

AN OVERVIEW OF PUBLIC TRANSIT IN CANADA'S THREE LARGEST URBAN AREAS

BACKGROUND

In Canada, public transit is primarily a provincial/ territorial and municipal responsibility given the Constitutional division of powers. The federal government has provided significant support to transit in recent years in recognition of transit's importance in addressing issues such as congestion and environmental concerns. However, the federal government also has some responsibilities for public transit, such as regulating services that run on federally regulated rail lines.

Provincial support of public transit is inconsistent across the country, with the largest provinces containing the biggest cities generally providing the greatest support in terms of financial support, legislation, and regulations/ requirements. Other provinces and territories provide more limited or no support to public transit.

Overall, the planning, funding and operation of public transit is the responsibility of municipalities or regional governments.

FINANCIAL SITUATION

Urban transit systems in Canada are publicly owned and need operation subsidies for services. With growing cities, increasing congestion, a growing recognition that unlimited new highways are not a solution, and environmental concerns, investments in transit are increasingly popular with the public. However, local governments, particularly large urban centers with expensive infrastructure needs (subways, light rail, busways) are not in a position to provide all the funding, and look to the provincial and federal governments to contribute.

GOVERNANCE SITUATION

Canada's three largest urban centers in Canada are not single city entities. They consist of a core large city, with numerous low density suburban communities surrounding them. As the core city also serves as the main business district, traffic congestion and resulting externalities have been a problem for decades, although the situation does appear to be getting worse. The suburban communities tend to grow in population at a higher rate than the core cities, and new commuting patterns are emerging with greater suburban competition to the central business districts, resulting in cross regional suburban to suburban commuting that not only adds to traffic congestion, but makes it more difficult to provide a transit option.

In recognition of the need to have coordination transportation planning, and more recently, integrated regional land use and transportation planning, three provinces have established regional transit authorities to oversee transit planning and operations (or are in the process of establishing). Some of these bodies have responsibility of both the transit systems and parts of the road networks.

CANADIAN REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITIES

1. Greater Vancouver Regional District: The Greater Vancouver Transportation Authority (TransLink) <http://www.translink.bc.ca/>

Cities and Populations Served

The Greater Vancouver Regional District (GVRD) consists of 21 municipalities and has an approximate population of 2.1 million people.

Mandate

The Greater Vancouver Transportation Authority was created by Provincial legislation and came into being on April 1, 1999. The Authority's mandate is to plan, finance, operate, and manage a regional transportation system that moves people and goods and supports the region's growth strategy, air quality and economic development objectives.

Governance

TransLink is a regional corporation that has a 15-member Board of Directors comprising 12 locally elected mayors or councilors appointed by the GVRD on a sub-regional basis and 3 Members of the Legislative Assembly from the Greater Vancouver area or cabinet ministers with portfolios related to transportation or urban affairs appointed by the Provincial Government.

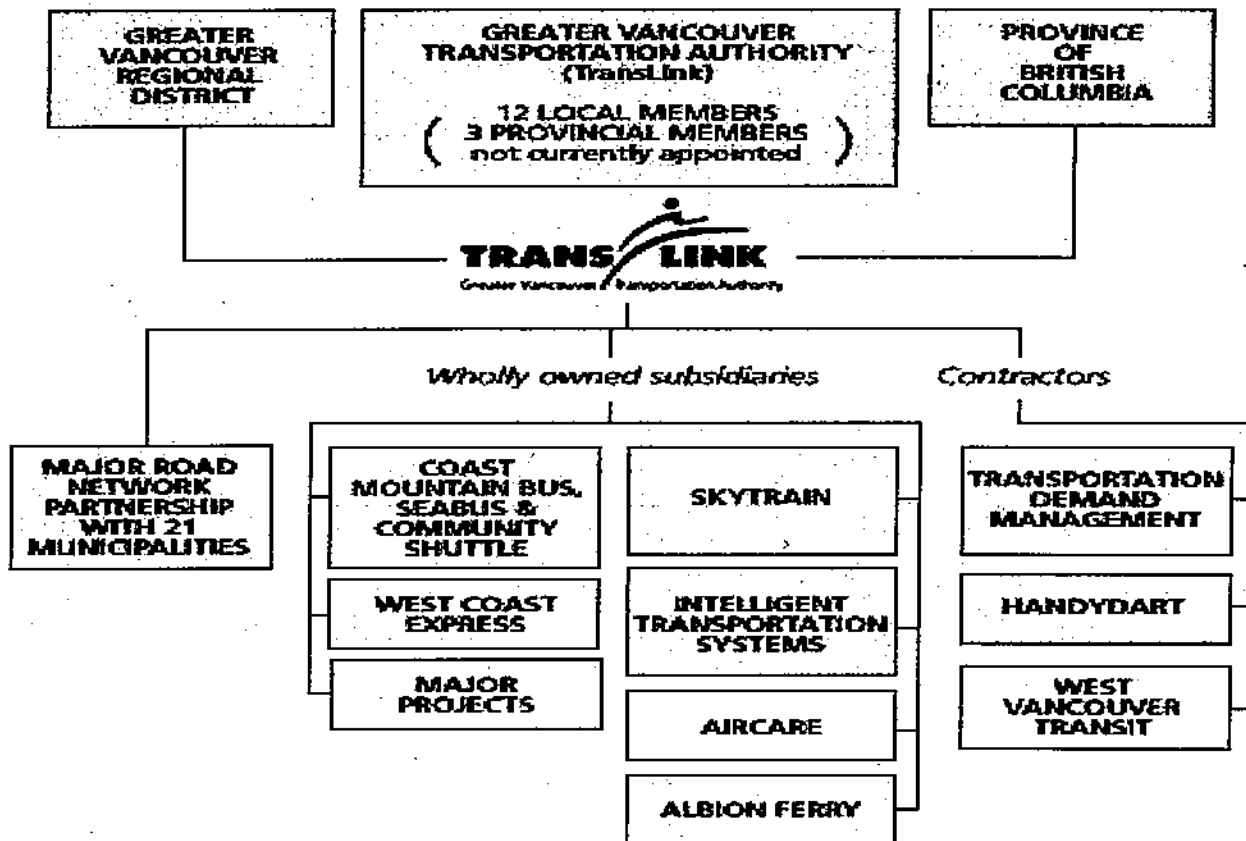
TransLink has a statutory mandate to fulfill specified obligations related to managing and operating the regional transportation system, and is empowered to do so. The Authority may enter into contracts; adopt bylaws and recommend regulations; raise revenues through taxes, levies, tolls, user fees and motor vehicle charges, and expropriate land.

The legislation specifies that the Authority must adopt a Strategic Transportation Plan (STP) that identifies the actions that it will undertake during the plan period including a long-range capital and financial plan. The authority is required to consult before taking any proposed action. The Authority must submit its STP, and any amendments to it, for ratification by resolution of the Greater Vancouver Regional District Board of Directors.

Responsibilities

TransLink's responsibilities include public transit (rail, bus and ferry), a major road network, transportation demand management and vehicle emissions testing.

Current Organizational Structure



Funding

The Authority has the ability to raise revenues for its purpose. The legislation identifies a mix of revenues sources that include fuel taxes, residential and commercial property taxes, levies on residential electricity accounts, parking sales and area taxes, and user fees including tolls on new facilities and transit fares. The Authority may also borrow and is considered a municipality for the purposes of federal government assistance through infrastructure and other programs.

Operations

TransLink uses partners, subsidiaries and contractors to deliver road, transit or transportation demand management services. With respect to transit, TransLink determines service levels and fares, procures and owns the assets, markets the services and in the case of subsidiaries appoints the board of directors and in the case of contractors, manages competitive procurement processes and operating agreements.

Government Agency or Transit Operator

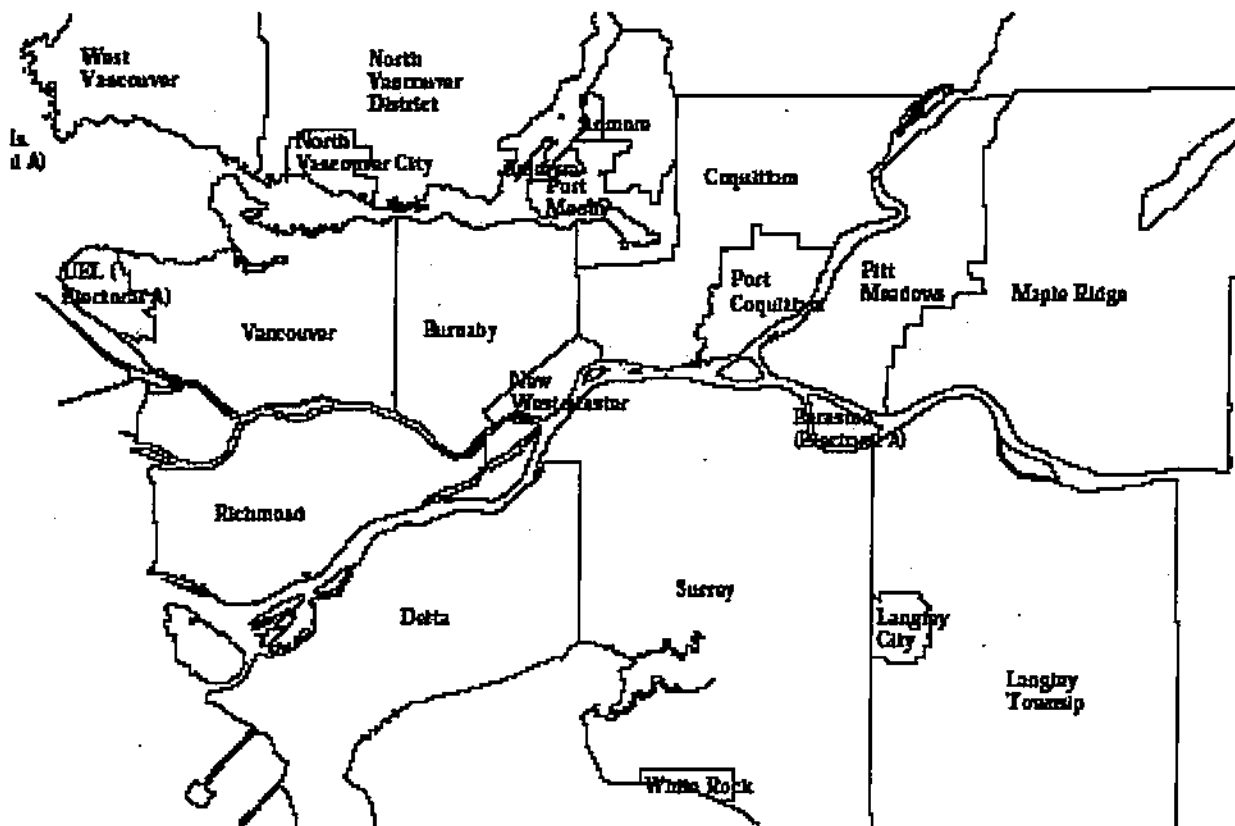
While the Authority's mandate includes roads and transit and it is not the direct operator of services, it does control all of the operational policy levers that would apply. These include determining the level of service, fares, marketing, owning and procuring the assets and raising revenues. TransLink is the sole operating authority for transit service in the transportation region (GVRD) and is able enter into service agreements to provide or receive services from adjoining regions (Fraser Valley and Squamish-Lillooet).

Upcoming Changes

The Provincial Government has recently announced it intends to make changes to TransLink. The changes focus on the appointment and composition of the Board, its relationship to the Greater Vancouver Regional District and its revenue measures. Legislation is to be introduced by the Province in the coming month and the changes will come into effect in October 2007.

There is nothing in the new legislation that would at this time that TransLink's mandate and core responsibilities would change. However, the changes would make TransLink more responsive to provincial priorities rather than local ones. The levy on parking stalls is expected to be eliminated as a funding option, as could the Hydro levy.

Map of Greater Vancouver Regional District



2. Greater Toronto Area: Greater Toronto Transportation Authority

Cities and Populations Served

The Greater Toronto Area (GTA) consists of a number of communities including Toronto, York Region, Halton Region (cities of Burlington, Oakville, Milton), Durham Region (cities of Ajax, Oshawa, Pickering) and Peel Region (cities of Brampton, Caledon and Mississauga) with a combined population of approximately 5.5 million people. The Hamilton area borders the GTA on the southwest with a population of approximately half a million people. In addition to the provincial inter-regional transit service (GO Transit), each city has their own transit system, which are largely uncoordinated. This lack of coordination is one of the reasons for the creation of the Greater Toronto Transportation Authority (GTTA). The various modes of transit used within this large region include rail, subway, streetcars and buses.

Overview

The GTTA was created by Provincial legislation in June 2006. The Chair and Vice-Chair were named to the GTTA in November 2006 and the remaining board members were confirmed in May 2007. The Board has met twice to begin addressing its mandate and responsibilities.

It is a very new organization and as such has not undertaken any major work or initiative on transit in the GTA to the best of our knowledge.

It should be noted that the Province of Ontario has developed an extensive growth plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe, a much larger area consisting of Toronto, Hamilton, Kawartha Lakes, Guelph, Peterborough, Barrie, Orillia, and Brantford, the regional municipalities of Halton, Peel, York, Durham, Waterloo and Niagara and the counties of Haldimand, Brant, Wellington, Dufferin, Simcoe, Northumberland and Peterborough.

Mandate:

The GTTA will be providing leadership in the co-ordination, planning, financing and development of an integrated, multi-modal transportation network that conforms with transportation policies of the Places to Grow Act 2005.

The GTTA Act establishes three divisions:

- Transportation Procurement Division
- Farecard Division
- GO Transit

Duties:

- Create a transportation plan and coordinate and set priorities for its implementation of the plan
- The plan must:
 - consider all modes of transportation including highways, railways, local transit systems, GO Transit, cycling and walking.
 - Promote the integration of local transit systems with each other and GO Transit
 - Work toward easing congestion and commute times
 - Work toward reducing transportation-related emissions of smog precursors and greenhouse gases
 - Include a rolling five-year capital plan
 - Include an investment strategy for the rolling five-year capital plan
- Fund, or arrange and manage the funding for integrated transportation across the regional transportation area.
- Promote and facilitate coordinated decision-making and investment among municipalities to ensure efficient and cost-effective.
- Promote the safety and efficiency of transportation corridors and develop a comprehensive emergency and security plan for local transit systems.

Governance

The GTTA is a provincial corporation governed by an 11-member Board of Directors comprised as follows:

- Two persons appointed by the province as the Chair and Vice-Chair
- Four persons recommended by the City of Toronto
- One person from each of the Regions of Halton, Durham, York and Peel and City of Hamilton
- The directors are appointed for a staggered term by the province

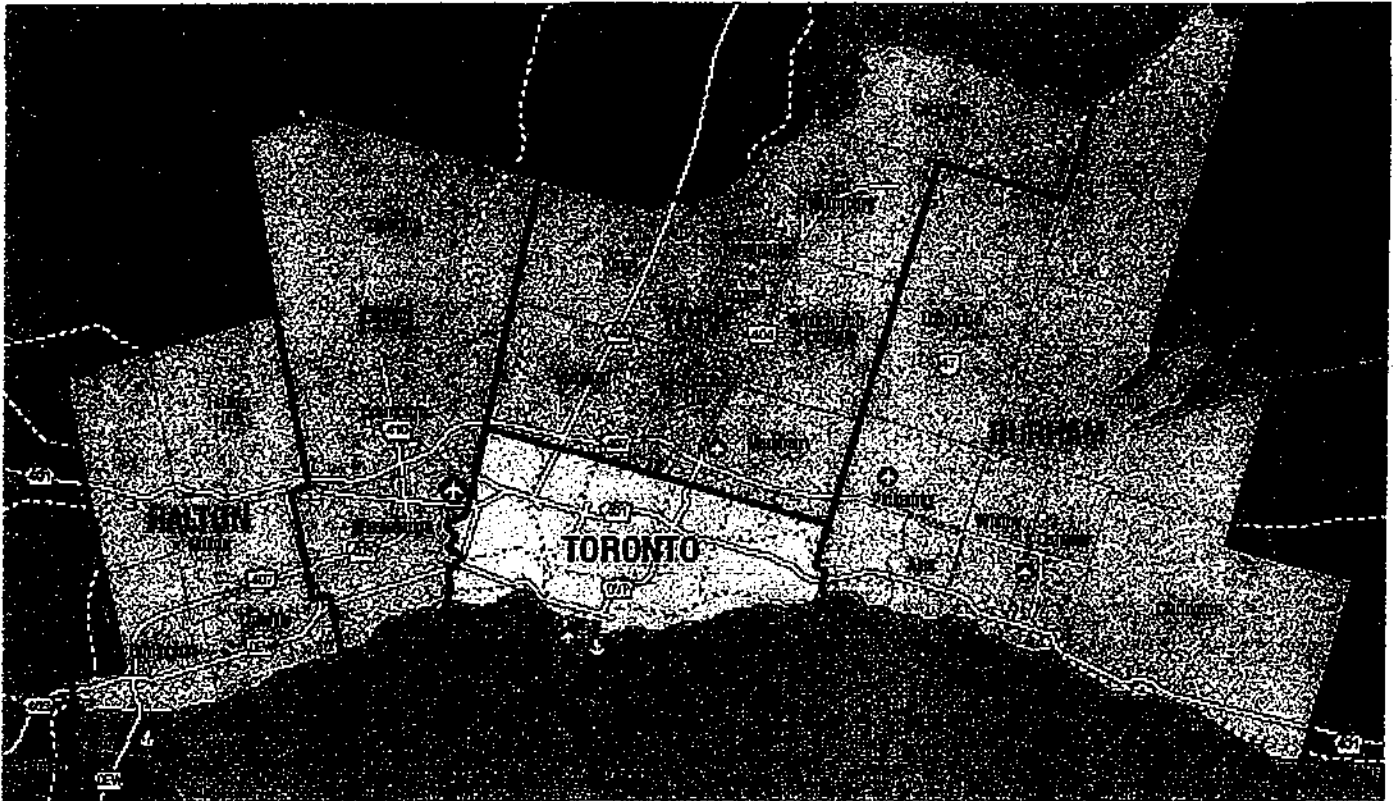
The corporation has the capacity, rights, powers and privileges of a natural person for carrying out its objects (except where limited by sections of the GTTA Act), including the power to hold, manage, operate, fund and deliver any local transit system or other transportation service within and outside the GTTA region by agreement with the municipalities receiving the service and to develop and implement strategies and programs relating to the demand for transit and transportation.

The GTTA may establish subsidiaries on approval of the Province.

The Corporation may expropriate land for the purpose of carrying out its objectives.

Responsibilities:

- The GTTA shall review its transportation plan at least every 10 years to ensure compliance with provincial plans and policies.
- Each year, the GTTA must submit a budget, business plan and annual report to the Ontario Minister of Transportation.

Map of Greater Toronto Area

3. Greater Montreal Area: Agence métropolitaine de transport <http://www.amt.qc.ca/>

Overview

L'Agence métropolitaine de transport (AMT) is a regional authority under the Quebec Ministry of Transport. Established in 1996, its territory consists of 83 municipalities and the Kanawake native reserve in the Montreal region. Total population for the region is approximately 3.2 million.

Its role is to plan, coordinate, integrate and promote public transit services, in collaboration with its partners, the transit agencies, the Quebec Ministry of Transport, the cities and Metropolitan Montreal. It also contributes to improving the effectiveness of routes that are of regional importance, and is responsible for the planning and expansion of the subway system.

Further, AMT contributes the financing of 14 transit systems in the Montreal region and contributes to the financing of 9 transit systems for the handicapped. It also offers to its partners its cooperation and its expertise.

Mission

AMT's mission is to improve the efficiency of personal travel in the metropolitan area by promoting the use of public transit. AMT is therefore responsible for the planning, coordination, integration and promotion of public transit services (bus, metro, taxi-bus, light rail transit, carpooling, commuter trains and adapted transit), as well as for improving the efficiency of roads of metropolitan significance. It offers its partners its cooperation, expertise, services, and know-how.

AMT is also responsible for the operation of 5 suburban commuter trains, 2 express bus routes, 15 stations, 59 park lots, and 83.4 kilometers of reserved transit lanes in the Montreal region.

Governance

AMT's board of directors consists of seven people. Four of them are appointed by the Government of Québec. The Communauté métropolitaine de Montréal appoints the remaining three Directors from among its own members. The Chairperson and Director General of AMT chairs the meetings of the Board.

Responsibility for public transit in the Montreal region is shared between two levels: local and regional. AMT's decisions directly affect the local transit authorities.

Financing

AMT finances its activities through a variety of means:

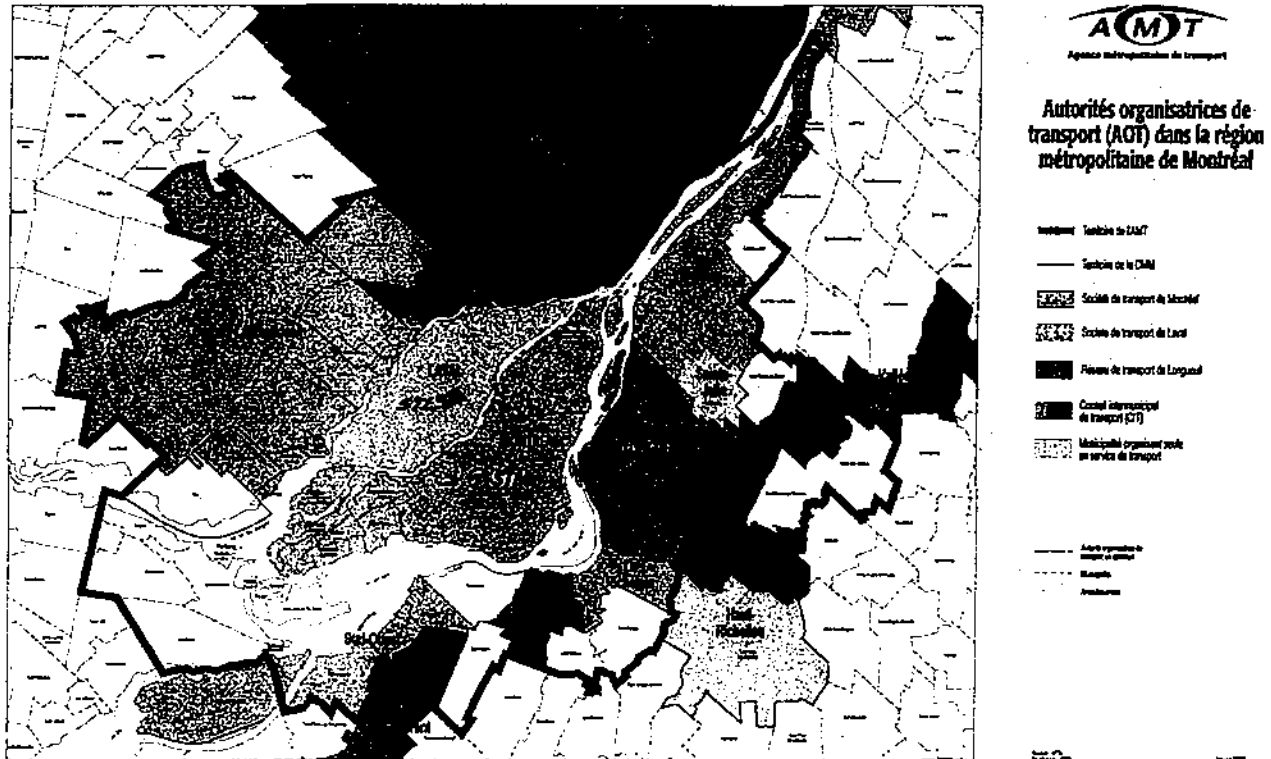
- Fares from transit services – 44.3 %;
- Government transfers from automobile taxes (1.5 cents per litre of gas sold in the region and a \$30 license registration fee) – 39.7 %;
- Municipal contributions to the suburban commuter trains and regional express buses – 13.4%
- Other revenues, such as commercial revenues and interest – 1.5 %;
- Provincial subsidies for the debt servicing of the suburban commuter trains, regional equipment, as well as adapted transit – 1.1%.

Activities

Activities of the AMT are numerous and complementary:

- Responsible for planning, coordination, integration and promoting transit services, as well as the improvement of the roads' effectiveness which have a metropolitan significance;
- Studies the feasibility of new services such as light rail train, subway, bus rapid transit when projects are authorized;
- Develops, manages and finances the commuter trains' network, bus services, as well as the equipment of metropolitan scale like park and ride lots, reserved lanes, and bus stations
- Assists businesses in the establishment of employer-based programs (transportation demand management measures);
- Controls fare integration and fare policies at the metropolitan scale;
- Issues the transit passes, establishes the fares and distributes the incomes between the transit providers;
- Plans and coordinates the integration of the adapted transit services which are offered on the territory by various organizations;
- Gives a financial support for the local organizations of transport which offer;
- Manages staff, material and financial resources, operation and fixed assets, under a unique approach and partnership.

Map of Montreal Region



INTERNATIONAL EXAMPLES

In 2004, Transport Canada undertook a study of international governance structure for public transit. Although not a comprehensive review, the information may be of use to the Santiago situation, particularly the London, United Kingdom example, where buses are run under private sector franchise and regulated by the regional transport agency, Transport for London. The study, entitled *Review of International Urban Transportation Policy Frameworks, Strategies and Governance Models* is available electronically on our website at: <http://www.tc.gc.ca/programs/environment/UTSP/docs/TC%20Report%20Final.pdf>

ANALYSIS OF REGIONAL TRANSIT/ TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITIES

Each region could provide advice and examples on a wide variety of transit issues, such as security, fare payment, technologies, etc. The GTA is a region of comparable size with Santiago, but the GTTA is still a very new organization. Nevertheless, provincial officials may have valuable insights regarding the issue of regional integration, the challenges they face, and how they plan to address them. While TransLink is the best Canadian model for integrated urban transit system, AMT is also a very advanced regional entity with considerable experience in transportation demand management.

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