

# A Review of Barriers and Opportunities facing First Nations in accessing Equitable, Reliable, Safe, Affordable, and Low-Carbon Transportation in BC

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF INTERNAL REPORT

**Prepared by:** Charlotte Bull, UBC Sustainability Scholar, 2023

**Prepared for:** BC Assembly of First Nations



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## Disclaimer

This report was produced as part of the UBC Sustainability Scholars Program, a partnership between the University of British Columbia and various local governments and organizations to provide graduate students with opportunities to do applied research on projects that advance sustainability across the region.

This project was conducted under the mentorship of the BC Assembly of First Nations staff. The opinions and recommendations in this report and any errors are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the BC Assembly of First Nations or the University of British Columbia.

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# 1. Introduction

First Nations in BC have been practising and developing their modes of movement since time immemorial and had sophisticated land and water transportation routes, allowing for the movement of people, goods, services, and ideas over hundreds of kilometers.<sup>1</sup> This differs from the commonly held belief that First Nations only lived in isolated communities, limited by geography and topography, and only began trading after contact. Some of these traditional trade routes include the Columbia and Fraser River systems, the Pacific Northwest Coastal trade route and the famous Nuxalk Carrier Grease Trails.<sup>1</sup>

Colonization and its legacy have impacted First Nations traditional transportation systems and trade routes. These impacts have been particularly evident in British Columbia (BC), where First Nations were dispossessed from their territories and confined to reserve lands, while systematically trying to eradicate their culture, economies, laws, and rights. In the current day context, reserves are often isolated, remote and/or not connected to wider community and regional transportation networks. Despite the ongoing efforts towards reconciliation, a significant infrastructure gap persists between First Nations communities and the rest of Canada. Remarkably, the last substantial federal infrastructure investment for transportation occurred back in 1980.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, the longstanding emphasis on private vehicle transportation systems in government policy and investment has compounded remoteness and disproportionality impacted First Nations mobility and ability to access essential services.

First Nations women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ peoples are particularly impacted by the lack of mobility options, with the availability of safe and affordable means of transportation a key barrier. The National Inquiry into the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Girls and Two-Spirit (MMIWG2S)+ Calls for Justice (2019)<sup>3</sup>, the Highway of Tears Symposium Recommendations Report (2006)<sup>4</sup>, The British Columbia's Missing Women Commission of Inquiry (2012)<sup>5</sup> and the Red Women Rising Report (2019)<sup>6</sup> all have calls and actions around transportation and mobility with only a few having been partially implemented. In addition, the United Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UN Declaration)<sup>7</sup> contains articles that can only be fulfilled through the provision of inclusive, secure, economically feasible, reliable, and environmentally responsible transportation solutions.

The climate emergency and the growing number of climate-related disasters in BC have further exposed the fragile and inequitable access to transportation experienced by First Nations. Equitable access to safe, affordable, and reliable transportation in addition to low-carbon transportation is critical to building resilience and upholding First Nations human rights, including socioeconomic well-being, human security, and inherent, constitutionally

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<sup>1</sup> Joseph, B. (2017, July 5). Indigenous Trade Networks Thrived Long Before the Arrival of Europeans. [www.ictinc.ca](https://www.ictinc.ca/blog/indigenous-trade-networks-thrived-long-before-the-arrival-of-europeans). <https://www.ictinc.ca/blog/indigenous-trade-networks-thrived-long-before-the-arrival-of-europeans>

<sup>2</sup> First Nations Financial Management Board. (2022). Closing the Infrastructure Gap [https://fnfmb.com/sites/default/files/2022-11/2022-11-09\\_roadmap\\_chapter\\_3\\_closing\\_the\\_infrastructure\\_gap.pdf](https://fnfmb.com/sites/default/files/2022-11/2022-11-09_roadmap_chapter_3_closing_the_infrastructure_gap.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. (2019). Reclaiming Power and Place, The Final Report of The National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls . [https://www.mmiwg-ffada.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Final\\_Report\\_Vol\\_1a-1.pdf](https://www.mmiwg-ffada.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Final_Report_Vol_1a-1.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> Highway of Tears Symposium Recommendations Report. (2006). <https://highwayoftears.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/Highway-of-Tears-Symposium-Recommendations-Report-January-2013.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> Forsaken: The Report of the Missing Women Commission of Inquiry. (2012). <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/law-crime-and-justice/about-bc-justice-system/inquiries/forsaken-es.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> Martin, C., & Walia, H. (2019). RED WOMEN RISING Indigenous Women Survivors in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside. <https://dewc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/MMIW-Report-Final-March-10-WEB.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. (2007). *Human Rights Quarterly*, 33(3). <https://doi.org/10.1353/hrq.2011.0040>

protected and Treaty rights. Furthermore, as society progresses towards a low-carbon transportation system, we must acknowledge the historic and ongoing challenges of the current system for First Nations and ensure this transition is just, fair and equitable, and that no First Nation in BC is left behind.<sup>8</sup>

## 2. BCAFN Mandate and Transportation Project

The First Nations Leadership Council (FNLC), as mandated by Chiefs’ resolutions at meetings of the BCAFN, Union of BC Indian Chiefs (UBCIC) and the First Nations Summit (FNS), endorsed the [BC First Nations Climate Strategy and Action Plan](#) (FN Climate Strategy) in April 2022. This includes priorities and actions aimed at ensuring “reliable, safe and affordable low-carbon and active transportation within and between First Nations communities,” including conducting a “review [of] state-led policies and programs relating to low-carbon transportation and active transportation projects and develop reform recommendations to support the needs and priorities of First Nations both on and off reserve.”<sup>9</sup>

In March of 2023, Chiefs-in-Assembly mandated BCAFN to assess gaps and opportunities that restrict First Nations in BC from accessing equitable, safe, reliable, affordable, low-carbon and active transportation within and between communities as well as provide recommendations for legislation, policy, and program reform ([Resolution 12/2023](#)).<sup>10</sup> To address this mandate, and with the support of the BC government, BCAFN is undertaking the First Nations Low-Carbon Transportation Project (referred to as the Transportation Project).

The purpose of the Transportation Project is to advance and accelerate First Nations equitable access to safe, affordable, and reliable low-carbon and active transportation within and between communities. This effort aligns with right to self-determination and seeks to help reduce carbon pollution while upholding the well-being of all First Nations peoples, as reflected in BC's *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act* and the Federal *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act* (both referred to as the Declaration Acts).

This report aims at identifying initial gaps and formulating recommendations. Its primary purpose is to offer insights to guide a First Nations survey and provide support to five (5) Nation-led pilot projects in the creation of their own transportation plans. Along with interviews with key actors and partners, these pieces will feed into a comprehensive Transportation Assessment Report (TAR) with final gaps and recommendations for the Provincial and Federal government to work with First Nations in BC. In addition, the selected pilot project communities will contribute to the development of a Low-Carbon Transportation Planning Guide, supporting First Nations communities in developing their own transportation plans tailored to their specific needs and aspirations.

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<sup>8</sup> Victoria News. (2023, March 30). Will clean transportation shift take rural Vancouver Island along for the ride? . <https://www.vicnews.com/news/will-clean-transportation-shift-take-rural-vancouver-island-along-for-the-ride-112804>

<sup>9</sup> BCAFN. (2022). Climate Strategy and Action Plan. <https://www.bcafn.ca/sites/default/files/2022-04/BCFNCSAP%20Final%20Draft%20%2822April2022%29.pdf>

<sup>10</sup> BCAFN. (2023). Resolution 12/2023. [https://www.bcafn.ca/sites/default/files/2023-05/2023\\_12\\_SCA\\_SUPPORTING%20FIRST%20NATIONS%20TO%20ACCESS%20SAFE%2C%20AFFORDABLE%2C%20RELIABLE%20AND%20LOW-CARBON%20TRANSPORTATION.pdf](https://www.bcafn.ca/sites/default/files/2023-05/2023_12_SCA_SUPPORTING%20FIRST%20NATIONS%20TO%20ACCESS%20SAFE%2C%20AFFORDABLE%2C%20RELIABLE%20AND%20LOW-CARBON%20TRANSPORTATION.pdf)

### 3. Approach and Methodology

As per the BCAFN's mandate, this report centres on the gaps and barriers First Nations face in accessing equitable, safe, reliable, affordable, and low-carbon transportation with and between communities, while providing the respective recommendations and opportunities to improve them. To facilitate a comprehensive analysis, each of the major forms of transportation (public transit, private vehicle transportation and active transportation) were explored in turn.

First, a gap analysis was carried out including an overview of the current situation and some of the low-carbon programs and initiatives in BC and Canada. Barriers and/or issues facing First Nations in accessing transportation equity, safety, reliability, affordability, and sustainability were then explored.

Subsequently, recommendations and opportunities for Provincial and Federal government were derived, in most cases linking directly to the gaps outlined in the same transportation categories: public transit, private vehicle transportation and active transportation. These gaps and recommendations were compiled into a summary section with next steps for the BC government moving forward, especially in relation to the upcoming provincial Clean Transportation Action Plan (CTAP).

Qualitative desktop research and analysis made up most of this report drawing upon a wide range of sources including government reports, academic papers, and newspaper articles. This research was carried out between April and July 2023.

To complement the desktop research, a limited number of interviews were carried out with key actors between May and July 2023. This helped us gain further insights into the gaps present in each category as well as the strengths and weaknesses of low-carbon policies and programs. The interviews were semi-structured, with questions drawing from issues around equitable, reliable, safe, affordable, and low-carbon transportation.

Interviews were conducted with the following organizations:

- BC Ministry of Energy, Mine and Low-Carbon Innovation (EMLI)
- BC Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure (MOTI)
- Infrastructure Canada
- First Nations Health Authority (FNHA)
- Victoria Transport Policy Institute
- Northern Development Initiative Trust (NDIT)
- Union of BC Indian Chiefs (UBCIC)
- Fraser Basin Council (FBC)

#### Limitations

This project consisted of 250 hours, so the scope of this research was limited to the most common forms of personal travel in BC. These included public transit (on-road and ferry), private vehicle transportation and active transportation. Given the research's limited scope, we were unable to conduct an exhaustive analysis for all First Nations in BC related to certain

transportation systems including private or community-run water-based networks, rail travel, air travel, inland ferry travel and on demand responsive transportation services such as car sharing, Uber, or private taxis.

Despite best efforts to encompass water-based transportation within the research, the constraints of the project and the availability of information necessitated a greater focus on land-based transportation. Therefore, when referring to private vehicles in this report, it can be assumed that they are land-based private vehicles (cars). However, it is important to recognize that water-based transportation via private boat or public ferry is commonly used by Remote Island/Coastal First Nations communities and Inland communities living near waterways. Any inclusion of ferry transportation centres around the services provided by BC Ferries as they operate most sailings in BC. However, BC Ferries isn't the sole provider of coastal ferry services and, there are eight unregulated ferry routes operated by contractors who receive Provincial government funding which service isolated communities including First Nations communities.<sup>11</sup>

In addition, this report centres on personal transportation, excluding commercial transportation, which revolves around the movement of goods and resources. The latter also carries significant importance for First Nations communities, but due to the limited scope of the research, it was not included in this report.

This research predominantly relied on desktop methods, and as such, it only covers the major gaps/barriers that broadly affect most First Nations communities in BC. We acknowledge that there are many more gaps/barriers to transportation that affect the diversity of First Nations in different ways based on many factors such as culture, history, and geographic location within BC.

Considering these limitations, in the future, additional research should consider conducting a comprehensive examination and analysis of the current state of water-based and commercial transportation in First Nations communities in British Columbia. BCAFN's planned survey and low-carbon transportation pilot projects may support filling some of these research gaps. However, additional government funding is needed for targeted community engagement and in-depth research within diverse First Nations contexts to effectively address contextual factors effectively.

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<sup>11</sup> Redlin, B. (2018). CONNECTING COASTAL COMMUNITIES Review of Coastal Ferry Services. <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/driving-and-transportation/reports-and-reference/reports-and-studies/ferries-marine/20180630-review-coastal-ferry-services.pdf>

## 4. Gaps Analysis Findings

### Public Transit

This report identifies **public transit** as one of the most significant transportation gaps in the province in relation to First Nations. There is currently no Province-wide public transit network and few inter-city transportation services across the province. A connected public transit network in BC that links to alternative First Nations-led modes of travel could serve First Nations communities, particularly remote First Nations communities. Current on-road services also have many issues, including unreliable services, gaps in first/last mile services, inequitable payment and booking systems, lack of affordability, and physical and cultural safety issues. Similarly, ferry transit services provided by BC Ferries are becoming more costly and unreliable, making Coastal or inland First Nation communities vulnerable to isolation where they lack access to basic services. In addition, there is poor First Nations representation and engagement within public transit decision-making processes and bodies.

This lack of accessible and affordable public transit options can hinder access to education, economic development, healthcare, and job opportunities for First Nations communities. First Nations women, girls, gender diverse and two-spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning, intersex, asexual, and all other sexual orientations and genders (2SLGBTQQA+) peoples are particularly impacted as they must resort to much more dangerous means of travel such as hitchhiking and may not be able to escape in the case of domestic violence. The Highway of Tears, a stretch of Highway (16) between Prince George and Prince Rupert where it is estimated that more than 40 Indigenous women have been abducted and murdered, provides insight into the tragic consequences of the structural lack of safe, reliable, and affordable transportation options.<sup>12</sup> First Nations Elders, who in some cases cannot or choose not to drive, are also at greater risk of isolation as transportation for medical appointments might be available in some cases but not for ‘non-essential’ social and cultural activities.<sup>13</sup>

In addition, the lack of public transit contributes to BC’s high transportation emissions. On-road LDVs (Light-Duty Vehicles) alone account for 13.3% of the overall emissions, representing the highest proportion among all modes of transportation.<sup>14</sup> Translink states that a “trip on a hybrid-diesel bus reduces GHGs by 56% compared to driving a gasoline car.”<sup>15</sup> Even if these emissions reductions are lower in rural areas due to less ridership, overall public transit is still cleaner.

### Private Vehicle Transportation

This absence of accessible public transit has meant that on-road **private vehicles** with Internal Combustion Engines (ICEs) are the only reliable transportation option for most trips. However, many First Nations face significant barriers in owning and maintaining a vehicle,

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<sup>12</sup> National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. (2019). Reclaiming Power and Place, The Final Report of The National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls . [https://www.mmiwg-ffada.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Final\\_Report\\_Vol\\_1a-1.pdf](https://www.mmiwg-ffada.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Final_Report_Vol_1a-1.pdf)

<sup>13</sup> Linovski, O., & Simpson, S.-A. (2021). PUBLIC TRANSIT AND EQUITY-DESERVING GROUPS UNDERSTANDING LIVED EXPERIENCES. [https://tspace.library.utoronto.ca/bitstream/1807/110044/1/Public%20Transit%20and%20Equity\\_Final%20Report.pdf](https://tspace.library.utoronto.ca/bitstream/1807/110044/1/Public%20Transit%20and%20Equity_Final%20Report.pdf)

<sup>14</sup> Infrastructure, M. of T. and. (n.d.). Climate action and transportation - Province of British Columbia. [www2.gov.bc.ca](http://www2.gov.bc.ca). <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/transportation/transportation-environment/climate-action>

<sup>15</sup> Translink. (2022b). Transit for the Planet Challenge. Translink.ca.

<https://www.translink.ca/news/2022/april/transit%20for%20the%20planet%20challenge#:~:text=Every%20time%20you%20take%20skyTrain>



primarily due to the financial challenges associated with acquisition, insurance and operation. The lack of access to a driver's licence in certain cases further compounds the issue. Furthermore, unsuitable resource roads can make it unsafe to travel and can leave communities isolated during winter conditions and extreme weather events.

This increased reliance on private vehicles and greater time travelled means that rural and remote communities consume more gas, contributing to BC's transport emissions. Meanwhile, 87% of BC's electricity is generated by hydropower.<sup>16</sup> This is one of the reasons why the BC government has spent significant time and energy promoting the use of Zero Emission Vehicles (ZEVs) through its CleanBC Go Electric Programs. However, the gaps reveal these programs are currently irrelevant for many First Nations communities as they fail to address the underlying barriers to financing a vehicle and/or gaining a license and don't address the issues of road safety and reliability. Some remote First Nations also rely on private boats or water taxis for transportation, and programs are also not adequately addressing these needs.

BC's private and car-centric transportation policies in addition to the legacy of colonialism, ongoing systemic discrimination and socioeconomic disparities have created a transportation system systematically stacked against First Nations communities whilst contributing to climate change. The increase in extreme climate events has further exposed the fragile and inequitable access to transportation experienced by First Nations peoples in BC and its environmental and economic consequences. In 2021 floods meant that 45 First Nation communities had to shelter in place due to compromised road and bridge infrastructure.<sup>17</sup> The 2023 wildfire events put in danger and isolated many First Nations communities including on Vancouver Island.<sup>18</sup>

## Active Transportation

In terms of **active transportation**, many communities' infrastructure, both First Nations and non-Indigenous, was not designed with active transportation in mind. Instead, community planning was focused on car-centric infrastructure which competes with active transportation users. Therefore, there is a lack of safe infrastructure in and between many communities and public transit networks, primarily lack of sidewalks and lighting, which limits uptake. There is also a lack of research on the specific active transportation needs of First Nations communities.

As stated by Translink, "active transportation is the most cost-effective mode of transportation, and is the most affordable, healthy, and low-emission way of travelling on our roads and streets."<sup>19</sup> However, similarly to public transit, although more attention has been given to improving active transportation infrastructure in recent years, this mode of transportation has historically been neglected and severely underfunded, making this shift currently unfeasible for many First Nations communities.

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<sup>16</sup>Energy Canada Regulator. (2019). CER – Provincial and Territorial Energy Profiles - British Columbia. Cer-Rec.gc.ca. <https://www.cer-rec.gc.ca/en/data-analysis/energy-markets/provincial-territorial-energy-profiles/provincial-territorial-energy-profiles-british-columbia.html>

<sup>17</sup> BCAFN. (2021). IMPACTED INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES REPORT #6 State of Emergency declared.

[https://www.bcafn.ca/sites/default/files/docs/news/21NOV2021\\_IndigenousImpactsReport.pdf](https://www.bcafn.ca/sites/default/files/docs/news/21NOV2021_IndigenousImpactsReport.pdf)

<sup>18</sup> CBC News. (2023, June 19). As B.C. fires threaten highways, communities fear their access routes will be choked off.

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/highway-4-wildfire-update-june-14-1.6876509>

<sup>19</sup> Translink (2022, June 30). Transport 2050: 10 year priorities for TransLink <https://www.translink.ca/-/media/translink/documents/about-translink/governance-and-board/council-minutes-and-reports/2022/june/attachment-2-transport-2050-10-year-priorities-for-translink.pdf>

## 5. Recommendations and Opportunities

The recommendations and opportunities are derived and linked to the gaps identified in the same transportation categories: public transit, private vehicle transportation and active transportation. Again, many of the recommendations are interrelated and cross-cutting. For this executive summary, the detailed explanations for each recommendation have been omitted.

### 5.1 Public Transit

- 5.1.1 Improve Reliability/Frequency of Existing Services
- 5.1.2 Eliminate Gaps in First/last Mile Public Transit Services
- 5.1.3 Make Planning and Paying for Public Transit Trips Accessible
- 5.1.4 Prioritize Affordability of Public Transit
- 5.1.5 Improve Physical and Cultural Safety of Public Transit
- 5.1.6 Improve Transit Ridership Data Services
- 5.1.7 Increase First Nations Representation and Meaningful Engagement
- 5.1.8 Develop a Province-wide Public Transit Network
- 5.1.9 Improve BC Ferries' Relationship with First Nations Communities

### 5.2 Private Vehicle Transportation

- 5.2.1 Address Licensing Barriers
- 5.2.2 Address Affordability Issues of Cars
- 5.2.3 Improve Resource Road Safety and Resilience
- 5.2.4 Increase ZEV LDV Rebates
- 5.2.5 Address Charging Infrastructure Gaps
- 5.2.6 Fund Low-Carbon and Renewable Fuel Initiatives

### 5.3 Active Transportation

- 5.3.1 Expand Funding of Safe Active Transportation Infrastructure Projects
- 5.3.2 Improve Connectivity Of Active Transportation Infrastructure
- 5.3.3 Improve Data Collection and Evaluation Mechanisms

#### Major Recommendations

By developing a **Province-wide public transit network** (including community-driven solutions) and improving **active transportation infrastructure and connectivity**, the Province can reduce emissions whilst addressing many of the gaps First Nations face to accessing equitable, reliable, safe, affordable and low-carbon transportation outlined in the report. Therefore, this report recommends that the Provincial government strongly considers promoting the importance of **public transit** and **active transportation** in the upcoming **Clean Transportation Action Plan (CTAP)**.

The Provincial and Federal government should also increase **First Nations representation** and ensure any future engagements prioritize **Nation-to-Nation and government-to-government interactions and partnerships**.

*Excerpt from internal report's executive summary*

## 6. Summary and Next Steps

This report identifies numerous ongoing gaps for First Nations in accessing equitable, reliable, safe, affordable and low-carbon transportation which centre around insufficient government investment in public transit and active transportation networks. To address these gaps, it is essential to bridge the infrastructure and socioeconomic disparities between underserved First Nations communities and their non-First Nations counterparts, particularly in remote and rural regions.

The findings indicate that the current focus of both the Provincial and Federal government's focus on reducing emissions by switching from ICEs to ZEVs is misguided. As mentioned, substantial barriers exist preventing First Nations from accessing, insuring and safely operating any type of private vehicle. Therefore, it is unrealistic for the Province to expect Nations to transition to ZEVs at the same pace as communities which already have a significant percentage of licensed private vehicle owners.

More importantly, the current strategy's continued focus on private vehicle transportation is "exacerbating the clean transportation rural-urban divide" according to a member of Climate Justice Victoria.<sup>7</sup> Chief Marilyn Slett, the Chief Councillor of the Heiltsuk Tribal Council, emphasizes that British Columbia's clean transportation strategy must extend beyond urban transit solutions and prioritize the provision of dependable and accessible public transit for First Nations and small towns.<sup>7</sup> She stated that ensuring the availability of safe and affordable transportation services is crucial not only for reducing transportation emissions but also for addressing the recommendations put forth by the National Inquiry into the (MMIWG2S)+.<sup>7</sup>

Recently, over 65 organizations have jointly released an open letter urging Premier David Eby to redirect the substantial funds allocated for highway expansion projects toward public transit and active transportation networks.<sup>7</sup> This further demonstrates the need for a cultural systems-wide shift away from traditional private vehicle transportation towards a more inclusive, equitable, safe and clean transportation system. First Nations peoples themselves recognize this - in the Roadmap to 2030, Indigenous engagements highlighted "the importance of expanding clean transportation beyond ZEVs to ensure safe and reliable public transportation."<sup>20</sup>

Therefore, instead of continuing to focus on electrifying private vehicle transportation, BC'S upcoming CTAP should prioritize the development of a Province-wide public transit network aligned with other alternative modes of travel to serve all First Nations communities throughout the Province. These services should be accessible, frequent, reliable, safe, affordable and respond to the diverse needs of First Nations communities as outlined in the recommendations. We advocate for a co-development of such a network with First Nations communities on a government-to-government and Nation-to-Nation basis to ensure that the needs are met for diverse communities.

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<sup>20</sup> CleanBC. (2021). Roadmap to 2030. [https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/environment/climate-change/action/cleanbc/cleanbc\\_roadmap\\_2030.pdf](https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/environment/climate-change/action/cleanbc/cleanbc_roadmap_2030.pdf)

Ideally, this network should also be powered by electricity through battery-powered buses and ferries. However, as discussed, these technologies are currently very expensive and difficult to install in rural and remote areas. Electrifying public transit should therefore not be a priority until reliable and comprehensive service has been established throughout the whole province, accessible to remote First Nations communities. Fossil fuel-powered public transit will still reduce emissions and contribute to Provincial emissions reduction targets - at present, public transit reduces annual greenhouse gas emissions by 4.7 million tonnes in Canada overall, valued at \$207 million.<sup>21</sup>

Developing a Province-wide public transit network will require significant investment and will not be profitable for many routes. However, a Province-wide public transit network is essential for the BC government to meet the commitments set out in the Declaration Act and advance reconciliation efforts whilst meeting emissions targets. In addition, The National Inquiry into the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Girls and Two-Spirit (MMIWG2S)+ Calls for Justice (2019), the Highway of Tears Symposium Recommendations Report (2006), The British Columbia's Missing Women Commission of Inquiry (2012) and the Red Women Rising Report (2019) all recommend the implementation of comprehensive public transit systems. Community-driven local low-carbon transportation systems can help support remote First Nations to connect to and benefit from the Province-wide public transit network.

It must be noted that the current CleanBC strategy fails to adequately address the current lack of safe active transportation infrastructure in most rural and remote First Nations communities. Active transportation emits little or no carbon, is accessible to the majority of community members and allows connectivity to public transit. Therefore, safe active transportation infrastructure should be prioritised as a key area of emissions reduction and sustainable funding should be allocated towards these initiatives in First Nations communities throughout BC. There is a lot of catching up to do as active transportation infrastructure and policy has been neglected for a very long time. To support this transition, a detailed review of the programs that have been funded by BC or the federal government in First Nations communities is advised.

Of course, this does not mean that ZEVs should be completely ignored. Private vehicle travel will necessarily have to transition from ICEs to ZEVs in future in order to reduce emissions. However, First Nations must be supported to meet the 2040 target for all light-duty vehicles sold to be electric as this target is currently unfeasible considering the affordability barriers. Therefore, the possibility of increasing LDV ZEV rebates for First Nations peoples should be strongly considered.

The government should also investigate whether the current plans for charging infrastructure in BC is sufficient for First Nations communities which may not live along the major highway corridors<sup>Error! Bookmark not defined.</sup><sup>22</sup> Although the Provincial government has mapped out where ZEV chargers are needed in future to complete the network, it is unclear whether these chargers are sufficient for First Nations communities to transition to ZEVs in the future,

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<sup>21</sup> Canadian Urban Transit Initiative (2019) The Economic Impact of Transit Investment in Canada [https://cutaactu.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/final\\_issue\\_paper\\_50\\_cuta\\_v2.pdf](https://cutaactu.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/final_issue_paper_50_cuta_v2.pdf)

<sup>22</sup> BC Hydro. (2022). BC Hydro's electric vehicle infrastructure Five-Year Plan -2025. <https://www.bchydro.com/content/dam/BCHydro/customer-portal/documents/power-smart/electric-vehicles/ev-5-year-ev-fast-charging-network-deployment-plan.pdf>

especially in the North of BC.<sup>23</sup> Therefore, more research should be conducted into the accessibility of the charging infrastructure for First Nations communities. In addition, efforts should be made to accelerate rural First Nations communities' transition to cleaner low-carbon fuel sources and connect them to the grid which is necessary for ZEV charging implementation.

Overall, both the Federal and Provincial governments should increase training, education, and skill development opportunities to empower First Nations community members to actively participate in transportation planning, maintenance, and operations in relation to low-carbon transportation initiatives. Status quo engagement systems are insufficient to ensure that First Nations can participate in the decision-making processes affecting their mobility rights meaningfully. The 'Best Practices for meaningful Engagement with First Nations' from the Assembly of First Nations 'Joint Committee on Climate Action Annual Report' should be followed and engagement should be based on a Nation-to-Nation, government-to-government basis, not through organizations.<sup>24</sup> Federal and Provincial government must also practice FPIC and work toward the commitments outlined in the UN Declaration. They must also work with the private sector, organizations, and different levels of government to ensure adequate and sustainable funding.

Ultimately, it is through collaborative efforts, substantial investment, and innovative strategies that the vision of a clean, accessible, and just transportation system for First Nations can be realized, contributing to both emissions reduction and reconciliation objectives.

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<sup>23</sup>CleanBC. (n.d.). British Columbia Direct Current Fast Charging (DCFC) Network Study: Core Network for Geographic Connectivity. [https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/farming-natural-resources-and-industry/electricity-alternative-energy/transportation/bc\\_dcfc\\_network\\_study\\_-\\_june\\_12\\_2018\\_final.pdf](https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/farming-natural-resources-and-industry/electricity-alternative-energy/transportation/bc_dcfc_network_study_-_june_12_2018_final.pdf)

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## APPENDIX - Glossary

### Transportation Definitions

- **Mobility:** The personal capacity to access transportation based on individual needs and circumstances
- **Transportation:** The physical infrastructure and systems that enable people to move.
- **Equitable:** Fairness in accessibility of transportation modes which meet the needs of all community members.<sup>25</sup> This includes the availability of infrastructure or systems as well as their ease of use for all community members
- **Reliable:** Transportation which dependably provides users with a consistent range of predictable travel times year-round<sup>26</sup>
- **Safe:** Transportation which can be used by everyone, but in particular First Nations women, girls and two-spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning, intersex, asexual, and all other sexual orientations and genders (2SLGBTQIA+) people, without fear of harassment, assault or violence. Safety also includes cultural safety for all First Nations community members<sup>27</sup>
- **Affordable:** The capacity of households to obtain basic mobility needed to access essential activities such as education, work, shopping, and healthcare while staying within their financial means.<sup>28</sup>
- **Low-carbon:** Transportation which produces significantly lower or zero greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions than traditional modes of transportation powered by fossil fuels. This includes the use of fully electric vehicles (ZEVs), hybrid or hydrogen fuel cell vehicles as modes of private or public transit<sup>29</sup>. In addition, it includes reducing private vehicle use through increasing public transit or active transportation
- **Public transit:** Getting from one place to another through the means of publicly available travel systems, including buses, trains, ferries and metro systems. Note, some definitions of public transit include on-demand responsive services such as taxis, water taxis, Uber and Evo, as well as community-driven services including carpooling, but this is beyond the scope of this research
- **Private vehicle transportation:** Getting from one place to another through the means of a privately-owned vehicle (land vehicles, water vehicles, air vehicles and off-road vehicles). Note, when referring to private vehicles in this report, it can be assumed that they are land-based private vehicles
- **Active transportation:** Getting from one place to another through the means of one's own human power. This includes but is not limited to walking, biking (including e-bikes and e-scooters), skateboarding, in-line skating/rollerblading, jogging and running, non-mechanized wheel chairing, canoeing, snowshoeing and cross-country skiing<sup>30</sup>

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## Types of First Nations Communities

- **Remote community:** A community or geographic location with any of the following characteristics:
  - at least 100 km from a city with a population greater than 29,999 people<sup>31</sup>
  - no year-round road access - limited access to seasonal ice roads or long, unreliable gravel roads<sup>30 32</sup>
  - restricted access to ferries or remote railways<sup>32</sup>
  - accessibility only by air for the majority of the year<sup>32</sup>
  - not currently connected to the North American electrical grid nor to the piped natural gas network<sup>33</sup>
  
- **Remote Southern Interior:** Communities which fulfil the remote community criteria above and are located within the Southern Interior region of BC (Kootenay/Boundary, Thompson/Okanagan and the Cariboo)
- **Remote Northern:** Communities which fulfil the remote community criteria above and are located within the Northern area of BC (Northeast, Omineca and Skeena Region)
- **Remote Island/Coastal:** Communities which fulfil the remote community criteria above and are located on or near rivers or the ocean (South Coast, West Coast and Vancouver Island)
- **Suburban:** Communities on the outskirts of, or connected to, population centres greater than 29,999 people
- **Urban:** Communities located within population centres greater than 29,999 people

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