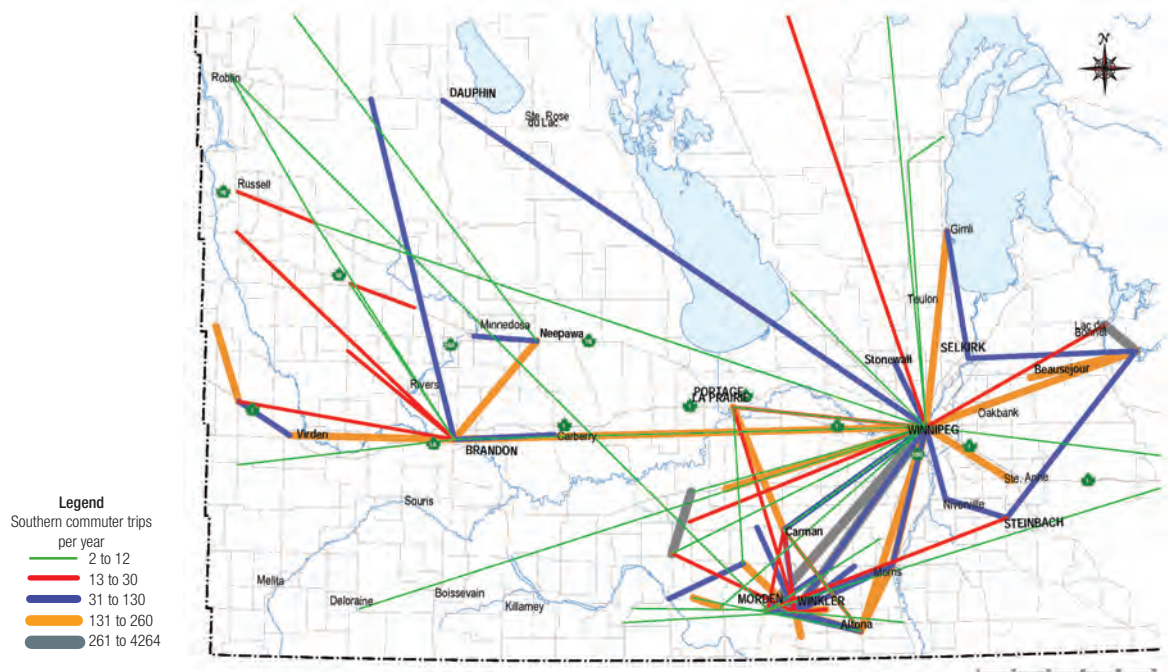


Figure 3: All trips made by bus

Figure 4: Southern commuter trips (all modes)



IDEAS FOR INCREASING BUS USE

SERVICE IMPROVEMENT

- The top four ideas for improving bus use were directly related to improving the service provided by intercity bus companies. People think bus companies should provide users with better comfort, convenience and customer service.
 - Provide lower fares and/or different types of fare incentives.
 - Provide better customer service in terms of drivers, depot staff and online services.
 - Provide better scheduling with more convenient pick-up and drop-off times.
 - Increase rider comfort and amenities (ex: interior bus maintenance and cleanliness).

ROLE OF GOVERNMENT

- Although the most common ideas for improving bus service include improved service, several ideas need government support.
- Change regulations to allow more flexibility for current bus service providers and to allow other providers, such as handi-vans or First Nations medical transport, more flexibility in the type of service they provide.
- Allow alternate services, such as the use of alternative types of vehicles (ex: vans) and allow providers to provide door-to-door service.
- Provide the same kind of government subsidies that urban transportation providers get. The idea of subsidies for local service providers was more popular than ongoing subsidies to large corporations.
- Government should provide funding to Manitobans who want to develop business proposals for alternative service or buy buses or other vehicles to transport the public.

IMPACTS OF INTERCITY BUSES ON COMMUNITIES

- Many people with mobility, economic and physical issues are more dependent on bus services. People generally think bus service is important to their communities to support the elderly, students and disadvantaged people.
- Freight service is important to many businesses, municipalities and stakeholder groups. A decline in bus frequency is hurting some businesses and they are more likely to use alternative services where they are available.
- Bus service provides important social and economic connections for northern communities. It encourages people to stay in rural communities by allowing them reliable access to regional, provincial and national services.
- Intercity bus service provides economic benefits to rural and northern communities. Passenger and freight transportation networks are important for tourism and all businesses.
- Some groups think that the loss of Greyhound service can be an opportunity for economic development if local people want to provide alternative service.
- Because bus frequency has been reduced significantly, many Manitobans have found alternative transportation (ex: seniors groups have volunteer drivers).

SUSTAINING BUS SERVICE

- Many of the ideas for sustaining intercity bus service are the same as for increasing bus service: better schedules, improved customer service, improved bus and depot amenities and better accessibility.
- Again, changes to government regulations are encouraged – both the provincial and federal governments could help sustain service with policies that promote bus use. For example, governments could use the bus for passenger and freight service where possible and promote its use in programs such as medical transportation programs. The introduction of a companion fare for patients traveling by bus for medical reasons should be considered.
- Funding for rural public transportation was also indicated as a possible solution. Some people think municipal governments should consider some funding for intercity bus transportation, in addition to federal and provincial funding.
- The main difference between ideas for improving bus use and ideas for sustaining intercity bus service appears in the level of local input suggested. Ideas for sustaining bus service called for more local input in decision making and service improvement.
- People think local governments should have some input on the type of bus service provided for their communities and in decisions about service changes affecting them locally.
- Local input into scheduling would result in schedules that meet local needs better and increase the use of buses.
- Many people think alternative fare structures could be a possible solution to help make bus service more affordable.
- Some people think it is important to connect intercity bus service with urban public transportation (ex: a daily pass for intercity bus users on city transit systems).
- Funding in the northern part of the province needs to be considered to cover the higher costs paid by service providers to compensate for poorer road infrastructure and the longer distances between communities.

SUMMARY

- Although most participants in the consultations said their most frequent mode of transportation is by personal automobile, the importance of bus service was stressed. It was noted that bus service provides independence and mobility to people who have economic and mobility challenges, and allows them to live fuller, more dignified lives in rural communities.
- The importance of bus service was noted for getting to medical and non-medical services and providing freight options to businesses, hospitals, government programs and municipal governments.
- People think it's important to stay connected to communities in their regions as well as to provincial and national destinations. Transportation patterns indicate regional and provincial connections are mainly used for social and recreational purposes. Trips made by bus have a similar pattern, suggesting that citizens use the bus to stay connected to friends and family and to participate in other social and recreational activities.
- People think declining intercity bus service greatly affects their transportation choices. Schedule and amenity improvements may increase bus ridership, however local input and support may be necessary to ensure that service is meeting local needs.
- Roles suggested for government include regulatory changes and funding support for rural public transportation.
- There was little support for an ongoing subsidy to a large international company, such as Greyhound. Generally support for local service providers was suggested as a more sustainable solution.