

Alternative Transportation



BC Tourism
Sustainability
Network



The BC Tourism Sustainability Network gratefully acknowledges that we live, work and play on the traditional, ancestral and unceded territories of the 204 First Nations in British Columbia.

Image: Guests enjoying Hiellen Longhouse Village and totem pole carved by master carver Christian White by e-bike rental, provided by Haida Tide Cultural Tours.



Ministry of
Tourism, Arts,
Culture and Sport



DESTINATION
BRITISH COLUMBIA®





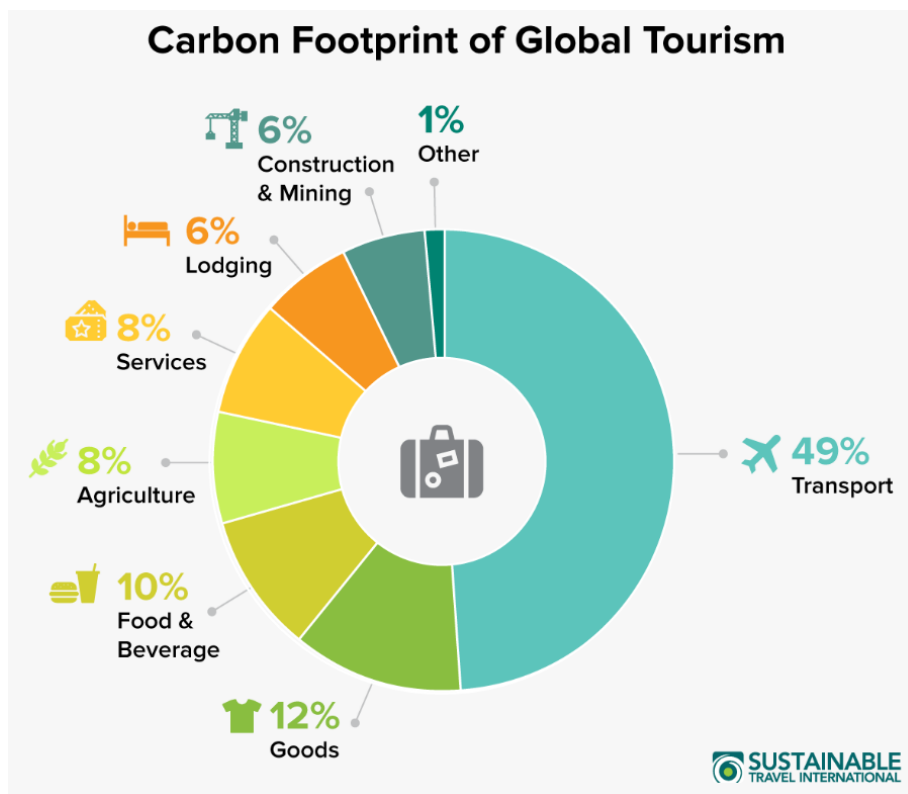
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Transportation in Tourism

Transportation's contribution to the carbon footprint of tourism

Transportation plays a pivotal role in the tourism industry as it represents an unavoidable part of a traveler's journey. In 2022, "Canada welcomed [49.9 million](#) total international arrivals, over four times those from 2021 and reaching well over half (56.3%) of the number of arrivals in 2019" (Statistics Canada, 2023). Air travel is by far the preferred mode of transportation for international travelers, followed by land and water transportation. Tourism is responsible for approximately [8% of global greenhouse gas emissions](#). Transportation is responsible for at least half of these emissions, while the remainder is due to accommodation, food & beverage, shopping and other emissions. The environmental impact of transportation is multi-faceted, with air pollution, noise pollution, and greenhouse gas emissions being the major impacts.



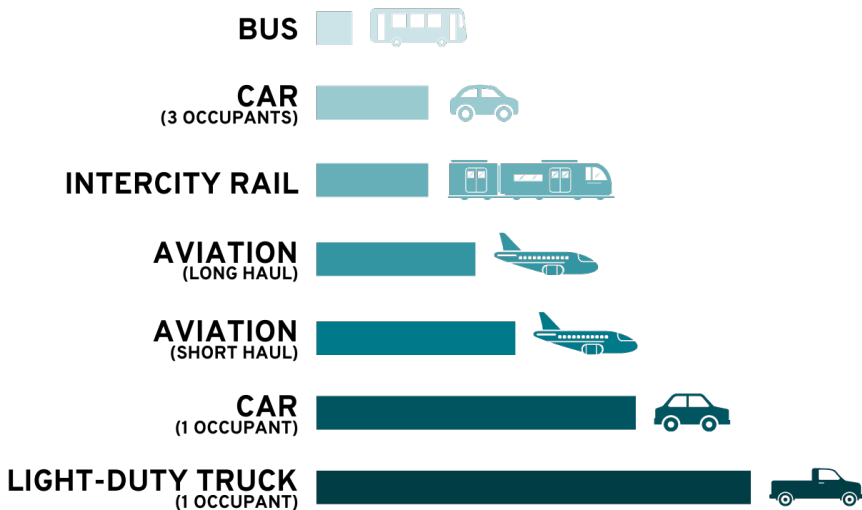
Source: [Sustainable Travel International](#)

In 2021, transportation generated [41% of the province's total emissions](#). To tackle this, in 2018, the Government of British Columbia introduced CleanBC, a plan to lower emissions by 40% by 2030. In this plan, the reduction target for transportation emissions ranges from 27-32% by 2030. This target highlights the importance of incorporating alternative modes of transportation into the visitor journey.

Existing transportation infrastructure in BC

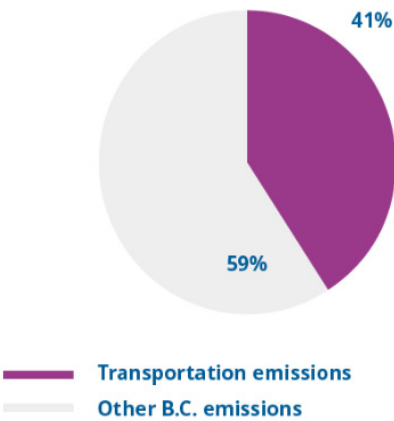
British Columbia has an extensive network of land, air and water transportation infrastructures. The province's highways are a crucial part of the transportation network, with multiple several major highways, including the Trans-Canada Highway, whose BC section runs across the province from Victoria to the BC-Alberta border. Other major highways include the Coquihalla Highway, the Sea-to-Sky Highway, and the Yellowhead Highway. The two major rail companies serving visitors are VIA Rail and Rocky Mountaineer. BC is home to a number of airports, the largest being Vancouver International Airport. This airport is considered one of the busiest airports and ports of entry in Canada. The province has several public transit systems, including the SkyTrain in Greater Vancouver and the BC Transit system (buses). British Columbia is also home to numerous ports, marinas, and ferry terminals. The Port of Vancouver is the largest in Canada. One major player in transportation infrastructure is BC Ferries, which operates a fleet of vessels that connect the coastal communities and islands to the mainland.

EMISSIONS BY MODE OF TRANSPORTATION FOR PASSENGERS ON LONG TRIPS



Adapted from: [Environmental and Energy Study Institute](#)

2021 emissions



Source: [CleanBC](#)





Active transportation in BC

[Active transportation](#) refers to all human-powered forms of travel. Walking and cycling are the most common, but running, scooting, skateboarding, in-line skating, using a wheelchair, paddling, skiing, snowshoeing, horseback riding and using electric bicycles or scooters are all types of active transportation.

To support the adoption of sustainable transportation options, the British Columbia government has implemented several initiatives, including the B.C. Active Transportation strategy, "[Move. Commute. Connect](#)".

The Government of British Columbia has set a target to double the percentage of trips taken using active transportation by 2030. In order to reach this target, \$60 million has been invested over the last three years to help communities develop over 400 active transportation projects (new paths, bike lanes, crosswalks, etc.). Investments have been coupled with educational programs to help communities develop robust active transportation strategies.

On Vancouver Island, the [South Island Transportation Strategy](#) is a great example of successful active transportation plan implementation. The strategy prioritizes investments to enhance the infrastructure necessary to establish connections, increase capacity, and ensure safety, thereby encouraging sustainable travel options. This approach incorporates all modes of travel (including public transit, active transportation, marine, rail, and road) to improve integration and accessibility, decrease reliance on single-occupancy vehicles, and create a thriving economy throughout the South Island communities.

Songhees Wheelness Program

The aim of the [Songhees Wheelness Program](#) was to inspire and assist Songhees community members to incorporate cycling into their daily routine. Supported by the Capital Regional District and funded by BC Healthy Communities, the initiative offered various resources to promote cycling among members (bike share program, youth programs, etc.). The program was highly successful.

Province-wide, one of the most famous examples of active transportation is the [Trans Canada Trail](#), the longest trail network in the world. The Trans Canada Trail spans over 2,655 kilometers through British Columbia. The goal of the trail is to connect people and nature, to offer accessible and inclusive outdoor activities, and to discover the diversity of the land.

Alternative Transportation in Practice

Alternative transportation refers to all modes of transportation other than private fuel-powered vehicles (such as private motor vehicles, airplanes, etc.). Alternative transportation includes active transportation.



BICYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN INITIATIVES

Bicycle and pedestrian initiatives have become increasingly popular in communities across British Columbia. In Kimberley, [The Platzl](#) is a pedestrian-only area that features a variety of shops, restaurants, arts, and culture. [The Okanagan Rail Trail](#) located between Vernon and Kelowna, is the perfect place for biking and walking, with almost 50 kilometers of trail dedicated to active transportation.



PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION INTEGRATION

Did you know that riding a bus is 91 times safer than travelling by car? With affordable, accessible, and convenient public transportation options, individuals develop a healthier lifestyle, safer commute and decrease greenhouse gas emissions. In Metro Vancouver, public transit user numbers rebounded to [almost 80 percent](#) of pre-pandemic levels by the end of 2022.



CARPOOLING AND RIDESHARING

Carpooling and ridesharing allow users to share the cost of transportation, reduce the number of cars on the road, decreasing traffic congestion and travel time. It also saves money and increases social connections. A successful community ridesharing program is the [Kootenay Carshare Cooperative](#).



ELECTRIC VEHICLES

EVs produce zero emissions and are cheaper to operate and maintain than gas-powered vehicles. Many tourism destinations and businesses have installed EV chargers, facilitating the journey for tourists, especially in remote locations. Many rental companies now offer electric and hybrid vehicles as part of their fleet.



OTHER FUELS

Alternative fuels such as hydrogen (blue or green, dedicated to transportation), and biodiesel have been gaining popularity as better options for alternative transportation, not only from an environmental perspective but also for being cost competitive with traditional fossil fuels.





Implementing alternative transportation in your business

Assessing current practices

An essential step to implementing alternative transportation is to evaluate the quality of the current programs already in place within a community and a business' operations. As a first step, assess the availability of infrastructure in and around your operation (condition of sidewalks, bike lanes, bike parking facilities, etc.). The second step consists of evaluating the policies and programs your business currently has in place (campaigns to promote walking and biking to work, employee incentives, etc.). Last but not least, consider factors such as safety concerns and the overall attitude of your community towards active transportation.

Setting alternative transportation goals

Setting alternative transportation goals for tourism businesses is essential in reducing the overall carbon footprint of their operations. Alternative transportation not only contributes to decreasing greenhouse gas emissions but also attracts environmentally conscious travelers. Tourism operators in urban areas can start with changes such as promoting the use of public transport, installing EV chargers, encouraging the use of electric vehicles, offering bike rentals, and organizing carpooling options. For businesses in remote locations, talk to your customers at time of booking about the different alternative transportation options they can use to get to your destination.

Collaborating with local transport providers

Partnering with local transport businesses makes transportation more accessible for travelers in your destination. Assess the current opportunities available in your community and don't hesitate to work with local transport providers to develop new initiatives. Reach out to your Destination Management Organization, local Chamber of Commerce and your local representatives to discuss opportunities (such as sharing the cost of transportation options). The ["Fuel Free... Almost"](#) program created by Visit Penticton is a good example of this type of partnership.

GoByBike BC Society

The [GoByBike BC Society](#) was established as a provincial organization to procure resources and help communities across British Columbia in organizing the famous "Bike to Work Week" events. Since 1995, the GoByBike BC has promoted the use of bikes as one of the best modes for alternative transportation. In 2023, 61,187 British Columbians logged 2,313,928 kilometers and saved 501,660 kilograms of greenhouse gases.

Benefits of Alternative Transportation for Tourism Operators

Environmental impact

In British Columbia, transportation is among the primary factors responsible for greenhouse gas emissions. However, alternative transportation can significantly decrease the number of motor vehicle trips, alleviate congestion, and curb air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions. Promoting alternative transportation aligns with mitigating climate change while supporting the preservation and enhancement of the natural environment. In addition, researchers have proven the connection between investments in active transportation and higher rates of physical activity, resulting in healthier communities. Active transportation is not only a way to preserve the environment, but also to maintain physical and mental health.

Cost saving and efficiency

Active transportation is known to promote social interaction, creating opportunities for connections among community members. As a tourism business, developing partnerships in your local community cut the overall cost of transporting goods, reduces emissions and fosters a sense of local cooperation. A community with high levels of active transportation is indicative of sustainability and livability. Destinations that are easily accessible to people using active transportation tend to attract more visitors, who then spend more time and money in the community.

Incentives and grants

The Province of British Columbia offers a range of incentives and grants to encourage the use of alternative transportation. These include e-bike rebates, incentives for purchasing electric vehicles, and an active transportation infrastructure grant and active transportation network planning grant.

- [E-bike rebates](#)
- [Electric vehicle rebates](#)
- [Active transportation infrastructure grant](#)
- [Active transportation network planning grant](#)



cleanBC

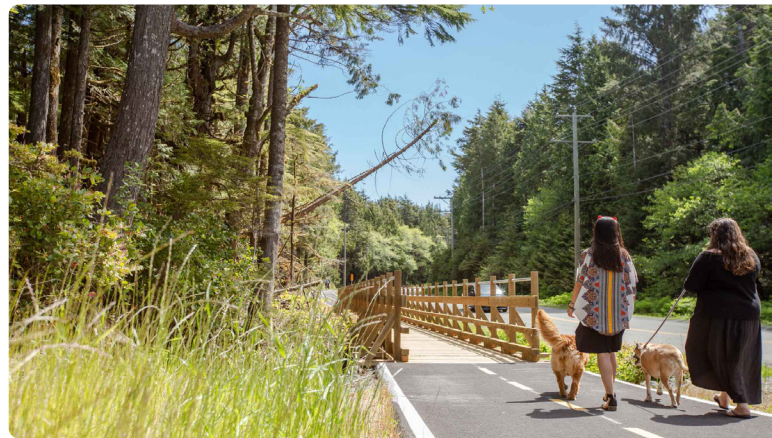
The [CleanBC Go Electric Commercial Vehicle Pilots \(CVP\)](#) Program supports B.C.-based businesses, non-profits and eligible public entities looking to deploy commercial zero-emission vehicles.

Alternative Transportation in Action: Multi-Use Path in Tofino

Located in the Pacific Rim on Vancouver Island, [the Multi-Use Path](#), commonly named “MUP”, is a popular trail that connects Tofino to Ucluelet. In Tofino, the trail runs 8.8km from town centre, extends past the Tofino Visitor Centre and connects to the 25-km ʔapsčiiik ʔašii (pronounced “ups-cheek ta-shee”) pathway through the Pacific Rim National Park Reserve. The trail runs alongside Highway 4 and connects to the many beaches next to the path. The trail is dedicated to active transportation, and is used year round by community members and visitors as they walk, run, cycle, skateboard, and e-bike their way into town or access various beaches.

[How did this idea first develop? Did you see a need in your community?](#)

The original idea for the Tofino MUP was self-started 25 years ago by community members and



volunteers, without any plans or direction from the government. In 2021, the path was expanded to connect to the Parks Canada multi-use path through Pacific Rim National Park. In 2023, the trail was finally completed and connects Tofino to Ucluelet via 40 kilometers of paved road.

[What are your future goals for alternative transportation?](#)

The current goals are focused on upgrading and repairing the path and widening it to the current provincial standard of 4 meters, as some areas of the path are too narrow for multiple users. Some areas of the path are too rough, so the current plan is to focus on improving the pathways that are already there and finalizing the connection to the Parks Canada multi-use path. Originally, the pathway ended at Cox Bay, but now the connection to Ucluelet allows for easy access between the two communities. The 2023 investment from the Province of BC will allow the MUP to extend along Mackenzie Beach Road. Future aspirations include a “MUP 2.0”, a pedestrian and bike path that runs down the centre of the peninsula.

[How do you collaborate effectively with local authorities and other transport providers? Any key partnerships?](#)

The pathway was funded from a combination of provincial funding and own source funding. The MUP has been greatly supported by funding from



the Province of BC, so the District of Tofino does not need to rely on local taxpayers. The District encourages use of the MUP with events such as “Bike to Work Week” with community organizations and schools. Tourism Tofino also plays an important role in communicating to tourists and visitors about the presence and value of the MUP. The District of Tofino has also worked with the Tla-o-qui-aht First Nation as newer sections of the path have crossed through salmon bearing streams, and it is important to have their support and consent for any additions moving forward.



What have been some successes you have experienced? What about barriers?

The pathway has been successfully integrated into and enjoyed by the community, and experiences high levels of resident and visitor traffic. The main challenges revolve around maintenance and managing the trail for an increasing number of users. There has been some need for soft regulation and rules for users as safety and enjoyment are top priorities. These regulations have been implemented through a communications campaign from the District of Tofino to the community, but moving forward, they may need additional support from the BC Ministry of Transportation as the pathway gets busier. There are some topographical challenges (such as rocks and trees) in sections where the trail may need to be expanded or repaired. Additionally, in the town centre there is a lack of bike racks and they fill up quickly in the summer. The pathway also crosses many driveways, so there are considerations for signage and safety of users as they cross these intersecting roads.

Tofino is also a rural and remote community, so quick and efficient maintenance and snow clean up is always a challenge. Generally, the pathway has not experienced extensive damage from flooding or other weather events, and the highway ditch running alongside it helps greatly with drainage.

What do you feel are rising trends in alternative transportation?

E-bikes are the main change in usership in recent years, and they are used by visitors and residents alike as an efficient way to commute or sightsee. The pathway has needed to be widened in some areas to account for this change in usership. There have been some close calls between e-bikes and other users, which called for regulations on how to safely share the pathway.



Image credit: District of Tofino

Resources for Further Reading

[Province of British Columbia - Active Transportation](#)

[BC Active Transportation Funding](#)

[BC Active Transportation Design Guide](#)

[CleanBC](#)

[CleanBC - Roadmap to 2030](#)

