

Metro ranks well in transit report

JEFF NAGEL
SURREY LEADER (Black Press)

Metro Vancouver has ranked second with a B grade in the first-ever national rankings of sustainable urban transportation practices.

The region trailed first-place Victoria in GreenApple Canada's Smart Transportation Rankings.

Abbotsford, which got a D grade, was ranked 14th out of the 18 urban areas in Canada surveyed.

The rankings, released by the Appleton Foundation and UBC's Sauder School of Business Friday, aim to foster debate on ways to help fight climate change.

The report credits Metro Vancouver's strong efforts to manage its high rate of growth and the move toward higher-density housing for the high ranking.

But it slams the high cost of transit charged by Trans-Link here as "one of the most expensive" systems

in Canada. A three-zone monthly pass now costs \$130 and is slated to climb to \$136 in January.

That would have to be slashed by more than half to \$62 per month in order to meet Appleton's target for transit affordability, which compares monthly pass costs to household income.

Authors also credit the region's low number of vehicles per capita and the move toward a hybrid taxi fleet, with 10 per cent of cabs and limos converted so far.

"Vancouver is leading the way for environmentally sustainable transportation in Canada," their report said.

It lauds Abbotsford's "ambitious" community plan, which aims to densify the downtown core and already developed areas, while improving transportation options.

Abbotsford (and the surrounding areas like Mission that were included) actually outperformed Metro Vancouver on some measures.

Local anti-idling bylaws cover 78 per cent of the area's population, compared to just 33 per cent in Metro Vancouver.

The foundation's goal is 100 per cent.

About 65 per cent of new housing in both areas are higher-density apartment or row housing units, compared to a target of 89 per cent.

Greater Vancouver has a higher proportion of existing apartment and row housing.

Vancouver's transit fleet boasts 23 per cent alternative fuel vehicles versus zero in Abbotsford and a target of nearly 40 per cent.

However Abbotsford's 22 per cent of alternate-fuel municipal vehicles outshone Greater Vancouver's eight per cent.

Other targets call for free transit in urban cores and a higher level of employer-issued transit passes (4.1 per cent compared to 1.2 per cent now in Vancouver and zero in Abbotsford).

