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Inter-Municipal Transit Governance: An Investigation of Challenges and Opportunities in the Alberta Capital Region

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MPA Research Report

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Inter-municipal Transit Governance:
An Investigation of Challenges & Opportunities in the Alberta Capital Region

Executive Summary:

This major research paper will examine the possibilities for inter-municipal coordination of public transit services and regional transit in the Alberta Capital Region. Through a brief examination of historic inter-municipal conflict, and broader evaluation of transportation planning literature, this report aims to establish a foundation from which to analyze potential governance options and future directions. This topic and specific regional governance options for public transit in the Edmonton region will be evaluated by reviewing case studies of regional public transit delivery in a Canadian context. Distinct understanding for these options and future actions will be assessed using information acquired through interviews with members of the Capital Region Board transit committee, board members of regional transit committees in Calgary and the Bow Valley as well as regional transit managers at the Capital Region Board and Calgary Regional Partnership.

Examining this topic will set the stage to review and analyze the events which caused the Province of Alberta to create the Capital Region Board in 2008, and the emerging regional elements of public transit delivery as a key priority in the Edmonton region. The implications for multi-level governance will be established in the course of this analysis. Ultimately, this paper should serve to demonstrate that regional problems require regional solutions; public transit is an inherently metropolitan and regional service requiring cooperation amongst municipalities and involvement by the provincial government.

<u>Acknowledgement</u>

I would like to extend my sincerest thanks to Dr. Andrew Sancton for his guidance, assistance and wisdom throughout the process of my Master's Research Paper.

I am very grateful to all of the willing and enthusiastic interviewees who contributed greatly to this Master's Research Paper. Your collective commitment to public service and interest in public transit are invaluable, and extremely motivating.

My efforts at Western over this past year were made far more enjoyable and contented by my best friend, Leonard Halladay. Thank you for your patience, your unwavering support and consistent willingness to indulge me. I love our adventures.

My endeavors are dedicated to my grandparents: four university educated individuals who lead by example in life-long learning. All of them actively instilled in me the value of a hard-earned education, and limitless curiosity about the world. Here's to the journey.

Table of Contents

Introduction

Public transportation is a critical public service for contemporary urban dwellers, and one that services metropolitan regions in many forms. In its very essence, public transportation as a public good is a basic necessity for the economic and social well-being of any city or metropolitan area. Inefficient, ineffective and inadequate access to or organization of public transit contributes negatively to individual mobility and to the economic potential of a region; thus, transportation systems require holistic regional coordination in order to increase livability and maximize the economic potential of a region. In order to foster meaningful interactions between that region's inhabitants and their built, social and economic environments, regional public transportation must encompass an accessible, reliable network of transportation options. Regional public transportation infrastructures should provide reasonably swift, seamless access throughout and within the broader reaches of a metropolitan region. Moreover, regional services such as public transit should be governed and funded in a manner that affords the most comprehensive service delivery, cost effective management, and user-friendly experience as possible to its citizens. Many of Canada's largest metropolitan areas practice some form of regional partnership or have a coordinated approach towards their transportation funding strategies, particularly in regards to public transit. In this context, and given the relatively integrated functionality of the Edmonton Census Metropolitan Area (CMA) in other respects, why is there an absence of regionally coordinated public transit in the region? What factors have contributed to, and perpetuated its absence and how is this dynamic shifting? Given the mandate of the Capital Region Board to investigate the potential of regional transit in the Alberta Capital Region, what steps are being taken to ensure that regional delivery of public transit comes to fruition?

The objectives of this report are twofold: to examine the absence of regional public transit and to address the best options and next steps toward integrated, inter-

municipal public transit services in the Alberta Capital Region. The evolution of institutional structures in the Edmonton region and aspects of multilevel governance involved in the development of regional public transit policy and delivery are of particular interest in this research project. Furthermore, a broader literature review in relation to transportation planning and public transit policy development reveals a number of themes reflective of the barriers present in the Edmonton region. Barriers that must be addressed in the course of this research stretch beyond the local and regional governance issues into some of the distributional barriers that would exist, even if the Edmonton region were comprised solely of one municipality. Most notably in this context are issues of urban versus suburban service delivery in public transit.[1]

Aside from some employer sponsored (Diversified) and private operators (Greyhound, SkyShuttle)[2], transit is primarily provided by three publicly owned operators, which operate public transit through the mayors and councils of the City of Edmonton, the City of St. Albert and Strathcona County.[3] Furthermore, there are currently eight municipalities that offer transit services,[4] many of which are delivered by contracted Edmonton Transit System (ETS) vehicles to smaller outlying communities. Three additional municipal governments are considering transit services, bringing to eleven the total potential number of municipalities offering transit service, each with an independent view of transit service in the Alberta Capital Region.[5] With the exception of Route 747 to the Edmonton International Airport, Edmonton Transit System does not operate beyond the City of Edmonton's boundaries, nor does it currently plan to extend light rail transit (LRT) services beyond its existing boundaries. Both St. Albert Transit and Strathcona County Transit systems operate buses within their jurisdictions, and to select

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[1] John F. Meligrana, "Toward Regional Transportation Governance: A Case Study of Greater Vancouver," *Transportation* 26, no. 4 (November 1999): 360.
[2] Capital Region Board, "Inter-municipal Transit Network Plan," Edmonton: March 2009, 17.
[3] Ibid, 19.
[4] Capital Region Board. "30 Year Transit Service Plan." Edmonton: September 2011, 14.
[5] Ibid, 14.

destinations in the City of Edmonton. The shortcomings in this arrangement abound, and derive specifically from overly-complex or inadequate overlap in fare product, scheduling or transfers. This research focuses specifically upon Capital Region Board transit plans, and the interaction of ETS, St. Albert Transit (STAT) and Strathcona County Transit (SCT) in the shift from their present roles toward a more functional and regionally integrated system.

A more functional system would involve further integration of scheduling, transfers and fare systems. An ideal system would entail full integration; this could be achieved through strong, coordinated local leadership through the Capital Region Board and legislation from the Province. This process could necessitate development of, and legislation for, a special purpose body, such as a regional commission, tasked with overseeing public transit delivery in the Alberta Capital Region in a manner similar to Metrolinx in the Greater Toronto Area or TransLink in Metro Vancouver. This research should serve to investigate past attempts at integration through annexation, an examination of Canadian case studies, and potential public transit governance frameworks currently identified by the Capital Region Board as best suited to deliver transit services to citizens in the Alberta Capital Region. An effort to establish the best practices empirically, through analysis of most recent attempts at inter-municipal transit strategies in the Capital Region, is important to local governments in the Edmonton region as it strives to manage rapid growth in a sustainable fashion.

In Alberta, like many other regions in Canada, a single, secure revenue stream for public transit operation and investment does not necessarily exist beyond municipal budgets.[6] The majority of operational funding for public transit is allocated from fare recovery (user fees) and municipal property-tax-based budgets, while funding for capital investment in infrastructure has been fuelled largely by Provincial and Federal

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[6] Capital Region Board, "Inter-municipal Transit Network Plan," 95.

investments, which tend to be sporadic. The province provides ongoing grant funding to

municipalities, of which an approximate $2 billion is dedicated to capital infrastructure[7].

Each municipality is generally able to direct its priorities; for example, "the five cent per

litre fuel tax grant provided to Edmonton and Calgary must be invested in transportation,

but each city determines what type of investment is needed".[8] Transit is sometimes

eligible for funding through some federal programs, though provinces often direct federal

funding.[9] In this situation, transit as a public good must compete against other essential

public services, such as highways. Although grants from higher levels of government

can be specific, with conditional requirements,[10] investment in transit infrastructure has

been shifting, as transit's perception as a "green" industry increases. The Alberta

Government announced its Green TRIP (Green Transit Incentives Program) in 2008,

which entails an additional $2 billion[11] (40% for Edmonton, 40% for Calgary and 20% to

other municipalities) dedicated to public transit. Additionally, three recent federal

transfers "specifically oriented toward transit, namely the Public Transit Fund ($400M in

2006), Public Transit Capital Trust 2006 ($900M), and Public Transit Capital Trust 2008

($500M)" have been made in recent years.

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[7] Canadian Urban Transit Association, "Urban Transit in Canada: Taking Stock of Recent Progress", 9.
[8] Ibid, 9.
[9] Ibid, 9.
[10] John Kim and Douglas S. West, "The Edmonton LRT: An Appropriate Choice?" *Canadian Public Policy* 17, no. 2 (June 1991): 180.
[11] Canadian Urban Transit Association, "Urban Transit in Canada: Taking Stock of Recent Progress", 9.

<u>Methodology</u>

The purpose of this research paper is to answer the following research questions: given the relatively integrated functionality of the Edmonton metropolitan area, why is there an absence of regionally coordinated public transit? What factors have contributed to, and perpetuated its absence and how is this dynamic shifting? Given the mandate of the Capital Region Board to investigate the potentiality of regional transit in the Alberta Capital Region, what steps are being taken to ensure that regional delivery of public transit comes to fruition?

These research questions emerge from many years of disproportionate and uncoordinated service levels between municipalities, perpetuated by a political environment of discordant relations between the City of Edmonton and its most populous adjacent municipalities. Two key assumptions of this research are entrenched in the policy goals of coordinated transit service: "that coordination will lead to better outcomes, and that coordination is a relatively simple endeavor to achieve".[12] There is a distinct need to begin to deliver public transportation as a public good and a regional service, in order to best serve the economic and social requirements of the region. An overarching element in this research is the relationship between public transit and land-use planning, as two sides of the same coin. This research will focus on governance, and specifically upon the interim report on transit governance delivered to the Capital Region Board in November 2012 and the Capital Region Inter-municipal Transit Network Plan, developed in March 2009. Although this paper does not directly address the relationship between land-use planning, transportation planning and public transit, it is important to

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[12] Marc Schlossberg, "Coordination as a Strategy for Serving the Transportation Disadvantaged," *Public Works Management and Policy* 9, no. 2 (October 2004): 133.

understand that land-use planning serves to underpin the Capital Region Board's very existence.

A strong, historic provincial interest in maintaining the relative status quo of municipal boundaries has created conflict in the past, exemplified when the City of Edmonton attempted to expand its municipal boundaries in 1980. A complete abandonment of regional planning in the 1990's during Ralph Klein's premiership further stalled any potential strategic action or conversation pertaining to regional planning. Only relatively recently, under Premiers Ed Stelmach and Alison Redford, have contemporary planning and service delivery issues been mandated onto the agenda of the Capital Region Board. Hence, when Municipal Affairs Minister Doug Griffiths made clear his dissatisfaction with the dysfunctional and largely detrimental nature of the status quo, it became obvious that the provincial role may well be lacking.[13] A closer examination of the Capital Region Board's priorities and the broader scope of regional transit in accordance with recent gestures from the Provincial government indicate that structural changes may be imminent for regional transit delivery. However the Capital Region Board, through the Province, must have the legislative authority to take action, and have the ability to curb the disadvantageous state of regional affairs in the Alberta Capital Region. It does not currently have such authority.

In order to address these research questions, this research report employs a qualitative approach of interview and case-study-based investigation. Case studies in the Canadian context are focused on regional transit governance in the Bow Valley region of Alberta, Calgary, Vancouver and Toronto. Calgary's public transit system bears many similarities to Edmonton's: both utilize a light rail system, initially constructed for a major sporting event and both rely upon the same provincial funding structures. Although

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[13] Elsie Stolte, "Minister urges Capital Region mayors and reeves to work together," *Edmonton Journal*, April 11, 2013.

Calgary has largely avoided the regional conflict experienced in the Alberta Capital Region, both metropolitan areas number slightly more than a million persons, and are experiencing similarly high growth rates. Inter-municipal public transit service is in its infancy in Calgary, yet this region operates within the same legislative and political frameworks as Edmonton. Moreover, the Calgary region may potentially be subject to any precedent set through establishment of regional transit in the Edmonton area.

Toronto is a much larger city, with a wider array of transit services and a much more dense and diverse population than Edmonton. However, the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) has recently experienced the creation of a regional transit authority in Metrolinx, an organization created by the Province of Ontario,[14] which has produced a plan to implement regional transit entitled "The Big Move". Furthermore, public transit is a politically active topic in Toronto, and the governance structure of Metrolinx forms one possible alternative for the Edmonton region to explore. TransLink, which oversees nearly all transportation planning and infrastructure management, serves the transportation needs of residents in Canada's third largest CMA, Metro Vancouver. This structure is significantly more established in many respects than others in Canada, and has also been studied academically in some depth, making it a valuable comparator. Evaluation of TransLink also provides the basis for understanding another alternative governance structure. Another fascinating, and much smaller case study is that of the Bow Valley Regional Transit Commission in the Banff-Canmore region of Alberta. This regional transit partnership has pioneered a precedent for regional transit governance and integrated municipal transit delivery in Alberta.

Inter-municipal public transportation in the Alberta Capital Region represents a multifaceted issue for provincial and municipal policymakers: the intersection of land-use

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[14] Rob MacIsaac, "The Big Move: Transforming Transportation in the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area," Metrolinx (An Agency of the Government of Ontario), November 2008: vi.

planning, transportation, and governance. The research design of this report is reflective

of the current political crossroads public transit governance faces in the Alberta Capital

Region. Beyond the comparative politics of a case study approach, used to establish a

spectrum of potential governance options, this report focuses on analysis of Capital

Region Board reports and information gathered directly from interviewing those involved

in the decision making. This approach attempts to capture the relatively current nature of

this topic, and allows for a snap shot of current posturing and prospective action to be

sampled. With the recent announcement of a viability study for inter-municipal transit in

the Alberta Capital Region, and a governance study underway, interviews with decision

makers and e-mail correspondence with those involved have provided much of the

information pertaining to the current status and potential next steps of implementing

inter-municipal transit in the immediate and longer term future. Examination of the

Interim Report on Transit Governance, delivered to the Capital Region Board on

November 17, 2012 by Urban Systems, and the Capital Region Inter-municipal Transit

Network Plan from 2009 have been primary sources of information as the final

governance report and viability study for inter-municipal transit are underway.

Additionally, the Capital Region Board's Integration Regional Transportation Master Plan

has provided invaluable background. Relevant, recent media coverage has also

provided a basis for examining the political willingness and public perception of inter-

municipal transit services across the Alberta Capital Region. Essentially, four primary

information sources were relied upon for the purposes of this research report: interviews

and correspondence with key local decision makers, who are public administrators,

politicians and board members; public reports from the Capital Region Board; literature

pertaining to public transit governance and the specifics of the Alberta Capital Region;

and, to some extent, contemporary media coverage.

Background

  The municipalities of the Alberta Capital Region have a colourful history, one marked by rapid post-war growth that continues to this day. According to Statistics Canada, the City of Edmonton had a population of 812,201 in the 2011 Census,[15] making it the second largest city in Alberta and the fifth largest municipality in Canada. In regional terms, the population of Edmonton comprises roughly 70% of the total 2011 population within in the Edmonton CMA; this is Canada's sixth largest CMA, with a current population is 1,159,869, growing at 11.2% per year.[16] Managing land-use planning sustainably during times of rapid growth has, at times, been exasperated by relatively dysfunctional relations between Edmonton and its two largest neighbours, St. Albert and Strathcona County (Sherwood Park).

  Since the early 1980's, the Edmonton region has had several organizations, with numerous voting and governance structures, responsible for overseeing regional development and cooperation. The Edmonton Metropolitan Regional Planning Commission (EMRPC) came first,[17] followed by the abolition of all regional planning commissions in 1994 by Alberta's Klein government both "as an econom[ic] measure and as a means to promote local economic development".[18] Continued discordance in the Alberta Capital Region resulted in the Alberta Capital Region Governance Review in 1998, followed by the creation of the Alberta Capital Region Forum (ACRF).[19] Subsequent creation of the Alberta Capital Region Alliance (ACRA)[20] highlights the delicate dynamics of the region and their inability to be addressed without collaborative

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[15] Statistics Canada, "Population and dwelling counts, for Canada, provinces and territories, and census subdivisions (municipalities), 2011 and 2006 censuses".
[16] Ibid.
[17] Andrew Sancton, Rebecca James and Rick Ramsay, *Amalgamation vs. Inter-Municipal Cooperation: Financing Local and Infrastructure Services* (Toronto: ICURR Press, 2000): 17.
[18] Ted E. Thomas, "Edmonton: Governance and Planning in the Metropolitan Region," in *Metropolitan Governance Revisited: American/Canadian Intergovernmental Perspectives*, ed. D.N. Rothblatt and A. Sancton, 273-317 (Berkeley: Institute of Governmental Studies at the University of California): 307.
[19] Doug Radke, "Working Together: Report of the Capital Region Integrated Growth Management Plan Project Team Final Report," Government of Alberta: December, 2007: 10.
[20] Edward LeSage and Lorna Stefanick, "New Regionalist Metropolitan Action: The Case of the Alberta Capital Region," Canadian Political Science Association Meetings, Winnipeg, 2004: 12.

and proportionate regional governance structures to mitigate conflict. ACRA was dissolved when the City of Edmonton removed itself in 2006[21] and then pressured the province for a more effective regional governance model with power to implement recommendations, resulting in the creation of the Capital Region Board (CRB) in 2008.

Historically, growth in the Alberta Capital Region has been facilitated by through a systematic absorption, by amalgamation or annexation, of adjacent municipalities by the City of Edmonton. According to John Gilpin, in his work on early development in the area, "Edmonton's first annexation bid was made in 1903 when a city charter was under discussion; its primary objective was the industrial plants in Cloverdale at the north end of the river… however, Strathcona annexed this territory before Edmonton could act."[22] He also notes that Edmonton's most ambitious bid to achieve these goals was made in October 1911, an annexation bid which "included the villages of West and North Edmonton as well as the City of Strathcona."[23] In 1912, a mere eight years after Edmonton was incorporated as a City, the newly designated Capital of Alberta amalgamated with the City of Strathcona, the chosen site of the new University of Alberta, to the south, across the North Saskatchewan River. Edmonton's aggressive annexation policy, combined with the quick action of local politicians to amalgamate Edmonton and Strathcona, suggest that the objective of these policies was to achieve the political consolidation of the Edmonton settlement. From 1917 to 1947 there were no major annexations or amalgamations in the Edmonton region; but from 1947 to 1980 there were nineteen separate annexations,[24] two of the most notable amalgamations,

[21] Radke, "Working Together: Report of the Capital Region Integrated Growth Management Plan Project Team Final Report," 11.
[22] John Gilpin, "The Land Development Process in Edmonton, Alberta, 1881-1917," in Power and Place: Canadian Urban Development in the North American Context, ed. Gilbert A. Stelter and Alan F.J. Artibise, 151-172 (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1986), 167.
[23] Ibid, 167.
[24] James Lightbody, "Edmonton," in City Politics in Canada, ed. Warren Magnusson and Andrew Sancton, 255-290 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1983), 276.

prior to 1979 and 1982 were those of the Towns of Beverly and Jasper Place during the early 1960's.[25]

Edmonton was (and it some ways, remains) essentially a very small city, even after the post-war urbanization of the 1950's. An "Anglo-Ontarian elite dominated social and civic life until the 1950's",[26] and the municipal sphere of politics did not experience a momentous clash of ideologies until decades later. Edmonton's politics have been affected by a broader political environment provincially that is generally quite content with the status quo. Combine this with "the rapid growth in the 1960's and 1970's, and the lack of comprehensive policy framework on urbanization from the provincial government",[27] and it makes sense that Edmonton and Calgary began to expand their boundaries as quickly as possible. Calgary was, and remains, an incredibly consolidated census metropolitan area; notably, its outlying communities are fewer in number and farther away than the relatively large, autonomous bedroom communities lying immediately on Edmonton's doorstep. Although the population of the Edmonton region had increased four-fold between the Second World War and the late 1970's, and the metropolitan population now included three sizable municipalities, "both Social Credit and Progressive Conservative provincial administrations generally turned a blind eye to difficulties emerging on [Edmonton's] doorstep".[28] During this period, both Edmonton and Calgary were frustrated in their attempts to expand, as there was "no stated policy on urbanization or local government organization at this time, in general, in Alberta, there was a consistent unstated policy on community growth and economic expansion".[29]

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[25] City of Edmonton, "History of Annexations (map)",
  http://webdocs.edmonton.ca/InfraPlan/SmartChoices/Audit/maps/report1map02.pdf (Accessed November 30, 2012).
[26] Lightbody, "Edmonton," in *City Politics in Canada*, 255.
[27] Jack Masson, *Alberta's Local Governments and Their Politics* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1985), 65.
[28] Lightbody, "Edmonton," in *City Politics in Canada*, 274.
[29] Masson, *Alberta's Local Governments and Their Politics* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1985), 65.

Establishment of district planning commissions in 1950 was a preliminary step in recognizing and managing services and infrastructure in Alberta's emergent metropolitan areas. In 1956, the McNally Commission on metropolitan development recommended annexation and amalgamation, in large part, and also spoke to broader concepts of metropolitan development:

1. It is unjust and inequitable that wide variations in the tax base should exist among the local governing bodies that comprise a metropolitan area where that area is in fact one economic and social unit.

2. A metropolitan area, which is in fact one economic and social unit, can ordinarily be more efficiently and effectively governed by one central municipal authority than by a multiplicity of local governing bodies.[30]

Two concepts, specifically rejected by the McNally Commission, were those of a two-tier federation (Toronto) and government by special purpose districts (Vancouver); the Commission generally "recommended the amalgamation of Calgary and Edmonton with their immediately adjacent industrial and residential suburbs."[31]

Both the City of St. Albert and Strathcona County, which border Edmonton to the northwest and east, respectively, have policies "encouraging a 'dormitory' growth rather than a more balanced variety".[32] The City of Edmonton and Strathcona County have fought bitterly over tax-lucrative Refinery Row, a large industrial complex directly to the east of Edmonton, in Strathcona County. As observed by Bettison, et al., "Sherwood Park, by remaining an unincorporated hamlet, has retained access to industrial tax revenues collected by Strathcona County... Though it suffers from limited representation in local government, the arrangement obviates the financial problem inherent in dormitory situations generally."[33] Conversely, St. Albert has attempted to "compensate

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[30] Jack Masson and Edward C. LeSage, Jr., Alberta's Local Governments: Politics and Democracy (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1994), 160.
[31] Lightbody, "Edmonton," in *City Politics in Canada*, 276.
[32] David G. Bettison, Larrie Taylor and J.K. Kenward, *Urban Affairs in Alberta* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1975), 254.
[33] Ibid, 254.

for its lack of industry by requiring residential development to pay its way by establishing high assessments… and special charges for the privilege of a noise-free and pollution-free environment, low social service costs, and similar benefits."[34] These policies have been critiqued as being selective, rather than offering a more comprehensive service package, St. Albert requires a minimum property tax assessment that "tends to set house prices that exclude low-income families."[35] The importance of such exclusionary policies pertains specifically to their implications for other municipalities, which become obliged to support a disproportionate share of low-income housing and social service costs,[36] such as public transit for the transport disadvantaged.

The most comprehensive attempt to mediate this situation came in 1979, with an annexation application submitted to the Local Authorities Board (LAB) by the City of Edmonton. This was perhaps the largest and most contentious annexation attempt in Canadian history; the hearing heard 186 witnesses, consumed 106 days of testimony, witnessed the filing of 299 exhibits and produced 12,235 pages of transcript.[37] Edmonton sought to absorb its metropolitan area as outlined in the McNally Commission, to encompass St. Albert and Sherwood Park. In December 1980, the LAB essentially "awarded the City… the area most subject to urbanizing pressures",[38] and perhaps most importantly, the Board at this time undertook an update to broaden the term 'annexation', whereby annexation "is viewed as an essential tool in fashioning the planned development not only of the annexing authority, but the region to which it contributes in giving a lifestyle."[39] The City of Edmonton was relying on a consolodationist approach, recommended by the McNally Commission, and discussed by Sancton as an approach that dominated in North America in the early twentieth

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[34] Bettison, Taylor and Kenward, *Urban Affairs in Alberta*, 255.
[35] Ibid, 255.
[36] Ibid, 255.
[37] T.J. Plunkett and James Lightbody, "Tribunals, Politics, and the Public Interest: The Edmonton Annexation Case," *Canadian Public Policy* 8, no. 2 (Spring 1982): 207-221, 207.
[38] Lightbody, "Edmonton," in *City Politics in Canada*, 278.
[39] Plunkett and Lightbody, "Tribunals, Politics, and the Public Interest: The Edmonton Annexation Case," 217.

century, as suburban municipalities voluntarily amalgamated with central cities to "provide cheaper, better services that could be accessed only by areas that were included within their boundaries."[40] However, Lightbody points out that, in Alberta, "the lieutenant governor in council had the power to vary LAB orders, and, accordingly Members of Legislative Assembly were bombarded with worried pleas from those about to lose their municipal identities."[41] In June 1981, the Alberta Government issued a revised order, awarding the City of Edmonton some 86,000 acres of land to the northeast, but not its suburban bedroom communities. In examining the Edmonton annexation, Feldman suggests in his response to Plunkett & Lightbody that "the political process won out",[42] and indeed it did. Regardless, the overarching issue of this case was "the management of the future growth and development of the Edmonton area".[43]

Fast-forward to the turn of the century; after the Klein government had disbanded regional planning commissions in Alberta, the Capital Region found itself in disarray, and a Coordinated Municipal Transit Review was conducted by ACRA in 2002. Among its conclusions, it recommended that dedicated funding for public transit would be desirable; it also suggested that transit corridors should reflect potential service growth beyond the City of Edmonton's boundaries and reflect the nature of the region's non-radial travel patterns[44]. Most importantly it advised that ACRA assume the role of regional transit advocate, to "ensure that future growth in the region is supportive of transit."[45] The January 2008 "Working Together" report from the Government of Alberta recommended establishment of the CRB, provision of startup funding, adoption and

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[40] Andrew Sancton, *Merger Mania: The Assault on Local Government,* Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2000: 37.
[41] Lightbody, "Edmonton," in *City Politics in Canada*, 278.
[42] Lionel D. Feldman, "Tribunals, Politics, and the Public Interest: The Edmonton Annexation Case: A Response," *Canadian Public Policy* 8, no. 3 (Summer 1982): 367-371, 371.
[43] T.J. Plunkett and James Lightbody, "[Tribunals, Politics, and the Public Interest: The Edmonton Annexation Case: A Response]: A Rebuttal," *Canadian Public Policy* 8, no. 3 (Summer 1982): 371-373, 371.
[44] Capital Region Board, "Inter-municipal Transit Network Plan," 11.
[45] Ibid, 11.

legislation of its current governance model[46]. Upon its establishment, by the Capital

Region Board Regulation, under the *Municipal Government Act* on April 15, 2008, the

Capital Region Board was mandated by the Province to develop long-term growth plans

for the Alberta Capital Region by March 31, 2009. The CRB met these deadlines, with a

specific regional focus on the intrinsically interrelated concepts[47] of land use planning

and public transit (and regional transportation master planning more broadly). Although

these plans were approved by the Province in 2011, serious concerns remain regarding

the validity of these plans should the Capital Region Board's provincial funding not be

renewed past 2014. Provincial approval of these plans does not necessarily mean their

recommendations will come to fruition; in fact, past disinterest from the Province

suggests these plans may grow to be insignificant should the Capital Region Board be

unable, or its members unwilling, to proceed in acting as a catalyst to their becoming

reality.

The current mandate of the Capital Region Board is broad, and includes

developing policy for a regional inter-municipal transit network. These include a "30 Year

Transit Service Plan", an "Integrated Regional Transportation Master Plan", a "Regional

Transit Cost Sharing Formula Report", and an interim report on governance framework.

The CRB has delivered these policy and planning documents, which have now been

approved by the Alberta Government. The Inter-municipal Transit Network plan and 30

Year Transit Service plan are the Capital Region Board's comprehensive roadmap for

the expansion and interconnection of all transit services into one seamless network.

These plans call for the expansion of LRT as the backbone of regional service, inter-

municipal bus services, regional park-and-ride facilities and the integration of specialized

transit services. They also include projects to explore integration of transit governance

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[46] Ibid, 10.
[47] Capital Region Board, "Integrated Regional Transportation Master Plan," Edmonton: September 2011, 15.

and fare structures across the Capital Region. The concept of integrated fare product was piloted by the University of Alberta's U-Pass, a program that simultaneously created a seamless fare product and lowered fares. In fact, research on frequency and fare choice in urban transit suggests that "social welfare could be improved by reducing service frequencies and using the money saved to lower fares"[48] a notion that could very well see a rise in public transit use, both for discretionary users and the transport disadvantaged. More importantly, the U-Pass program, and its success, represents the "most effective example of regional cooperation between the three municipalities",[49] as a workable revenue sharing agreement coincided its implementation in September 2007. Barriers to inter-municipal transit governance in the Alberta Capital Region include inconsistent and unsecure sources of funding, and the constrained capacity of the Capital Region Board to make effective decisions in implementing its plans and policies, thus inhibiting its effectiveness. The CRB was created by the Province, and its funding through the Government of Alberta is currently secured only until 2014.

Regional governance of transit and delivery of services, specifically, is a topical political issue in the Alberta Capital Region and becomes especially relevant as the City of Edmonton expands its LRT system. A new northwest leg of the LRT system is presently under construction, and could potentially reach St. Albert's boundaries in the near future. Additionally, funding has been secured for west and southeast LRT expansion. These expansions should enable St. Albert Transit (STAT) and Strathcona County Transit (SCT) to re-evaluate their long term service delivery strategies and vehicle purchasing plans toward feeder service onto a regional rail network. The LRT is viewed as a backbone to regional transit service, in the sense that the system would facilitate inter-municipal commuting; however, interim governance studies suggest that

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[48] Ian Savage, "The Dynamics of Fare and Frequency Choice in Urban Transit," *Transportation Research* 44, no.10 (December 2010): 815.
[49] Capital Region Board, "Inter-municipal Transit Network Plan," 19.

the LRT would remain within the City of Edmonton's jurisdiction, with the City leading expansion.[50] Any potential regional commission would not be responsible for LRT until this service is expanded past the City of Edmonton's boundaries.[51]

Thus, functional regional transit delivery between these three existing systems may not require full integration immediately, rather a unitary system of fare product and timing of transfers at key LRT stations. Once a regional transit governance structure was established, and management and delivery aspects of regional transit were uploaded, this could present an appropriate juncture to discuss long-term prospects for the management and delivery of LRT services. At present, construction of the northwest LRT means feeder service may be a viable option for St. Albert in the near future, thus eliminating the immediate need for an integration of bus services with STAT. This presents a tricky situation, as an eastern expansion of the LRT seems the farthest off and integrated bus may well be the most viable option for inter-municipal service to and from Strathcona County. This position in and of itself raises the spectre of conflict, as each of these three systems operate vehicles which are highly visible, mobile reminders of municipal autonomy. Therefore, the most plausible formula for successfully establishing a functional system of regional transit delivery will be found in its overarching governance structure, with governance and some management aspects overseen by a regional entity and delivery by municipal operators. Likewise, any functional regional system must entail willing participation from all three municipal transit operators, a challenge that remains at the whim of local decision makers and electorate.

Examination of the current policy environment becomes critical to establishing the feasibility of regional transit service. Recent announcement in February 2013 of

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[50] Capital Region Board, "Inter-municipal Transit Governance Study and Implementation Plan: Interim Report to the Transit Committee," Edmonton: Urban Systems, November 2012: 21.
[51] Ibid, 21.

voluntary, joint funding[52] for a viability study of inter-municipal regional transit services is an early victory, and these cooperative efforts were rewarded by additional grant funding through the Regional Collaboration Program (RCP).[53] The question remains: how can the Capital Region Board succeed in developing and implementing a functionally integrated regional transit system without the legislative authority to do so. Are municipalities expected to cooperate autonomously or will the province take on a greater role in its metropolitan regions?

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[52] Elsie Stolte, "Capital Region Municipalities Study Integrated Transit Network," *Edmonton Journal*, February 19, 2013.

[53] Capital Region Board Media Release, February 19, 2013.

Findings

In considering the tremendous costs associated with public transit delivery, it is imperative that local governments are attaining the best value for public funds possible, guided by the most effective service models for citizens. Transit is one of the most expensive public services currently serviced through property-tax-based municipal budgets in the Edmonton region; further analysis facilitates high value regional services that strive to maintain a high quality of life within the region.

Meligrana presents public transportation delivery within a governance and policy development framework, as "an essential public service in modern society"[54] and as a "basic and necessary underpinning for the functioning of a city-region".[55] One of the most prominent aspects of this work, beyond its governance elements, is its ability to highlight the integral link between land-use planning and transportation planning that has become the quintessence of many Capital Region Board reports. Meligrana asserts that long term sustainability of any metropolitan region is a "reflection of its transportation system" and, in particular, that when public transit is "inadequate or is organized ineffectively, personal mobility, economic activity and the environment all suffer."[56] Some of the broader themes present in transportation planning literature, and addressed by Meligrana in relation to the Vancouver case study include those of local versus regional service, urban versus suburban service and the concept of privatization. The most instructive aspect of Meligrana's work for the purposes of this research is his discussion of models of transportation governance; these five models range from complete independence to full integration, whereby transit delivery in the Edmonton metropolitan area is classified at the second stage of integration, as informally coordinated. Callahan's assessment of public transit governance in Southern California is useful in

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[54] Meligrana, "Toward Regional Transportation Governance: A Case Study of Greater Vancouver," 359.
[55] Ibid, 359.
[56] Ibid, 359.

highlighting the intricacies of American public transit funding models, and the relative inability of Canadian systems to compare with American and European models. Superficially, this work serves to illustrate important distinctions between these models and Canadian examples. Two of Callahan's four findings on regional transit delivery are especially relevant to this research: conflict is inevitable and successful regional solutions are intensely local. [57] Furthermore, Callahan's examination of three public agencies revealed that "conflict is endemic and that mechanisms for cooperation are contextual."[58]

As demonstrated in the background of this report, historic context is of great importance when considering matters of inter-municipal cooperation in the Alberta Capital Region. In particular, the dialogue between Plunkett & Lightbody and Feldman has served to navigate this research through the aggressive attempted annexation of St. Albert and Sherwood Park by the City of Edmonton, in so much as it captured the antagonistic and often bitter nature of this dispute within a theoretical framework of consolidation versus public choice. Additionally, work by Bettison assisted in providing a detailed picture of the tax policy distinctions between the Alberta Capital Region's three largest municipalities, which serve to highlight some of the distributive barriers that would exist in delivering transit, even if all three of these areas were a part of one municipality. For example, the concept of a regional fare system is one that would seem to strike as common-sense approach, perhaps even as a cooperative effort between a collective of transit operators and certainly for single regional operator. Currently, each of the inter-municipal transit operations in the Alberta Capital Region charges a "unique fare that varies from the fare being charged at every other transit operation".[59] Different regional fares exist across Canada; for example, residents of the City of Toronto pay a

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[57] Richard Callahan, "Governance: The Collision of Politics and Cooperation," *Public Administration Review* 67, no. 2 (March 2007): 291.
[58] Ibid, 298
[59] Capital Region Board, "Inter-municipal Transit Network Plan," 56.

flat cash fare whether or not they travel three kilometers or thirty, and Metro Vancouver residents have multiple transit zones with different pricing until the evening rush is over at 6:30 (after this time the entire system runs of a flat fare).[60] Monthly fares vary by zone in Vancouver, whereas monthly fares are a flat rate in Toronto; both cities have separate fare arrangements for commuter rail. Although there is no ideal system for regional fares, the Alberta Capital Region's fare systems have evolved perhaps too organically, to the extent that fares alone have become a deterrent, especially for discretionary and occasional transit users.

The Universal Transit Pass Program (U-Pass) is popular across Canada, and has demonstrated the resounding success of an integrated, inter-municipal fare product for post-secondary students at institutions in the City of Edmonton. This program was initially negotiated by the University of Alberta Students' Union with ETS and its two neighbouring systems; current Edmonton City Councillor Don Iveson, Chair of the CRB Transit Committee, was part of the team that negotiated the U-Pass on behalf of the University of Alberta. The U-Pass program has been renewed by large margins in two student referenda, and has been instrumental in promoting mode shift from automobile to transit travel to and from campuses. The program provides incentive to shift travel mode, especially on commuter trips, as this specific U-Pass program is subsidized through parking revenue and funded through mandatory student fees. Moreover, this program captures individuals at a moment in their mobility biography when many may find themselves transport disadvantaged, and simultaneously making many independent life choices for the first time. The mode shift benefits of this program have been studied extensively at the University of British Columbia,[61] and are reflective of mode shift

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[60] Capital Region Board, "Inter-municipal Transit Network Plan," 56.
[61] University of British Columbia, "Fall 2011 Transportation Status Report," 17.

achieved in many other North American jurisdictions.[62] This provides an excellent

example of the benefits achieved through the development of one single fare product

between the region's three public transit providers, albeit in an exclusive context and at a

conceptual level.

Issues of service delivery in the Edmonton metropolitan region may appear to

stem quite simply from a lack of inter-municipal cooperation, as the background of this

report suggests. An overview of transit planning and governance literature provides the

grounding in basic principles of transportation and land-use planning which are integral

to this research and analysis. In particular, Meligrana's analysis of Metro Vancouver's

evolution in public transit delivery presents a multiple stage model of transportation

governance that provides grounding to place many large Canadian cities in a useful

comparative context in terms of public transit delivery. Meligrana's historical synopsis of

public transit delivery in Metro Vancouver provided direction through its overview of

transit governance and management across Canada. Specifically, Meligrana's work was

useful in establishing a spectrum of transit governance in Canada and placing

Edmonton's current dynamics, and the identified option of a regional commission, within

this spectrum. However, many of the causes of this lacking cooperation are rooted in

lacking and insecure governance frameworks in the Edmonton region, which would

generally be used to address much larger, systemic issues of local concern in Canada:

municipal autonomy, transportation and land use planning, social service efficiency

(such as regional public transit), and tax revenues (through property taxes and transfers

from other levels of government).[63] In many regards, a significant clash of ideologies in

public administration is well illustrated through the Edmonton annexation case and its

implications for planning and service delivery the Alberta Capital Region, especially

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[62] Jeffrey Brown, Daniel Hess, and Donald Shoup, "Fare-Free Public Transit at Universities: An Evaluation," *Journal of Planning Education and Research* 23, no.1 (September 2003): 79.
[63] Radke, "Working Together: Report of the Capital Region Integrated Growth Management Plan Project Team Final Report,"13.

services that are such visible signals of municipal autonomy as public transit. The LAB's decision of decades past favoured a traditional consolodationist approach, backed by recommendations from the more antiquated McNally Commission; Peter Lougheed's government, however, overturned this decision in order to protect municipal autonomy, a concept which aligns closely with the fundamentals of public choice theory.

Efforts to coordinate municipal service delivery in the Alberta Capital Region context can be explored through consolidationist lens of municipal organization, and as expressed through a frame of public choice. These approaches can be used to assess decision making at the municipal level through a regional scope, which is the role of these concepts in relation to regional public transit delivery. Sancton illustrates the distinction between these two approaches to regional governance succinctly, through his analogous discussion of grocery store retailing and multi-municipality city-regions. This compares the level of selection, quality and price citizens receive, as taxpayers, in both administration and services, as akin to a monopolistic provider of services versus a wider array of choices in municipal service provision.[64] Trepidation for a consolodationist model could potentially arise if citizens are exclusively conceptualized as consumers of municipal services, rather than an intricate and engaged element within the fabric of the public administration process.

In terms of public transit and public choice, municipalities can cooperate across jurisdictions to provide more comprehensive services, decrease their scope of comprehensive service delivery in favour of more select service provision, or an increase in management of contracted services. However, Sancton illustrates that few people shop for an overall municipal service package, and that the majority of citizens are likely to be disinclined, or incapable, of moving from municipality to municipality simply based

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[64] Sancton, *Merger Mania: The Assault on Local Government,* 74.

on their perceived need of municipal services.[65] This notion is reminiscent of the relation between residential relocation and the concept of an individual's mobility biography; in short, an individual's built environment exercises a distinct influence over their preferred mode of travel at major moments in one's life, however not everyone perceives the real impacts of the built environment on their transport habits.[66] Thus, a vast discrepancy in regional public transit services is detrimental in the a broader theoretical context, if one considers that regional public transit in a metropolitan area to be a public good, designed to encourage social mobility, economic prosperity, and environmental stewardship for all.

Further, Sancton's analysis of public choice demonstrates that the efficient delivery of municipal services need not require large municipalities.[67] This is not to say that the transit needs of a city-region are best served by one large municipality, but rather through some form of deliberate, coordinated service delivery. Variety in the size and type of municipalities within a region may generate a multitude of service models, although this situation does not, in and of itself, result in inefficiencies. Thus, there is little incentive to assume that Edmonton's failed annexation, or any future amalgamation in the Alberta Capital Region is a wise strategy to pursue under the guise of perceived cost savings, or service efficiencies. Edmonton is, however, stuck in an awkward position as a relatively consolidated region in comparison to Metro Vancouver, but a region far less consolidated than Calgary, for example. A more detailed examination of Edmonton's struggle as an outlier on this scale of regional population distribution creates a distinct challenge in delivery of public transit. While the region cooperates on essential services, such as waste management and sewage treatment, these underground services are almost universally regarded as essential, and are often "out of sight, out of mind" for many citizens. Contrariwise, public transit vehicles are roving, visible signals of

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[65] Sancton, *Merger Mania: The Assault on Local Government,* 75.
[66] Joachim Scheiner and Christian Holz-Rau, "Changes in Travel Mode Use After Residential Relocation: a Contribution to Mobility Biographies," *Transportation* 40, no. 2 (February 2013): 454.
[67] Sancton, *Merger Mania: The Assault on Local Government,* 82.

municipal autonomy, and can be perceived as an especially expensive and subsidized public service that can be tailored to an individual community's need. Thus, Edmonton and its two large suburban bedroom communities make up the overwhelming majority of the Edmonton CMA's population, but have largely represented their own interests in a manner that has discouraged inter-municipal cooperation, except on the most straightforward of issues. Enter the CRB as a regional entity, and its provincially decided mandate for longer-term, more visionary approaches to planning and service delivery in the Alberta Capital Region.

The forum for inter-municipal interaction and the political context of multilevel governance are paramount when considering regional public transit in the Edmonton metropolitan area. Two prominent Albertan academics, LeSage and Stefanick, note the importance of multilevel governance in the Alberta Capital Region, and provide the basis for understanding services such as inter-municipal transit within this sphere. LeSage and Stefanick's findings are related to the theory that, in a globalizing world, regional rather than national governments have the best ability to capitalize on emerging economies and political power.[68] This concept speaks to the importance of regional local government collaboration in addressing barriers and pursuing opportunities for inter-municipal transit. The history of regional cooperation and planning in the Edmonton area, and the inherent "municipal polycentricity"[69] of the Edmonton metropolitan region has produced a region that cooperates effectively in some respects, such as utilities servicing and waste management,[70] yet lacks coordination of transit delivery. When Lightbody asserts that "Calgary is essentially unitary; Edmonton is not";[71] he advocates that the most cost effective way to deliver services, and essentially to govern the

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[68] LeSage and Stefanick, "New Regionalist Metropolitan Action: The Case of the Alberta Capital Region," 1.
[69] Ibid, 29
[70] Ibid, 6.
[71] Lightbody, "Canada's Seraglio Cities: Political Barriers to Regional Governance," *The Canadian Journal of Sociology* 24, no. 2: 177.

Edmonton region, is through municipal consolidation. Sancton et al. note "municipal organization in Edmonton is already remarkably consolidated",[72] with around 70% of the CMA population in relation to Calgary's 95% share of the CMA population. In considering governance frameworks at a local level, we must consider the potential consolidation advocated by Lightbody, and the existing relative consolidation in Edmonton, argued by Sancton. In the context of transit as a public good, both may prove ineffective, as citizens of the Alberta Capital Region experience disproportionate service delivery as a result of poorly regional coordinated transit. In their discussion of multilevel governance in the Calgary context, Miller and Smart explain that, no matter the relative consolidation of a region's population, relations between municipal, provincial and federal governments in Canada could "better be seen as a complex mosaic of bilateral relations that occasionally expand into trilateral programs or conflicts".[73] Furthermore, amalgamation of multiple existing municipalities to create larger regional government, in the hopes of lowering overall service and administration costs can create distinctly separate issues of representation and urban policy development. Such is the case with the Halifax Regional Municipality, a massive geographic region comprised largely of rural areas with "70 percent of the population crowded into 5 percent of the municipality near Halifax harbour."[74] Thus, Finbow asserts that "amalgamation essentially submerged urban areas in an oversized, rural-based entity that is unable to effectively advocate for urban interests."[75] The situation in the Halifax Regional Municipality represents an interesting case whereby amalgamation as a solution to regional service distribution has

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[72] Sancton, James and Ramsay, *Amalgamation vs. Inter-Municipal Cooperation: Financing Local and Infrastructure Services*, 23.
[73] Byron Miller and David Smart, "Ascending the Main Stage?: Calgary in the Multilevel Governance Drama," in *Sites of Governance: Multilevel Governance and Policy Making in Canada's Big Cities*, ed. Martin Horak and Robert Young, 26-52 (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2012): 26.
[74] Robert G. Finbow, "Submerging the Urban: Halifax in a Multilevel Governance System," in *Sites of Governance: Multilevel Governance and Policy Making in Canada's Big Cities,* ed. Martin Horak and Robert Young, 73-103 (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2012): 77.
[75] Ibid, 76.

ultimately led to political and social fragmentation between urban and rural residents, within a broader municipality unable to represent either set of interests.

Examination of Canadian case studies of regional transit planning, specifically, provide instrumental awareness of functioning models of regional public transit governance, within comparable funding arrangements and relatively analogous policy environments. Vancouver, as a highly fragmented metropolitan area, and Calgary, the model of consolidation, present reasonable context to place the Alberta Capital Region as an outlier of relative consolidation; there are three large municipalities in the Alberta Capital Region, and a highly fragmented approach to cooperation on services, based largely upon type of service. The Greater Vancouver Regional District (now Metro Vancouver) encompasses twenty municipalities,[76] many of them sizable enough to rival the City of Vancouver proper for dominance, population wise. This makes the Metro Vancouver area a relatively fragmented city-region,[77] yet one that is able to cooperate effectively on issues of public transportation and transportation planning through mandated regional governance of these issues. Metro Vancouver is served by TransLink, a uniquely adaptive organization, a branch of BC Transit that was strategically developed specifically to serve Metro Vancouver, and designed to respond to a particular set of circumstances.[78] TransLink has subsequently evolved, since its inception in 1999,[79] to oversee most major transportation infrastructure across the multitude of municipal boundaries in Metro Vancouver. What is significant is the comprehensive nature of this organization, and the success in regional strategic planning achieved by TransLink, as a result of Provincial involvement. TransLink has engaged in extensive strategic planning, that resulted in major changes in 2007 which

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[76] Meligrana, "Toward Regional Transportation Governance: A Case Study of Greater Vancouver," 360.
[77] Ibid, 377.
[78] Ibid, 369.
[79] Ibid, 373.

included new revenue-generating measures, a restructuring of the executive of the body, and increases in the areas under TransLink's jurisdiction.[80]

While interviews reveal that regional transit planning is truly in its infancy in Calgary, the C-Train and Edmonton's LRT system bear much in common in terms of system development and the built environments they support. Calgary and Edmonton may be long-time rivals, but these two cities are natural comparators: they are of relatively similar size and located within the same provincial policy environment. Whereas a regional conversation on service sharing and inter-municipal services has been ongoing in the Alberta Capital Region over the past forty years, inter-municipal transit service is a relatively new issue in the Calgary region. The apparent result is that provincial structures for regional planning in British Columbia have allowed the fragmented municipalities of Metro Vancouver to coincide in relative peace within a metropolitan area nearly twice the size of Alberta's metropolitan areas around Edmonton and Calgary. In particular, the Alberta Capital Region has become a highly charged political battleground, with three large municipalities vying for the interests of their residents, with little in the form of provincial oversight, beyond the Capital Region Board. While the municipalities in the Alberta Capital Region, and especially the City of Edmonton, attempts to fandangle agreements and arrangements that best serve the region's citizens, municipal consolidation in Calgary largely obviates these issues and perpetuates reluctance on the part of the provincial government in Alberta to intervene in a manner that would implement serious change in the Alberta Capital Region.

Metrolinx, in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA), serves as another example of regional transit governance. Metrolinx is an agency of Ontario's provincial government, created to improve the coordination and integration of all modes of transportation in the

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[80] Acuere Consulting, "Translink Governance Review," Vancouver: March 2013, 2.

Greater Toronto Area.[81] This entails a regional governance model of many municipalities and transit operators, including the GO Train system, cooperating together. These examples do serve useful, although any successful endeavor toward a regional transit commission in the Alberta Capital Region must remain conscious of budgetary provisions, and stable secure funding for transit remains a key issue across Canada, and particularly in Alberta, as "provincial plans in Canada still evolve in splendid isolation".[82] Such a model could be applied to the Edmonton Metropolitan region, although one glaring difference in service delivery to citizens between the Capital Region and the Metro Vancouver or the GTA, is the disparity of service levels in public transit; the Edmonton region has multiple public transit providers and an intricate system, whereas the Province of British Columbia mandated "the South Coast British Columbia Transportation Authority… commonly known as TransLink"[83] to serve Metro Vancouver, likewise Metrolinx is provincially mandated to serve the GTA.[84] Public transit, and transportation networks in general, are an excellent example of how metropolitan regions are "an integrated and interwoven unit; autonomous communities thus fragment government activities that are regional by nature."[85] Certainly if the Edmonton region integrated transit services to some degree with St. Albert and Strathcona County, this more cohesive service could "offer more attractive and convenient transit routing, scheduling and service; more destinations could be serviced… in the core area, saving travel time, and transfer inconvenience."[86]

From a planning perspective, the Edmonton region may not even be the most suitable in terms of being high density or possessing strong socioeconomic indicators favoring mass transit use. In particular, there is a strong relation between the success of

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[81] MacIsaac, "The Big Move: Transforming Transportation in the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area," vi.
[82] James Lightbody, "The Strategic Planning Component in the Policymaking Process for Municipalities in Canada," *Policy Studies Journal* 21, no. 1 (Spring 1993): 102.
[83] Andrew Sancton, *Canadian Local Government: An Urban Perspective* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 2011), 54.
[84] MacIsaac, "The Big Move: Transforming Transportation in the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area," vi.
[85] Masson and LeSage, Jr., *Alberta's Local Governments: Politics and Democracy,* 153.
[86] Ibid, 153.

an urban rail network and its supporting policies and structures. However, its suitability to an urban rail network need not impede such a system's success should careful use of suitable policy be employed,[87] in fact, some of the most successful urban rail systems in North America include nearby Vancouver's SkyTrain and Calgary's C-Train.[88] Realistic assessment of service delivery and regional growth strategies should acknowledge that "modal choice in personal transportation is a complex phenomenon",[89] and that delivery of the best quality services throughout the region will require forward thinking strategies and policy implementation. One of the most effective mechanisms for addressing inter-municipal transit is to address economies of scale within a city-region, as supported through research on commuting in the Canadian Prairie cities. That is to say, no matter the scale of development, if public transit is supposed to increase social mobility, reduce the economic strains of commuting, and mitigate the ramifications of urban sprawl that as population density increases, "both urban and rural areas exhibit shorter commute distances".[90] This research demonstrates that population density, and land-use planning, are intrinsically connected to transportation systems, yet the interesting element of this connection is that population density need not increase systematically, in every region, for its positive ramifications to effect a metropolitan region in its entirety.

An interesting precedent has been set in Alberta, in the form of a small transit commission that provides inter-municipal transit services in the shadow of the Rocky Mountains. The Town of Banff, the Town of Canmore and Improvement District #9 signed a Memorandum of Understanding on January 7, 2009[91] declaring their commitment to establishing a regional transit commission. These three municipalities

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[87] Roger Mackett and Ela Babalik Sutcliffe, "New Urban Rail Systems: A Policy-Based Technique to Make Them Successful," *Journal of Transport Geography* 11, no. 2 (June 2003): 162.

[88] Ibid, 162.

[89] Sarmistha R. Majumdar, "The Case for the Development of Public Transit in an Urban Boundary Rural Area," *Review of Policy Research* 27, no. 6 (November 2010): 754.

[90] Jamie Partridge and James Nolan, "Commuting on the Canadian Prairies and the Urban/Rural Divide," *Canadian Journal of Administrative Sciences* 22, no.1 (March 2005): 70.

[91] Bow Valley Regional Transit Commission. "Bow Valley Regional Transit Services Commission: Five-Year Business Plan, Fall 2011 to Summer 2016": iv.

passed by-laws approving draft business plans for the commission, and submitted the plan to Alberta's Ministry of Municipal Affairs in April of 2010.[92] Thus, the Bow Valley Regional Transit Commission (BVRTC) was established in 2011 and began providing regional service in 2012;[93] currently its small fleet provides services between the Town of Canmore and the Town of Banff, with the permission of Parks Canada. The Towns of Banff and Canmore share the costs of operation equally[94] and the commission is moving forward with a five-year business plan to incorporate services to local ski resorts and other popular recreational destinations in the area, such as Lake Louise. Stakeholders involved at other levels of government have included Parks Canada; additionally, many private sector industries such as resorts and hotels have expressed an interest in being involved with the BVRTC. This commission and its inter-municipal service have set a precedent, albeit on a much smaller scale than the Alberta Capital Region is operating.

As illustrated through the feasibility study of regional transit, currently underway in the Alberta Capital Region, collaborative attempts toward realizing economies of scale, efficiencies in service and resource allocation for joint capital projects can be rewarded by the Government of Alberta through Regional Collaboration Program (RCP). Not only does such cooperation generate greater resources in terms of funding, it yields a much higher potentiality for tangible results[95] that increase the service quality of transit in the Alberta Capital Region, and perceived quality of life from a region's citizenry. Through the BVRTC, the initial stages of regional planning and inter-municipal service development have been undertaken by three Alberta municipalities and thus set a precedent for regional transit governance. Moreover, Provincial Green Trip capital funding for capital projects and political championship from Alberta's big city mayors

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[92] Bow Valley Regional Transit Commission. "Bow Valley Regional Transit Services Commission: Five-Year Business Plan, Fall 2011 to Summer 2016", iv.
[93] Ibid, iii.
[94] Ibid, 8.
[95] Elsie Stolte, "Capital Region Municipalities Study Integrated Transit Network," *Edmonton Journal*, February 19, 2013.

have put regional public transit on the agenda in the Alberta Capital Region. Such factors have assisted in bringing regional public transit to the mandate of the Capital Region Board, and have been highlighted in land-use documents through the concept that no bus route or transit service should be an island: "each bus route acquires added value insofar as it is part of a transit system potentially allowing transfers".[96]

The CRB, specifically, is a vehicle to establishing regional public transit services in the Alberta Capital Region, "through legislation and regulation, [the CRB] been mandated to develop the Capital Region Growth Plan, but has not explicitly been charged with its implementation",[97] and thus implementation ultimately becomes a decision made by the three operators of public transit in the region. Hence, a viability study, as announced in February 2013, is now underway to examine the next moves for these three municipal operators. Given the high degree of investment made by the region's three transit operating municipalities, any shift toward a regional system presents a complex political and economic decision. One major incentive, presented in correspondence with the CRB, is the concept of a regional transit commission as an advocate for funding, and further as a regional organization that may garner increased access to funding that each municipality operating on its own. The feasibility study will present options for proceeding with regional transit that could ultimately translate into a business plan that could be presented to individual councils and to the Province.

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[96] Chris Harris, "Governing Spaces: Urban Transit, Land Development and the Local State," *Civil Engineering and Environmental Systems* 25, no. 4 (December 2008): 282.
[97] Capital Region Board, "Inter-municipal Transit Network Plan," 77.

Analysis

The first legs of Edmonton's LRT system began operation in time for the 1978 Commonwealth Games, when Edmonton was the first municipality in North America with a population of less than a million persons to operate a system of this kind. Edmonton recognized early on that "integrated, high-quality, and accessible transit systems are essential in order to attract travelers to shift to public transport".[98] Only a few years ago, Edmonton Transit System (ETS) was the first in Canada to claim a fully accessible transit fleet and network of facilities; in light of recent investments and promotion, LRT has recently undergone a massive resurgence in ridership. Evaluation of governance options, and subsequent policy implications, presently undertaken by the Capital Region Board are at a critical intersection, in an attempt to make feasible some type of regional public transit framework. The relevance and importance of multilevel governance to regional public transit policy, specifically the pertinence of the Provincial government in this context, underscore the need for some measure of intergovernmental relations in the context of mass transit.[99] Governance of public transit involves numerous organizations, and interactions between levels of government, which can lead to a fragmented steering approach.[100] A regional public transit governance framework would generate an overarching aim and accountability structures to provide sensible, comprehensive services within the Edmonton region in a manner that avoids duplication of services and encourages more creative land use policy, rather than having Edmonton and its outlying communities continuing to grow boundlessly.

In Horak's analysis of multilevel governance in Canada's municipalities, he concludes that there are many "complex files" which require "specifically multilevel

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[98] Nir Sharaby and Yoram Shiftan, "The Impact of Fare Integration on Travel Behavior and Transit Ridership," *Transport Policy* 21 (May 2012): 63.
[99] Robert J. Eger and Justin Marlowe, "Hofferbert in Transit: A Dynamic Stages Model of the Urban Policy Process," *Review of Policy Research* 23, no. 2 (March 2006): 419.
[100] Lisa Hansson, "Hybrid Steering Cultures in the Governance of Public Transport: A Successful Way to Meet Demands?" *Research in Transportation Economics* 39, no. 1 (March 2013): 175.

action",[101] Horak notes that such action is necessitated by a lack of capacity at the local level, and a level of policy response catered to local conditions that demands local involvement, but may involve action from higher orders of government.[102] Horak identifies four primary agents involved in multilevel governance, and four primary roles for these actors. These agents are identified as local government, provincial government, federal government and local social forces;[103] these agents may be involved in multilevel governance in one or more of the following aspects: policy advocacy, resource provision, policy development and policy implementation.[104] Horak suggests that Canadian cities have too many "complex files" and policy issues for one level of government to address alone, thus multilevel governance should not be avoided as a mode of policy making.[105] In the specific case of multilevel governance and inter-municipal transit in the Alberta Capital Region, indeed a "complex case", the main agents are local and provincial governments, with a small degree of federal involvement in regards to capital funding for large-scale investments. The CRB, specifically, is designed to bridge the role between local and provincial agents and is mandated to foster regional cooperation; however, the CRB does not have the power necessary in terms of resource provision or policy implementation to be effective. While the CRB operates in the spheres of policy advocacy and policy development, it cannot be successful as a bridge between agents should it be unable to become more involved in multilevel governance within all four of the above aspects.

Horak defines the idea of multilevel governance as "a mode of policy making that involves complex interactions among multiple levels of governments and social

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[101] Martin Horak, "Conclusion: Understanding Multilevel Governance in Canada's Cities," in *Sites of Governance: Multilevel Governance and Policy Making in Canada's Big Cities,* ed. Martin Horak and Robert Young, 339-370 (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2012): 340.
[102] Ibid, 340.
[103] Ibid, 341.
[104] Ibid, 341.
[105] Ibid, 366.

forces",[106] and certainly public transit fits as a complex policy issue within this frame.

Indeed, Minister Griffiths' comments allude to aspects of multilevel governance present

in the sphere of financing and operating inter-municipal public transit in the Alberta

Capital Region. In terms of regional planning and multilevel government interaction,

between local agents and their provincial agent, the "Working Together" report, the plan

that resulted in creation of the CRB, provides insight as toward the gaps in the CRB's

authority and jurisdiction. While LRT in particular is identified explicitly as a specifically

regional issue,[107] there is a distinct gap in the CRB's legitimacy between two key stages:

detailed planning and decision making, whereby the CRB has no authoritative powers in

recommending plans.[108] This report agreed with the City of Edmonton's position as a

dominant local agent, and attempted to create a voting structure reflective of this

dynamic; moreover, the report recognized that complete "local authority and autonomy

at all costs is inappropriate for the good of the entire region, [and that] local

circumstances deserve recognition in the decision-making process."[109] However, the

report that led to the creation of the CRB also leaves a distinctly grey area, and does not

address the awkward dynamic of the Alberta Capital Region as a mostly consolidated

but still distinctly fragmented city-region; the report claimed that "the transfer of most

planning and decision-making responsibility to the Province, including decisions that will

affect the City of Edmonton, implies that the City does not believe that working with its

regional partners, in the absence of provincial direction, will lead to effective

decisions."[110] The report argues that the Province is not necessarily in a better position

to "make local decisions than locally elected officials, which seems unsupportable given

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[106] Horak, "Conclusion: Understanding Multilevel Governance in Canada's Cities," 339.
[107] Radke, "Working Together: Report of the Capital Region Integrated Growth Management Plan Project Team Final Report," 60.
[108] Ibid, 61.
[109] Ibid, 58.
[110] Ibid, 58.

the philosophy of the *Municipal Government Act.*"[111] This report takes a somewhat

threatening tone, when it states that the current voting model of the CRB presumes that

Edmonton will not act on its own and thus "jeopardize its opportunity for a truly regional

partnership" because, "if this model is not successful, the alternative is long and

protracted debates on options that include annexation or amalgamation".[112] Even taking

the most positive approach to this situations entails that all solutions to regional

problems in the Alberta Capital Region will be born out of a consensus model; this is,

quite simply, an unrealistic expectation. The realities of regional service delivery are

based in the region's finances, whereby industrial revenues flow primarily to two

counties[113] and where cost sharing is largely based on population distribution and not

tax assessments.[114] The CRB is tasked with providing policy, and is mandated to be a

leader, yet has little in the way of management authority or any design or influence in a

coordinated implementation attempt of its policies. The CRB must evolve, through

legislation, toward having the ability to manage and implement change.

Where planning for public transit in the Alberta Capital Region is concerned, the

Capital Region Board defines inter-municipal public transit within its ambitious 30 Year

Transit Service Plan as including the following comprehensive services and facilities:[115]

- All light rail transit capital and operating costs including operations and facilities entirely within a single jurisdiction (assuming LRT remains in Edmonton)
- All bus services operating from the last transit center or stop in one jurisdiction across municipal boundaries to stops located in another jurisdiction
- A proportionate cost of all facilities required to support operation of transit vehicles needed to operate inter-municipal bus and rail services including garages
- 'Park and Ride' lots and transit centers primarily required to support the inter-municipal flow of passengers by transit, car pool or van pool
- Transit priority corridors that facilitate the movement of buses or rail vehicles on corridors that are used by inter-municipal transit vehicles

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[111] Radke, "Working Together: Report of the Capital Region Integrated Growth Management Plan Project Team Final Report," 58.
[112] Ibid, 65.
[113] Ibid, 77.
[114] Ibid, 81.
[115] Capital Region Board, "30 Year Transit Service Plan," Edmonton: September 2011: 19.

- Regional initiatives that facilitate regional transit including but not limited to information services, smart buses, smart cards, or a regional control center

This definition forms the basis for critical analysis of governance issues and discussion of governance frameworks for inter-municipal transit from CRB documents. For example, within the Capital Region Inter-municipal Transit Network Plan, several key principles are established: that functional responsibility must be distributed along a continuum, and that these responsibilities will evolve over time, and that the CRB must focus on 'quick wins'.[116] The first two of these three principles coincide with one another and are understandable, given the degree to which integration must occur between three operators that are informally coordinated,[117] to use Meligrana's scale of integration. These principles also signal a more pragmatic and visionary approach to public transit delivery and inter-municipal services in the Alberta Capital Region generally. However, the 'quick win' approach is somewhat troublesome. While this approach is often viewed as an effective method of championing a cause through relatively immediate and visible successes, this specific method may not serve the CRB Transit Committee or the Alberta Capital Region well in the long term. In fact, the Alberta Capital Region Governance Review was critical of 'quick win' concept over ten years ago. This approach, in a 2009 context, was understandably identified as a manner of delivering tangible results that could be attained by using immediately available GREEN Trip funding[118]. However, the 'quick win' mentality is also cited as being a strategy that could provide any new regional entity with "significant credibility".[119] While this tactic was initially conceived to generate swift action in light of GREEN Trip funding from the Province of Alberta, its mentality becomes infectious and begins to negate the very purpose of these reports as a significant step toward regional service delivery, one that

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[116] Capital Region Board, "Inter-municipal Transit Network Plan," 70.
[117] Meligrana, "Toward Regional Transportation Governance: A Case Study of Greater Vancouver," 365.
[118] Capital Region Board, "Inter-municipal Transit Network Plan," 70.
[119] Ibid, 70.

must acknowledge such changes will present challenges and generate some conflict.

For instance, establishment of a regional fare system and purchasing of new buses are

not 'quick wins',[120] these are major milestones that must be regarded as such.

Should the Capital Region Board be unable, or its members unwilling, to deliver a

concrete and workable solution for management of regional land-use and service

delivery, the Province has considered amalgamation within the region.[121] Amalgamation

remains an unlikely and relatively drastic course of action; however, a more relevant

consideration is that regional provision of services should not necessitate amalgamation.

While some degree of Provincial action is likely necessary to expedite implementation of

regional transit, and has taken place elsewhere in Canada, it would be prudent to recall

successes. For example, the U-PASS demonstrates a situation whereby municipalities

and organizations within the Alberta Capital Region were able to cooperate on their own

accord to afford residents a glimpse at the ease of inter-municipal transit fare. In the

context of CRB endeavours and inter-municipal transit for a broader population in the

Alberta Capital Region, interviews with CRB Transit Committee members revealed that,

at present, there is a strong degree of political will in the region to realize some degree

of regional and inter-municipal public transit service. One interviewee specifically

mentioned the confusion for residents that arises from a plethora of fare products among

three operators, since there are over one hundred different fare products and options

throughout the Alberta Capital Region. These include fare products available on

Edmonton Transit, St. Albert Transit and Strathcona County Transit and those fare

products available for travel on other services, such as contract service provided by

ETS. If the ultimate goal of a public transit system, in fundamental competition with the

private automobile, is to provide even effective commuter services within a metropolitan

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[120] Capital Region Board, "Inter-municipal Transit Network Plan," 78.
[121] Elsie Stolte, "Amalgamation of Capital Region possible if infighting doesn't stop, minister says," *Edmonton Journal*, April 15, 2013.

region, any added complexity of fare structure will only serve to provide a significant barrier to generating the necessary mode shift in discretionary ridership. Moreover, the key demographic for success of any regional system lies in generating mode shift from discretionary riders versus the transport disadvantaged (those who use transit due to social constraints).[122] That is to say transit ridership is already high amongst students, seniors and those unable to afford consistent travel in a private automobile;[123] successful regional transit relies upon those with discretionary, disposable income for travel to choose transit over the private automobile, for a least some portion of their daily trips.

The concept of mode shift entails the following challenges, as identified by Harris: that transit faces fundamental technological competition from the automobile; that transit invariably tends to lose money (increasingly so as the city becomes more sprawling); and, that "the benefits of high frequency, loss-making transit services tend to be captured by land owners, insofar as transit allows higher densities of development than automobile-only access."[124] This is to say that transit not only generates, but relies upon higher density development and presents the case for public transit planning and land-use planning as intrinsically interrelated concepts. In municipal settings in Canada, where property-tax based budgets make up a majority of municipal budgets, higher land values can be achieved with higher densities and thus, improve access to public transit. Conversely, it is imperative that developers and property owners alike feel confident that increased transit services be delivered should they choose to build and inhabit higher density dwellings. This conversation is topical in nearly all Canadian metropolitan areas, and the paradigm in the Alberta Capital Region is well summarized in Staples' recent article in the *Edmonton Journal* where he notes that Alberta Minister of Urban Affairs

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[122] Todd Litman, "Evaluating Public Transit Benefits and Costs: Best Practices Guidebook," Victoria: Victoria Transport Policy Institute, February 2013: 19.
[123] Ibid, 26.
[124] Harris, "Governing Spaces: Urban Transit, Land Development and the Local State," 284.

Doug Griffiths "spoke out in favour of smarter growth at the Capital Region Board last week, and Edmonton's commitment to 'grow up' as a struggle when municipalities building outwards are right on your borders."[125]

In addition to tying land-use planning and transit together more cohesively, there are significant challenges associated with developing any type of regional governance structure for public transit in the Alberta Capital Region, that are far beyond a 'quick win'. Among the key issues and next steps as identified in the Interim Report on transit governance, many fiscal issues arise. This report suggests that the ability of local governments to generate revenue to expand and operate transit are constrained,[126] and notes a lack of sharing arrangements between any of the transit providers in the Alberta Capital Region, either for capital projects or ongoing operational costs. Moreover, the CRB and the Transit Committee do not have direct access to direct, stable and sustainable sources of funding;[127] in addition, many of the mechanisms for funding transit that are available in other provinces such as British Columbia and Ontario are currently not feasible in Alberta unless legislation to enact a new form of revenue or taxation were developed.[128] Capacity for funding development and operation coordinated inter-municipal transit exists within a complex overall structure for transit funding in Canada. In particular, a lack of dedicated operational funding for transit in Alberta hinders any potential regional service. These issues are at the forefront of regional inability, especially on the part of the CRB, to manage or implement any effective change to the status quo. Ironically, the CRB as a regional entity presents a chance for the region's municipalities to act as a regional funding advocate for a conglomeration of transit providers, both at the provincial and federal levels, in a manner

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[125] David Staples, "Amalgamation would bring better governance to Capital region," *Edmonton Journal*, April 19, 2013.
[126] Capital Region Board, "Inter-municipal Transit Governance Study and Implementation Plan: Interim Report to the Transit Committee", 10.
[127] Ibid, 12.
[128] Capital Region Board, "Inter-municipal Transit Network Plan," 95.

that may serve the region far more effectively that a handful of operators advocating independently.

Beyond the conundrum of transit funding, decision making by the Transit Committee and the CRB as a whole are constrained through a veto system by any of the three transit operators,[129] a dynamic that was reflected in speaking with some decision makers; the CRB has no leverage or power to enact a regional commission or any other governance structure whereby all three transit operating municipalities take part. Thus, governance must evolve incrementally in iterations whereby Legislative adjustments may be able to keep pace as required in order to direct the CRB's mandate into the future. In terms of land-use planning and public transit planning agendas especially, these adjustments may also "involve the *Municipal Government Act* which currently governs the responsibilities and powers of municipalities in Alberta."[130] These changes could be overseeing implementation or acting in a "highly prescribed manner",[131] however the final recommendations of the CRB Inter-municipal Transit Network Plan do not blatantly suggest any specific way to proceed, only that the Province support governance in the form of a Regional Transit Committee (RTC) and enact "any necessary legislation and/or regulatory changes to support the implementation of this governance model".[132]

Based on the CRB's 30 Year Transit Service Plan, and its definitions of inter-municipal transit, the 'quick win' approach would seem to be a losing strategy for gaining long term momentum. While an early victory may draw attention to regional transit, this approach will likely only serve as a detriment to the cause of inter-municipal transit in the long run. First, this approach may present a somewhat substantial, immediate result that

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[129] Capital Region Board, "Inter-municipal Transit Governance Study and Implementation Plan: Interim Report to the Transit Committee," 11.
[130] Capital Region Board, "Inter-municipal Transit Network Plan," 77.
[131] Ibid, 77.
[132] Ibid, 93.

provides instant gratification to policy makers and politicians without realizing any

effective, long-term change. Secondly, this approach mitigates the very concept that

sweeping, structural changes are required to make public transit a service that is

effectively managed and delivered in the long-term. Beyond discussion of regional LRT,

a 'quick win' approach will not suffice in bringing together ETS, STAT and SCT to

develop a governance structure whereby they deliver service in a coordinated manner,

even at the most autonomous level whereby the three operators are governed and

managed by a regional entity while maintaining autonomy over delivery of service. This

said, some of the 'quick wins' presented in the CRB's Inter-municipal Transit Network

Plan are more directed, including recommendation for an urban transit section at Alberta

Transportation[133], which would establish a meaningful place for a dialogue on public

transit. Another important suggestion was to create a place for public transit in the

broader context of other public policy issues such as public health and environmental

stewardship.

　　While these are respectable concepts, one issue that has yet to be addressed by

the CRB is that of knowledge management, and its own lack of expertise in urban transit

issues and transportation management; existing knowledge in the Alberta Capital

Region is currently siphoned within departments of ETS, STAT and SCT. This signals

that a coordination of local agents is critical[134] prior to proceeding at the Transit

Committee level of the CRB; further, an absence of staff and knowledge at the CRB

level is reflective of a limited capacity for dealing with urban transit issues at Alberta

Transportation.[135] The current design of provincial grants, such as GREEN Trip, and

other similar capital funding sources must be reflective of a regional transit system and

not three separate operators, while some funding does address inter-municipal transit it

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[133] Capital Region Board, "Inter-municipal Transit Network Plan," 93.
[134] Capital Region Board, "Inter-municipal Transit Governance Study and Implementation Plan: Interim Report to the Transit Committee," 12.
[135] Ibid, 14.

does not truly build a regional transit system.[136] The current system of one-to-one

bilateral agreements would need to be merged incrementally and upgraded to a regional

scale in order to access the funding required to make regional transit successful.

Consequently, the responsibilities of any special purpose body tasked with management

of transit in the Alberta Capital Region would likely play a governance and management

role, while service delivery and implementation would continue to be the responsibility of

three separate operators; paramount in any arrangement for regional transit governance

is the "legislated authority to access various sources of funding."[137] This situation is

somewhat reminiscent of Metrolinx, with ten local transit operators[138] conceptually

coordinated through a provincially mandated organization. Alternatives to the Transit

Committee structure within the CRB are explored at length in the Interim Report of the

Inter-Municipal Transit Governance Study and Implementation Plan, delivered to the

CRB in November 2012. This report suggests that it would be prudent for the Transit

Committee, the CRB and the Province to work collaboratively through any governance

discussion in order to establish any required legislative authorities,[139] a step that has yet

to be taken beyond a discussion amongst local operators and municipal agents. Among

the governance frameworks discussed in the Interim Report are: a regional commission

model, an inter-municipal partnership model, a controlled corporation model, and a non-

profit corporation model. Both corporate models have been dismissed, and while the

partnership model has not been eliminated, the Transit Committee has identified the

commission framework as a preferred model for further exploration.[140] This preferred

alternative, governance by regional transit committee, would phase in LRT over the

longer-term and would oversee regional transit governance, and phase in management,

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[136] Ibid, 14.
[137] Capital Region Board, "Inter-municipal Transit Governance Study and Implementation Plan: Interim Report to the Transit Committee," 23.
[138] Acuere Consulting, "Translink Governance Review," Vancouver: March 2013, 12.
[139] Capital Region Board, "Inter-municipal Transit Governance Study and Implementation Plan: Interim Report to the Transit Committee," 25.
[140] Ibid, 33.

while individual operators maintain control of service and operations. This commission could include the entire region or a sub-set of municipalities interested in inter-municipal transit, programs and facilities.[141] If this commission were independent of the CRB Transit Committee, some interconnectivity with the CRB would inevitably have to exist, since transit and land-use are interconnected and both are at the very core of the CRB's existence.

The regional commission model was identified as having the greatest chance of "addressing many of the barriers to implementing the approved Inter-Municipal Transit Network Plan",[142] the concept is that a commission would be designed to provide the best transit services possible, but also the best leadership with senior governments and opportunities for secured funding. This situation would involve significant direction from the province, as a commission model would necessitate provincial approval; the Bow Valley Regional Transit Commission has set a precedent, and the necessary "legislative authority [for a commission] is recognized in the *Municipal Government Act*".[143] Of the many complexities involved with setting up a new commission for regional transit in the Alberta Capital Region, the Interim Report on Governance suggests it best to focus on the ultimate end goal rather than stumbling through several stages, each with their own complex options and directions. This means that ongoing provincial oversight involved with a regional transit commission must serve to depoliticize regional planning through an "all-in" approach, whereby all three transit operators take part in regional service, in order to capture the benefits of avoiding boundary issues. The three transit operators face significant risk and opportunity in this arrangement, however the latitude offered in a commission structure means that beyond the financial aspects of this arrangement, a

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[141] Capital Region Board, "Inter-municipal Transit Governance Study and Implementation Plan: Interim Report to the Transit Committee," 26.
[142] Ibid, 34.
[143] Ibid, 26.

more complete support mechanism for strategic plans and long term vision for transit in the Alberta Capital Region can be realized.

The Interim Report on governance suggests the following steps be taken to explore a commission model: "agency engagement", "five-year service and business plans", and "stakeholder engagement". The feasibility study of inter-municipal transit that is currently underway serves to accomplish much of the agency engagement, and is expected to move the three municipal transit operators closer to development of five year business and service plans. At this critical juncture, the most difficult aspects of realizing inter-municipal transit remain centered upon the CRB's ability to act in resource provision and policy implementation capacities, which it currently does not have. Any advocacy and policy development that takes place at the CRB will be largely irrelevant unless it is backed by provincial legislation and funding. Municipal elections take place in Alberta in the fall of 2013; given that transit has been a cause championed by many local politicians, and a long term planning issue that is sure to face new mayors and councils, one positive element is that this matter is securely on the regional agenda. What remains to be seen is the extent to which Premier Redford and her government take seriously the role for provincial oversight and guidance; Redford has been clear that her vision for Alberta's cities includes public transit. Redford is, however, very much about the status quo, and has been identified in the media as a fiscal conservative on numerous Edmonton issues.[144] With regional cooperation occurring in a more functional manner than it has in decades, a very significant piece of the inter-municipal transit puzzle at this point remains with the province, in the form of legislative ability for the CRB to plan, fund, own, implement, and operate transit services and facilities, which

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[144] David Staples, "Alison Redford's vision for Alberta cities: culture, public transit, inner city development, renewal of urban centres, community schools." *Edmonton Journal.* April 19, 2012.

needs to be established by the Province.[145]

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[145] Capital Region Board, "Inter-municipal Transit Governance Study and Implementation Plan: Interim Report to the Transit Committee," 12.

<u>Conclusions</u>

It is of paramount importance that the Alberta Capital Region has a clear, mandated implementation plan and an arrangement for managing public transit infrastructure and service delivery. The most important considerations in regards to inter-municipal transit for the Alberta Capital Region into the future relate to the structure of regional governance, in alignment with a realistic assessment of cost sharing and service delivery for regional growth strategies. These strategies must strive to deliver the best quality services and forward thinking policies for urban development in the Edmonton Metropolitan region. Repeated messaging from politicians and citizens alike over the past decade has underscored the need for the region to undertake regional planning as a "deliberate social activity that seeks to attain an array of goals through an orderly process of debate, analyses, and a set of proposals".[146] Unfortunately, the CRB as an agent in multilevel governance and regional planning does not have the appropriate tools at its disposal to ensure these efforts come to fruition.

One concept to revisit and consider in matters pertaining to the CRB, transit and land-use in the Alberta Capital Region is the general satisfaction with the status quo in Alberta. Since this is a politically comfortable situation, it becomes difficult for a regional body tasked with making logical planning decisions to affect change through policy implementation. In terms of inter-municipal transit in the Alberta Capital Region, any tangible result will undoubtedly involve a legislation enabling the CRB to implement change directly or to work alongside a regional transit commission. Past unwillingness to change the awkward dynamics of the Alberta Capital Region has led to a sphere of distrust between local agents; given the present climate of local cooperation and

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[146] Gerald Hodge and Ira M. Robinson, *Planning Canadian Regions* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2001), 18.

potential willingness to approach inter-municipal transit as a serious topic, a mechanism for breaking this cyclical partiality to the status quo must be found.

Harris' review of transit as a public good, and the importance of delivering transit as a public service, has been particularly insightful. His work highlights the importance of understanding public transit's role in direct, perpetual competition with the automobile,[147] the impacts of this relationship and their pertinence to public administrators. Harris also serves to reiterate the linkage between land use and transportation, and encompasses this relation in a cyclical relationship whereby land use influences citizens' trips, thus determining their transportation needs and shaping the urban landscape based on transportation facilities, which influences accessibility and affects land value.[148] The most effective way to raise revenue and ridership (most especially discretionary commuter ridership) is to improve an individual's transit experience; in the case of Edmonton, this could be achieved through a transit system that truly reflects the region's travel needs and more effectively addresses land-use, population growth and travel patterns.

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[147] Harris, "Governing Spaces: Urban Transit, Land Development and the Local State," 282.
[148] Ibid, 286.

Appendix A: List of Interviews & Contacts

Key contacts and interviews for the purposes of this report included:

- Don Iveson, Edmonton City Councillor

  o Chair, Capital Region Board Transit Committee

- Peter Wlodarczak, Strathcona County Councillor

  o Member, Capital Region Board Transit Committee

- Len Bracko, St. Albert City Councillor

  o Member, Capital Region Board Transit Committee

- Sharon Shuya, Manager of Regional Projects

  o Capital Region Board (via e-mail)

- Leslie Taylor, Banff Town Councillor

  o Chair, Bow Valley Regional Transit Commission

- Ettore Iannacito, Regional Transit Program Manager

  o Calgary Regional Partnership

- David Cooper, Senior Transit Planner

  o Calgary Transit

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