

**Subject: [Fwd: Cost of Cars to Transit]**

**Date:** Wed, 21 Nov 2001 14:39:45 -0800

**From:** Brian Platts <brian\_platts@telus.net>

**To:** Corrie Kost <kost@triumf.ca>

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**Subject: Cost of Cars to Transit**

**Date:** Wed, 21 Nov 2001 00:23:00 -0800

**From:** "Dave Sadler" <davesadler@telus.net>

**To:** "FONVCA" <fonvca@fonvca.org>, "Mayor and Council - DNV" <Council@district.north-van.bc.ca>

> *Worth Sharing. Certainly the situation in Vancouver area is not much  
> different than in Seattle. This just out from the Seattle Weekly.*  
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> *Published November 15 - 21, 2001*  
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> *Road Hogs*  
> *Think transit is expensive? Check out the cost of cars.*  
> *BY KEVIN FULLERTON*  
> *SO YOU'RE a do-good liberal who always supports public transportation with*  
> *your vote, but some days you read the newspaper and feel like a schmuck.*  
> *Cost overruns, inexplicable planning, lack of ridership--we spend so much*  
> *on*  
> *buses and rails, and seem to get so little. You're tired of the smirks you*  
> *get from the cynics when you bring up the social costs of preserving our*  
> *car*  
> *culture. But are the bleeding hearts the only ones who can justify the*  
> *costs*  
> *of public transit?*  
>  
> *Absolutely not, say researchers who analyze the comparative costs of*  
> *public*  
> *transportation and car commuting. Even the barest of financial*  
> *comparisons,*  
> *they say, show that each dollar spent on public transit gives back much*  
> *more*  
> *than a dollar invested in highways and other car-conducive infrastructure.*  
> *Think of it this way: Public transit may be the hard-luck brother who hits*  
> *you up for the occasional loan and embarrasses you at polite gatherings,*  
> *but*  
> *driving a car is like having a drug habit. Addicts never count the costs*  
> *of*  
> *their habit because that would be far too depressing.*  
>  
> *The Puget Sound Regional Council (PSRC) says we spend about \$26 billion*  
> *locally, or 25 percent of our personal incomes, just for the privilege of*  
> *moving around. And it's not light rail that's eating a hole in your*  
> *pocket.*  
> *We each paid about \$5,400 in 1998 to drive a car, but only \$690 to fund*  
> *buses, ferries, and other public transit, the PSRC calculates.*  
>  
> *Think the price is worth it for all that individual mobility? Those*  
> *numbers*  
> *don't even begin to get at the real costs of cars, says PSRC's Ralph*  
> *Cipriani. "We pay for unprecedented mobility, comfort, and privacy in ways*  
> *that are not always apparent," says Cipriani. "Most [people] generally*  
> *consider the costs associated with maintaining and improving roadways,*  
> *building sidewalks and bike paths, buying buses and operating transit*  
> *routes. . . . In fact, these direct public expenditures by government are*  
> *only a small portion of the total cost of transportation."*

> *Parking is one of the biggest hidden costs of driving. In many cases, your car costs more sitting still than it does running down the street. A 1996 report from Northwest Environment Watch estimated that a parking space adds about 10 cents per mile to the cost of a daily commute. A typical commercial development dedicates more space to parking than it does to offices and stores. That drives up construction costs, in some cases as much as 18 percent, which means your rent, plate of pasta, and coffee cost more. But the cost of parking gets even more personal: Chances are your employer could pay you as much as \$2,000 more per year for what it costs to hold a parking space for you.*

>

> *Drivers can't even enjoy the smug satisfaction that they themselves are paying for the convenience of their cars. The U.S. Department of Transportation estimates that roadway-user fees and taxes (such as the gas tax and vehicle registration fees) pay for only about 60 percent of public expenditures for roadway construction and repairs. The rest has to be paid for by the public at large through sales and property taxes.*

>

> *Residents of cities that have made heavy investments in public transit, such as New York City, pay \$2,500 less per year for mobility than do residents of car-dependent cities like Houston, points out Peter Hurley of the Transportation Choices Coalition. Seattle's per-household costs are closer to Houston's than New York's.*

> *Cipriani says the road warriors are losing the battle to provide an urban infrastructure that allows us the freedom of movement we cherish as Americans. "The current system of financing transportation, both roadways and transit, is not serving us well. It is an overly complex and inefficient financing system, which does little to provide the public sector with adequate resources to expand and improve all forms of transportation," says*

> *Cipriani.*

> *Any way you slice it, says Transportation Choices' Hurley, it's far cheaper to add a bus or rail rider to the daily commute than another driver.*

"People

> *who tend to be ideologically opposed to paying more for public transit don't have good economic arguments that stand up," says Hurley.*

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