BACKGROUND REPORT

Transportation Today

January 2026

Let's move, Courtenay

STRATEGIC TRANSPORTATION PLAN

Let's move, Courtenay

STRATEGIC TRANSPORTATION PLAN

The City of Courtenay respectfully acknowledges that the lands to which the Strategic Transportation Plan apply are on the unceded territory of the K'ómoks First Nation, the traditional keepers of this land.

Why Do We Make Land Acknowledgments?

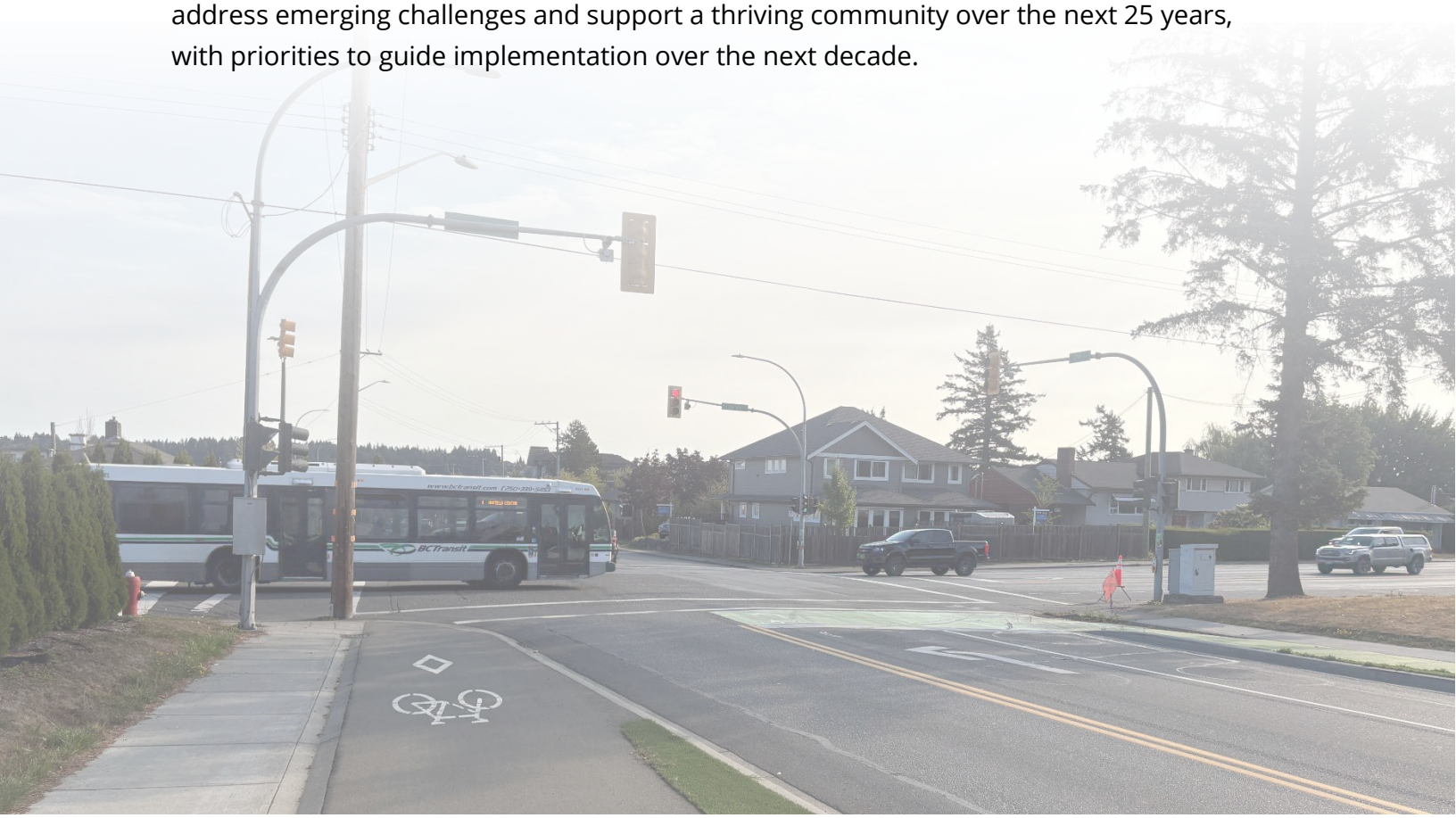
Acknowledging human relationships to place is an ancient Indigenous practice that continues today. In the spirit of reconciliation, the City of Courtenay makes this land acknowledgment to raise awareness of ongoing Indigenous presence and land rights in the territory that includes and encompasses Courtenay. It invites us – a settler government – to reflect on how we might be perpetuating colonial processes that are ongoing and from which we have benefited, as well as the changes we will make to honour the Indigenous peoples and their lands that we inhabit.

Contents

1.0 Introduction

The City of Courtenay is located in the heart of the Comox Valley, within the Comox Valley Regional District (CVRD) on the ancestral lands of K'omoks First Nation. The city is the urban and cultural centre of the region, while offering access to amazing beaches, mountains, and forests throughout the Comox Valley. Today, Courtenay is growing quickly and consistently as its reputation as desirable place to live, work, and visit expands. Population and employment growth has significant implications for transportation infrastructure demands, local housing needs, community sustainability, and economic development opportunities.

The Strategic Transportation Plan (STP) is a long-term strategy that will guide the development of safe, connected and efficient multi-modal transportation options. It is a road map for the community to establish our vision for improved and expanded mobility, while also guiding the City, its partners, and the development community on actions and priorities for investment in our transportation networks. It aims to effectively and efficiently address emerging challenges and support a thriving community over the next 25 years, with priorities to guide implementation over the next decade.



1.1 Why the Strategic Transportation Plan?

The Strategic Transportation Plan (STP) will be Courtenay's key guide to inform and shape the city's transportation future. The STP will be our commitment to:

- Provide the **leadership** needed to support a sustainable future with realistic transportation choices.
- Work in **partnership** with businesses; educational institutions; community organizations; transportation providers; and municipal, regional, Indigenous, and senior governments.
- **Invest in sustainable transportation modes** that are consistent with City's priorities.
- **Integrate with other directions** as identified through Courtenay's key plans, policies, and initiatives, some of which are highlighted in the figure below.
- **Clearly communicate** the City's transportation priorities to residents, businesses, and partners.

With our successes from the previous plan, we recognize that new transportation challenges are emerging from recent legislative changes, accelerating growth in Courtenay, and shifting priorities after the COVID-19 pandemic. We are revisiting the key directions in the 2019 Transportation Master Plan to ensure they align with current priorities and are proactive in identifying transportation investments to that support safe, comfortable, and efficient mobility options in our community.

1.1.1 Changes Since the Previous Transportation Master Plan

The previous Transportation Master Plan, Connecting Courtenay, was prepared in 2019. Connecting Courtenay has successfully guided investments across the city's transportation networks since its adoption. Since 2019, Courtenay has undergone significant change and many of previous plan's priorities have been achieved or are currently being developed. More recently, key community planning initiatives and provincial legislative changes have driven the need to review and refresh the City's transportation vision and priorities.

The following are some of the key changes over the past five years that are shaping the directions for the Strategic Transportation Plan.

Updating Key Planning and Policy Documents

- **Official Community Plan**. A new community-led OCP was adopted in 2022 with updated policy guidance that has a greater focus on sustainable transportation. The OCP is currently undergoing further updates to align with provincial legislative requirements.
- **Cycling Network Plan**. In 2023, the City created an implementation strategy to identify the five-year priorities for implementing cycling network improvements.
- **Traffic Calming Guide and Policy**. Adopted in 2024, the Traffic Calming Guide and Policy provides a clear and consistent process to implement traffic calming infrastructure across Courtenay.

- **Subdivision and Servicing Bylaw**. Updated in 2023 to revise cycling facility design standards across Courtenay to align with the updated implementation plan for the City's cycling network.
- **Alignment with Provincial Legislation**. Courtenay's planning and policy documents, including the OCP and Zoning Bylaw, are being updated to ensure they align with provincial directives to support a diverse and growing housing supply across B.C. Regular updates to comply with legislation will ensure that the City continues thoughtfully incorporate new growth, focusing on infill housing and transportation networks that support higher density development.

Investing in Transportation Infrastructure & Services

- **Cycling Network Improvements**. New and upgraded cycling facilities have been pursued on 5th Street, 17th Street, Back Road and Fitzgerald Avenue to help more people feel safe and comfortable cycling in Courtenay.
- **Street Network Buildout**. Neighbourhood street networks continue to be built in emerging communities like Crown Isle and Buckstone.
- **Pedestrian Enhancements.** The new 6th Street Active Transportation Bridge is currently being constructed to help connect people walking and cycling between East and West Courtenay. Grant funding was secured to fund the new Dingwall Steps, while sidewalk improvements are planned or complete on Ryan Road, 5th Street, and 17th Street, as examples.

- **Transit Exchanges**. Three new transit exchanges are planned for Courtenay in collaboration with the CVRD and BC Transit. The North Island College exchange is currently under construction, with new exchanges in South Courtenay and Downtown Courtenay to be advanced in 2026.
- **Transit Service**. The Route 1 bus was established in 2021, providing frequent transit service between South Courtenay and Downtown Comox.
- **Neighbourhood Traffic Calming**. Traffic calming improvements have been implemented in East Courtenay and the Old Orchard neighbourhood, with further change contemplated through the new Traffic Calming Guide and Policy.

Why is Transportation Important?

Our transportation networks play a key role in how we experience Courtenay, influencing modal choices, trip distance and duration, safety, trip costs, and the overall travel experience. Transportation also affects our broader community, influencing the health, sustainability, and livability of the city. The STP can help Courtenay to continue to evolve and address many of the important outcomes from thriving transportation systems, including:

Safety. Transportation networks should allow people to feel safe while moving around Courtenay. Well-designed infrastructure can reduce the risk of collisions and improve perceptions of safety, benefiting everyone in our community.

Affordability. Housing and transportation costs are often the two greatest household expenditures. Affordable transportation options such as walking, transit, and cycling can support residents of all incomes to access daily needs and economic opportunities.

Sustainability. Transportation is a big contributor to greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, with motor vehicles being the primary source. Investing in and promoting sustainable and active and shared modes of travel can reduce vehicle trips, congestion, air pollution, and GHG emissions.

Health and Wellbeing. Transportation and planning policies can effectively encourage physical activity. With more active transportation and transit options, people can be more active. Being more physically active can improve health, increase social interactions and community cohesion, and reduce risk of chronic diseases.

Economy. An efficient transportation network benefits our local and regional economies by seamlessly delivering goods, supporting employee and customer access, and creating desirable conditions for new businesses.

1.2 Plan Process

The City will work extensively with the community and interest holders to develop a comprehensive plan that serves as the guide for planning and implementing transportation improvements in Courtenay.

Initiated in August 2025, the Strategic Transportation Plan will be developed over a five-phase process that integrates background research, technical analysis, community and partner engagement, visioning and goal setting, and policy and implementation planning. These stages are shown below:

2.0 Shaping Influences

2.1 First Nations

The City of Courtenay is located on the traditional territory of the K'ómoks First Nation. According to the 2021 Census, 2,110 people, or approximately 7.6% of the City's residents, identify as having Indigenous identity. The City recognizes the ongoing presence, rights, and contributions of the K'ómoks people, and works to foster respectful relationships and meaningful engagement. The City's plans and initiatives seek to build upon directions identified by the K'ómoks First Nation, with the aim of identifying shared priorities and strengthening connections between communities, and the Strategic Transportation Plan will be no different.

2.2 Our Community

2.2.1 Location + Area

Courtenay is located on the central eastern coast of Vancouver Island and spans approximately 32 square kilometres. The City is bordered by the Town of Comox to the northeast, the Village of Cumberland to the west, and is surrounded by the larger Comox Valley Regional District, as shown in **Map 1,** and neighbours K'omoks First Nation's reserve lands. Courtenay features a mix of urban and rural landscapes, with a variety of distinct neighbourhoods that contribute to the character and vibrancy of the community.

At the heart of Courtenay is its downtown core. The area is valued for its walkability and proximity to key amenities, including shops, restaurants, parks, and public facilities, making it an accessible and active part of the community. Adjacent to downtown is Old Orchard, one of Courtenay's older residential neighbourhoods, which maintains a close connection to the city's civic and commercial centre. In contrast, areas such as Crown Isle and South Courtenay (e.g. The Ridge) represent the city's more recent growth and evolving residential patterns.

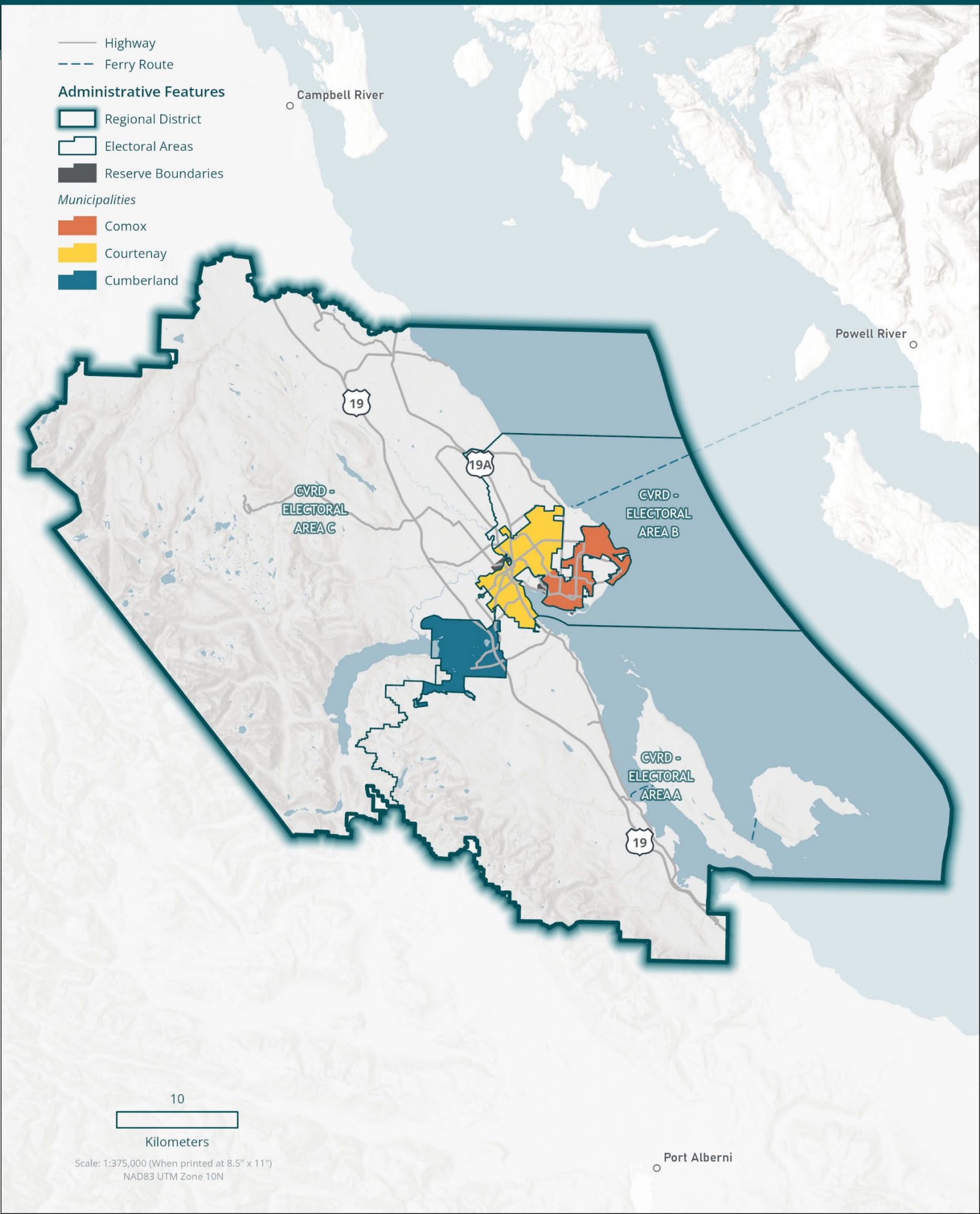
The City's Official Community Plan (OCP) identifies several Primary and Secondary Growth Areas, where current and future higher density will be focused, including:

- **Primary Growth Areas**: Downtown Town Centre, Harmston Avenue Civic Precinct, Downtown Core, Lower and Upper Ryan Road Town Centres, and the Cliffe Avenue Urban Corridor.
- **Secondary Growth Areas:** Tin Town, Lake Trail, and McPhee Neighbourhood Centres, along with multi-residential zones adjacent to Ryan Road.

These neighbourhoods and corridors are central to Courtenay's strategy for creating walkable, complete communities that offer diverse housing, access to daily needs, and efficient infrastructure. These growth areas, key regional destinations, and other land use concepts are explored further in ***Section 2.2.3***.

Courtenay Strategic Transportation Plan: *Regional Context*

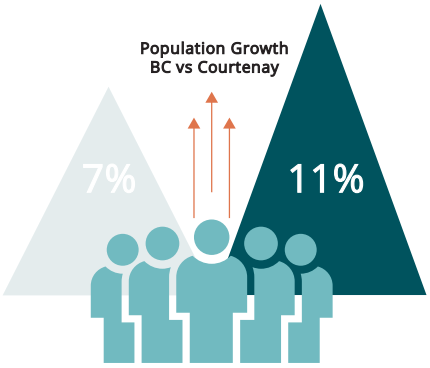
Map 1



2.2.2 Demographic Trends

Courtenay's people are central to shaping transportation choices and travel patterns. How our population could change over the life of the Strategic Transportation Plan is important to understand and will inform the plan's priorities. Based on BC Government estimates, projections, and 2021 Census data, key demographic trends for Courtenay are summarized below:

2.2.2.1 Population Trends

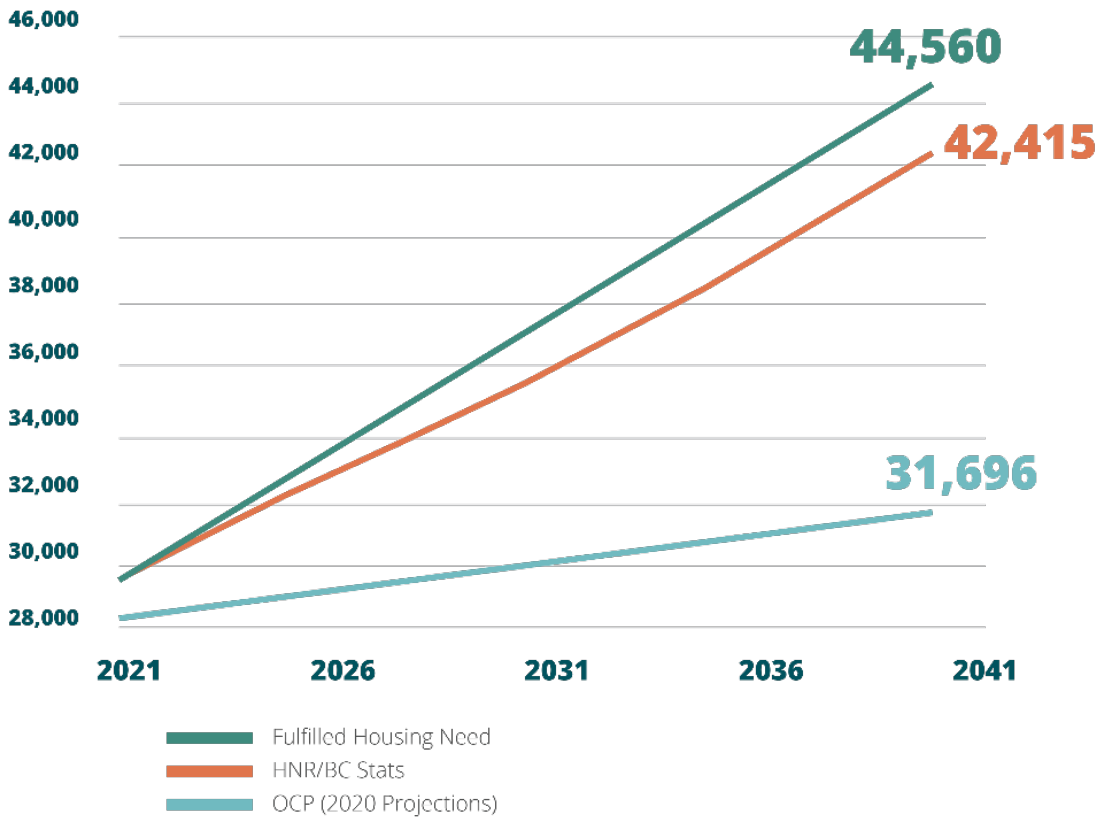


- **A Growing Community.** Courtenay's population grew 11% over five years (2016–2021), from 26,590 to 29,530, compared to 7% growth across British Columbia during the same period. This growth highlights the need for housing, services, and amenities along key multi-modal corridors that support walking, cycling, and transit for daily trips. Looking ahead, Courtenay's population is projected to grow by 44% over the next 20 years (2021–2041), reaching approximately 42,415 residents[1], as shown in **Figure 1** below. This sustained growth indicates significant pressure on transportation infrastructure and the need for proactive planning.
- **An Aging Population.** Residents aged 65 and older grew by 22% between 2016 and 2021 and are projected to increase by 41% between 2021 and 2041, with the 85+ age group expected to grow by 181% over the same 20-year period, the highest among all age cohorts. Census data shows that 28.3% of Courtenay's population is 65+, compared to 20.3% provincially, reinforcing the need for accessible and age-friendly transportation options.

[1] City of Courtenay, Housing Needs Report (2024). Retrieved from https://www.courtenay.ca/media/file/housing-needs-report-2024

- **Rapid Growth in Working-Age Adults.** The 25–44 age group grew by 20% between 2016 and 2021 and is projected to grow by 52% between 2021 and 2041, the second highest rate of growth across all age cohorts. This demographic will drive demand for efficient commuting options and active transportation networks.
- **Youth Population Growth.** The youth population (14 years or younger) in Courtenay grew by 7% between 2016 and 2021 and is projected to grow by 26% between 2021 and 2041, reinforcing the need for safe routes to schools, recreational facilities, and family-friendly transportation options.

Figure 1. Population projections (2021-2041)



2.2.2.2 Other Demographic Trends

Beyond population size and age, other demographic factors influence transportation needs and equity considerations:

- **Presence of Newcomers.** Between 2011 and 2021, Courtenay welcomed 785 new immigrants, representing 2.8% of the population, higher than Comox (1.5%), Cumberland (2.1%), and the Comox Valley Regional District (2.0%). This suggests Courtenay plays a key role in regional settlement patterns, highlighting the importance of safe, connected routes and transit options to support new residents.
- **Low-Income Households.** Approximately 11.4% of households in Courtenay fall below the low-income measure, compared to 9.6% in Cumberland, 6.9% in Comox, and 10.3% across the Comox Valley Regional District. This highlights the need for affordable and reliable transportation options, including transit and active modes, to ensure equitable access to jobs, services, and amenities.

2.2.3 Land Use + Destinations

Land use and destination patterns in Courtenay shape how people move through the city and access key services, amenities, and employment areas. Understanding the location and function of growth centres, schools, parks, and regional nodes helps inform transportation planning that supports daily travel needs and long-term mobility goals. This section outlines the major land use areas and destinations that influence transportation choices and infrastructure priorities. Many of these destinations and key growth areas are shown in **Map 2**.

Growth Centres: The City's Official Community Plan (OCP) identifies several Primary and Secondary Growth Areas where higher-density development will be focused, shaping future land use and transportation priorities in Courtenay.

- **Primary Growth Locations – Town Centres and Urban Corridors**
  - Downtown Town Centre
  - Harmston Avenue Civic Precinct
  - Downtown Core
  - Lower Ryan Road Town Centre
  - Upper Ryan Road Town Centre
  - Cliffe Avenue Urban Corridor (between 11th and Anfield Road)
- **Secondary Growth Locations – Neighbourhood Centres and Multi-Residential**
  - Tin Town Neighbourhood Centre
  - Lake Trail Neighbourhood Centre
  - McPhee Neighbourhood Centre
  - Multi-Residential adjacent to Lower Ryan Road Town Centre
  - Future Neighbourhood Centre
  - Ryan Road & Anderton Road

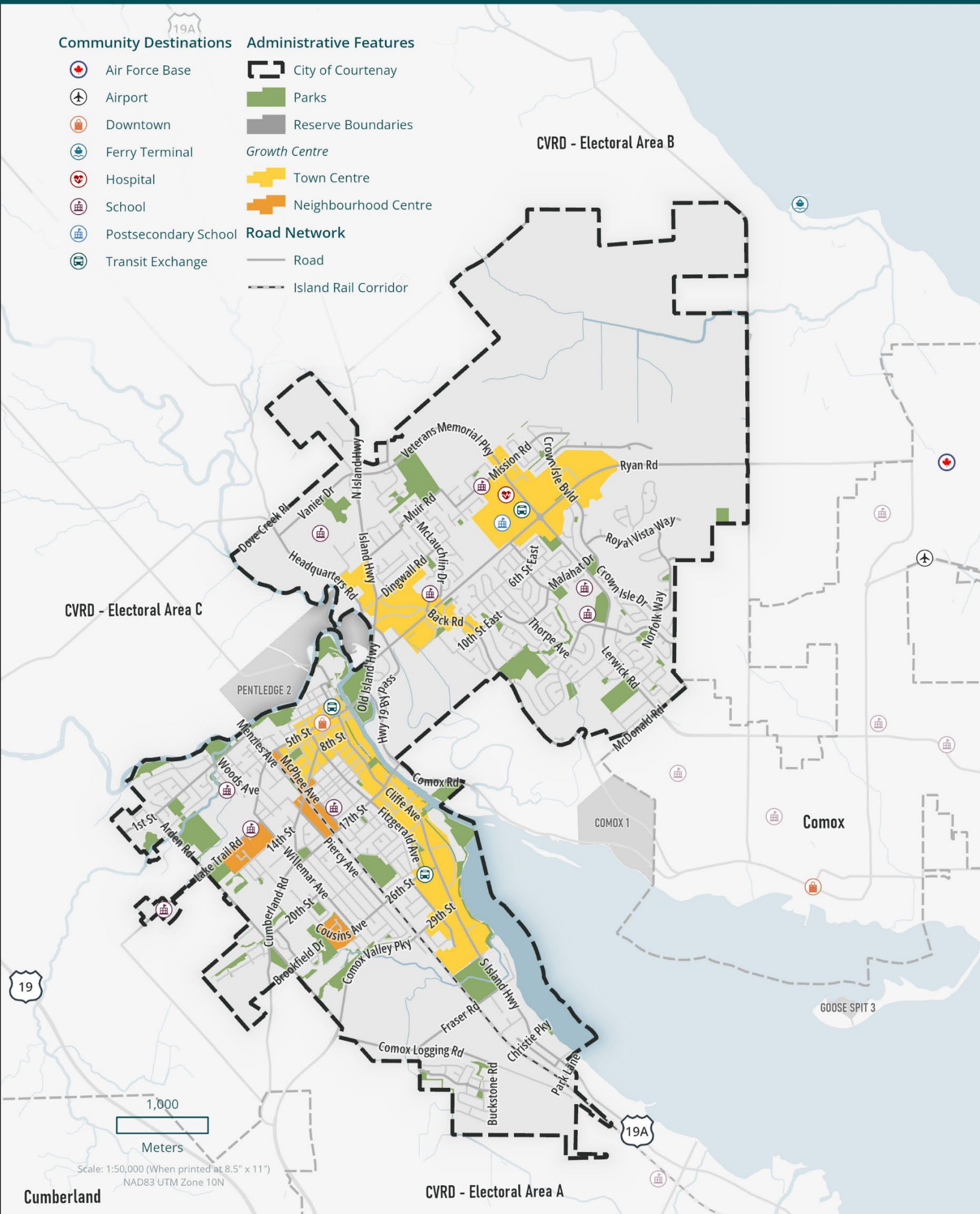
Major Employment Destinations: Major employers within Courtenay and the broader Comox Valley include Comox Valley Hospital, North Island College, School District 71, Canadian Forces Base (CFB Comox), and Mount Washington Alpine Resort. Areas with high employment density also include downtown Courtenay and Comox, where numerous businesses and organizations are clustered. These employment destinations attract many employees and play a significant role in shaping transportation needs and commuter patterns throughout the region.

Schools: There are 11 schools located across the City of Courtenay, including five elementary schools, five secondary schools (including middle and alternate schools), and one post-secondary institution. School travel patterns influence transportation planning by emphasizing the need for safe walking routes and reliable transit options to support student mobility across age groups. Some schools, such as Georges P. Vanier Secondary School and Arden Elementary, are located in less densely populated areas of the city, creating different mobility contexts to more urban schools.

Parks and Recreation: Courtenay residents benefit from a well-distributed network of parks and recreation facilities, including community parks like Lewis Park, neighbourhood parks such as Harmston Park, and natural areas that support passive recreation. Most residents live within an 800-metre walk of these amenities, though walkability gaps exist west of Downtown and along lower Ryan Road. Parks and recreation facilities influence transportation planning by emphasizing the need for safe pedestrian connections and equitable access to recreational spaces across the city.

Other Regional Nodes: Regional centres such as Downtown Comox, Cumberland, and other nearby communities play an important role in shaping travel patterns to and from Courtenay. These areas are connected through regional transit services, active transportation routes, and key arterial roads that support commuting, access to services, and recreational travel. Supporting these connections is essential for improving regional mobility, reducing car dependency, and supporting coordinated land use and transportation planning across the Comox Valley.

Courtenay Strategic Transportation Plan: *Land Use + Community Destinations* **Map 2**



2.3 Jurisdiction + Service Providers

City of Courtenay

The City is responsible for planning, designing, and maintaining infrastructure in public rights-of-way in the municipality (with some exceptions), including sidewalks, cycling facilities, and transit-supportive infrastructure, such as transit stops. The City is also responsible for trail development and maintenance on municipal properties.

Comox Valley Regional District (CVRD)

The Comox Valley Regional District plays a key role in regional transit service, working with BC Transit to set fare rates, and plan service and investment for current and future transit routes. The introduction of shared mobility services has also been led by the CVRD. Outside of Courtenay, the CVRD collaborates with MOTT on developing active transportation and road improvements on rural rights-of-way but does not have jurisdiction over these assets.

Ministry of Transportation & Transit (MOTT)

The B.C. Ministry of Transportation + Transit has jurisdiction over Highway 19A (including parts of Cliffe Avenue), Ryan Road, and Comox Valley Parkway in Courtenay, along with all roads in the electoral areas connecting to the city. This includes all planning, design, operations, and maintenance activities within these rights-of-way. Further, MOTT has influence over development approvals near the highway.

BC Transit

BC Transit has jurisdiction over transit planning and operations across the Comox Valley. This includes planning and operating fixed-route and handyDART services and collaborating with local municipalities and the CVRD on service expansion and fares. Bus operations in the Comox Valley are contracted to a third party, PWTransit Canada.

Private Service Operators

Private service operators are playing a growing role in Courtenay's transportation system. This includes shared mobility providers, such as BCAA and their Evolve E-Bike Share; private taxi and bus operators; and seasonal shuttles to Mount Washington Alpine Resort.

Island Corridor Foundation (ICF)

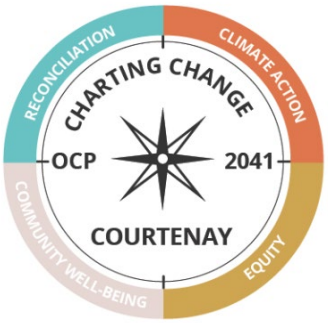
The Island Corridor Foundation has jurisdiction over the Island Rail Corridor on Vancouver Island, including in Courtenay. The ICF is administered by the 14 First Nations and five regional districts, located along the corridor, including K'ómoks First Nation and the CVRD.

2.4 Planning and Regulatory Framework

Established policies, plans, and studies help guide transportation in the City of Courtenay at multiple scales, from city-wide initiatives to specific corridors and intersections. These documents also provide important context for land use, environmental, and economic development goals, integrating mobility into the broader community vision. This section outlines the current planning and regulatory framework that shapes the development of the Strategic Transportation Plan (STP).

2.4.1 City Plans + Studies

Official Community Plan, 2022 (update in progress)



The City of Courtenay Official Community Plan sets a long-term vision for a sustainable, inclusive, and resilient city, and is the foundational policy document guiding land use, development, and transportation. The OCP recognizes that transportation is the largest source of GHG emissions in Courtenay and prioritizes a shift toward active and sustainable mobility. Key transportation objectives from the OCP include:

- 30% of trips are by walking, cycling, and transit by 2030.
- Transportation investments prioritize walking, cycling, and transit.
- Street standards include attention to safety, accessibility, and comfort at the pedestrian scale.
- Excess existing road space is repurposed to support public life, active travel, and green infrastructure.
- Zero emissions, electrified transportation is supported and increasingly the norm.
- The amount of land dedicated to parking is minimized.
- Parking standards reflect electric vehicle and cycling needs.
- New development integrates multi-modal transportation network planning into site design.
- Educational programs to support transit use, walking, cycling, and car sharing are widely available.
- Opportunities for innovation in transportation are explored.

Transportation policies are closely linked with other chapters of the OCP:

- **Parks & Recreation:** Parks, greenways, and streets are integrated to create a seamless active transportation system. Updates to the Parks and Recreation Master Plan and Transportation Master Plan are recommended to support green and active street standards.
- **Natural Environment:** Reducing impervious surfaces and supporting watershed health are addressed through transportation and land use planning.
- **Urban Form & Growth Areas:** Identified Neighbourhood Centres (Lake Trail, McPhee, Tin Town, Ryan Road, Anderton Road) are key to informing transportation networks and priorities, supporting compact, walkable communities.

Downtown Vitalization Local Area Plan, in progress

The Downtown Vitalization Local Area Plan is currently being developed to guide future growth and revitalization in Courtenay's downtown core. As Courtenay continues to grow, the DVLAP will outline key actions to encourage complementary residential and commercial development, activate civic spaces with engaging programming, and strengthen connections throughout downtown to improve accessibility for everyone. While still under development, the DVLAP process is highlighting the importance of the Fitzgerald Avenue corridor and waterfront as key areas for redevelopment and realizing improved mobility in future.

Strategic Priorities 2023-2026

The City of Courtenay's Strategic Priorities 2023–2026 set out the vision of Courtenay's Mayor and Council for a connected, inclusive, and sustainable community. The plan emphasizes functional transportation choices, prioritizing walking, cycling, transit, and traffic calming to support mobility and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Complete Communities Growth Assessment, 2024

The City of Courtenay Complete Communities Assessment builds on the OCP to provide evidence-based guidance for planning and growth. The assessment considers four lenses, one of which is transportation. Through the transportation lens, the report evaluates connectivity, identifies gaps in transportation access, and highlights areas where improvements are needed. Transportation-specific actions identified through the assessment support a more complete, accessible community, including:

- Update the 2019 Transportation Master Plan with catchment modelling study. This connects to the traffic counting efforts that are starting with traffic calming work.
- Review the Subdivision and Development Servicing Bylaw and integrate provisions that require future development to adopt a grid, modified grid street network, or provide mid-block connections for active transportation.

- Building on the 2019 Transportation Master Plan recommendations, prioritize active transportation upgrades near schools as well as connections to Primary and Secondary Growth Centres.

Parks and Recreation Master Plan, 2019 + Implementation Strategy, 2023

The Courtenay Parks and Recreation Master Plan provides a 10-year framework to guide decisions about parks and recreation lands, facilities, amenities, programs, and resources. Key goals identified in the strategy include improving connectivity and fostering a healthy and active community. The plan's recommendations support transportation planning by prioritizing accessible, connected routes that encourage active travel between parks, neighbourhoods, and key destinations. The implementation strategy outlines recommendations to implement the 2019 Parks and Recreation Master Plan. Relevant recommendations include:

- Work with other jurisdictions in the Comox Valley on major trail networks to achieve active transportation, recreation and tourism opportunities
- Coordinate among City departments to plan for connectivity of pedestrian and bicycle networks and extension of key corridors

Urban Forest Strategy, 2019

The Courtenay Urban Forest Strategy (2019–2050) sets a vision for a greener, more connected city through expanded tree canopy and stewardship. Implications for transportation include street tree guidelines, streetscape recommendations, and enhancements to the pedestrian experience.

Strategic Cultural Plan, 2025

The Strategic Cultural Plan creates a framework and roadmap to continue supporting arts and culture in Courtenay over the next 10 years. The plan identifies the need to review transportation options for cultural events.

2.4.2 Regional + Provincial Plans

Regional Growth Strategy, 2011

The Regional Growth Strategy (RGS) provides a 20-year framework for land use and decision-making across the Comox Valley, aiming to preserve the region's high quality of life. Transportation is a central focus, with dedicated policies to develop an accessible, efficient, and affordable multi-modal network connecting core settlement areas, town centres, and neighbouring communities. The RGS sets the following objectives related to transportation:

- **Objective 4-A:** Increase public transit use.
- **Objective 4-B:** Improve bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure to increase the use of active transportation options.
- **Objective 4-C:** Develop and maintain an inter-regional transportation system that efficiently and safely facilitates the movement of people and goods.

Objectives also emphasize reducing GHG emissions from transportation and improving public health and safety. The RGS identifies settlement expansion areas, indicating areas of potential growth that is anticipated to occur in phased manner. Settlement expansion areas adjacent to Courtenay in the strategy include Lake Trail and Royston, among others. The RGS is foundational for the STP, offering strategic direction and long-term goals that shape sustainable mobility and regional connectivity.

Poverty Reduction Assessment & Strategy, 2021

Identifies safe, affordable, and accessible transportation as a key factor in poverty reduction, emphasizing equity and support for underserved groups. The strategy emphasizes the reliance on active transportation and transit across the Comox Valley, particularly households living in poverty, as key mobility options to reach daily needs throughout the region.

Comox Valley Transit Future Plan, 2014

This plan sets a 25-year vision for the region's transit network, aiming to make transit more affordable, efficient, and convenient. It outlines goals for increasing ridership, integrating transit with key centres and other transportation modes, and improving safety and accessibility. The plan establishes targets and prioritizes investments to transform the current network, with a strong focus on multi-modal corridors and transit connectivity to cycling and pedestrian routes. While the plan guides transit service within the entire Comox Valley, regional connectivity to Courtenay and neighbouring communities is crucial.

CVRD Active Transportation Network Plan, 2021 + Implementation Strategy, 2024

The Active Transportation Network Plan guides improvements to walking and cycling infrastructure across the Comox Valley's rural electoral areas. It identifies a long-term network vision, design standards, and priority projects to enhance safety and connectivity for all active modes. The plan strengthens regional connectivity by linking active transportation routes with neighbouring communities, with numerous projects connecting directly to the City of Courtenay's walking and cycling networks. This includes "routes of regional significance", key active transportation connections across the municipalities and the electoral areas.

CleanBC, 2018

The Province's CleanBC initiative lays out a framework for climate action including green buildings, cleaner industry and waste, green jobs, and sustainable transportation, targeting greenhouse gas emission reductions from 2007 levels of 40% by 2030, 60% by 2040, and 80% by 2050. Programs launched through CleanBC are currently under independent review to ensure they align with the strategy's goals for GHG reductions and other objectives.

Move. Commute. Connect. – B.C.'s Active Transportation Strategy, 2019

B.C.'s Active Transportation Strategy lays out the Province's intent to promote and invest in active transportation. The strategy contains several short-, medium-, and long-term initiatives that aim to double the percentage of trips taken with active transportation by 2030. It emphasizes building safe, accessible, and integrated active transportation networks, and outlines initiatives for education, affordability, and partnerships.

2.4.3 Municipal Bylaws

The following bylaws make up the regulatory framework for transportation planning and implementation in Courtenay. This includes guidance relevant to new development, along with regulations that ensure public rights-of-way are used legally and effectively.

- Zoning Bylaw no.2500
- Subdivision and Servicing Bylaw no. 3200
- Traffic Regulation Bylaw no. 1926
- Development Cost Charges Bylaw no. 2840
- Parks and Public Spaces Regulation Bylaw no. 3121

3.0 Transportation Today

To establish a foundation for future action, it is important to understand existing transportation conditions in Courtenay. This section focuses on the current transportation context in the city, summarizing existing transportation infrastructure and services, and trends in mobility, including mode choice, road safety, and GHG emissions. Current conditions will help inform where the City wants to go through the Strategic Transportation Plan process, identifying key gaps, needs, and opportunities to be actioned through the STP.

3.1 How We Move

3.1.1 Travel Mode Choice

Commuting patterns provide insight into transportation preferences and infrastructure needs. Based on 2021 Census data, key trends for Courtenay are summarized below:

- **Dominance of Private Vehicles.** 84% of commuters in Courtenay travel by car, truck, or van, similar to Comox (84%) and slightly lower than Cumberland (86%), but higher than the provincial average (80%). This reliance on private motor vehicles highlights the importance of managing road capacity and parking while promoting alternatives to mitigate congestion and road safety challenges.
- **Limited Transit Use.** Only 3% of Courtenay commuters use public transit, compared to 9% provincially. This gap highlights the need for improved transit service and infrastructure to encourage mode shift.
- **Active Transportation Opportunities.** Walking accounts for 7% of trips, aligning with the provincial average, while cycling represents 3%, slightly above the BC average (2%). These figures suggest potential to expand active transportation networks.

Courtenay's 2021 commute mode share is compared to several other Vancouver Island communities in **Table 1** below. Mode share in Courtenay is comparable to many of these communities, generally with a slightly higher sustainable mode share (active transportation + public transit).

Table 1. Commute Mode Share Comparison

	Courtenay	Cumberland	Comox	Comox Valley	Campbell River	Nanaimo	Powell River	Port Alberni
Population (2021)	28,420	4,447	14,806	72,445	35,519	99,863	13,943	18,259
Commuting Mode Share								
Car, truck or van	84%	86%	84%	86%	89%	87%	87%	89%
Public transit	3%	1%	2%	2%	3%	4%	2%	2%
Walked	7%	5%	5%	6%	4%	5%	7%	6%
Bicycle	3%	3%	4%	3%	1%	1%	2%	1%
Other method	3%	5%	4%	4%	4%	3%	2%	2%

3.1.2 Commuting Patterns

Commute time and destination provide insight into regional travel behaviour and connectivity needs. Based on 2021 Census data, key trends for Courtenay are summarized below:

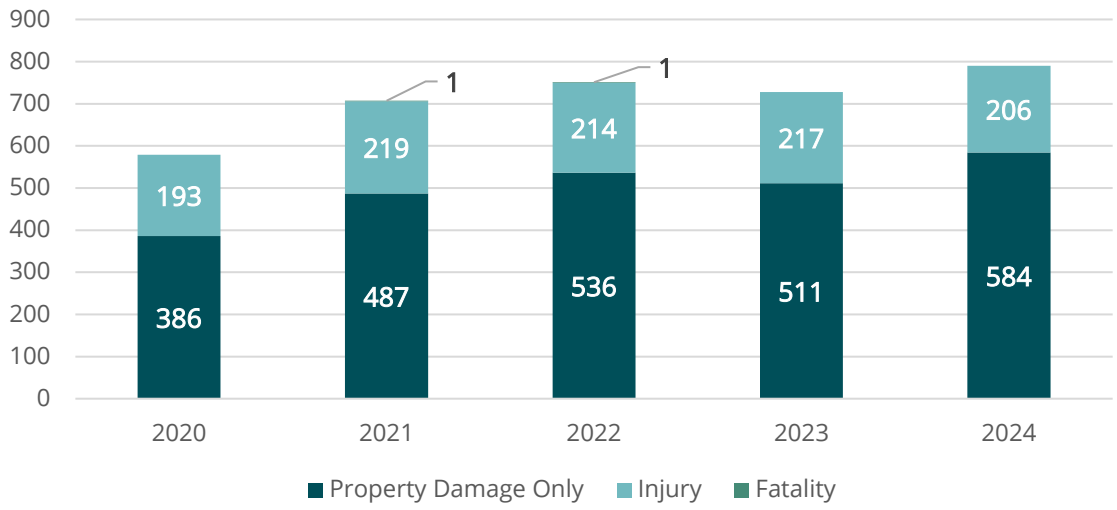
- **Short Commutes Dominate.** 57% of Courtenay commuters travel less than 15 minutes, compared to 32% provincially, indicating a strong proximity between housing and employment. This supports strategies that enhance pedestrian and cycling connectivity, along with local transit.
- **Local Employment Concentration.** 63% of Courtenay commuters work within their local area, compared to 41% across the Comox Valley Regional District and 52% provincially. This concentration reinforces the importance of local transportation networks and active modes.
- **Regional Connectivity Matters.** 25% commute to other communities within the Comox Valley, highlighting the need for inter-community transit and cycling infrastructure to support regional mobility.
- **Minimal Out-of-Region Travel.** Only 11% commute outside the Comox Valley, similar to regional averages, suggesting most travel remains local or within the region.

3.2 Mobility Statistics

3.2.1 Road Safety + Crash Data

Collision data for the City of Courtenay is provided through ICBC to understand general road safety trends across the city and identify locations where road safety challenges are concentrated. Using data from 2020-2024, the total number of collisions over this five-year period are shown in **Figure 2** below. During this period, 3,555 collisions in Courtenay were reported to ICBC. The total number of collisions has increased since 2020, with lower traffic volumes during the COVID-19 pandemic likely contributing to fewer collisions in 2020. While the number of collisions has increased the proportion that resulted in injuries or fatalities decreased over the five years, from 33% in 2020 to 26% in 2024. Two fatal collisions were recorded in Courtenay, with no traffic deaths identified since 2022.

Figure 2. Collisions in the City of Courtenay, by Collision Type (ICBC, 2025)



Collisions with vulnerable road users are also tracked by ICBC, including collisions involving pedestrians and cyclists. 130 incidents involving active transportation users were identified between 2020 and 2024, including 60 involving a pedestrian, 65 involving a cyclist, and 5 were both a cyclist and pedestrian. The proportion of collisions involving active transportation users has grown over time, from 2% in 2020 to 5% in 2024. These collisions were also more likely to result in an injury or fatality (74%) than the overall average (30%).

ICBC reporting includes the specific locations where collisions occurred in Courtenay. Based on this information, the top 20 intersections with the highest total number of collisions are summarized in **Table 2**. Results show that collisions are more prevalent at intersections along high traffic volume corridors, including many locations along Highway 19A, Cliffe Avenue, Ryan Road, and 17th Street. Note that many of these locations are along provincial highways and are therefore not under City jurisdiction. Heat mapping of all collisions locations is shown in **Map 3**.

To help understand where collisions are occurring in Courtenay on a rate-basis, collisions could be normalized to traffic volumes once this information has been collected later in the STP as part of a more thorough network screening process.

Table 2. Top Collision Locations in Courtenay, 2020-2024 (ICBC, 2025)

Location	Total Collisions	Injury + Fatal Collisions	Jurisdiction
Hwy 19 Bypass / Highway 19A / Ryan Rd	207	87	MOTT
Lerwick Rd / Ryan Rd	183	62	MOTT
17th St / Cliffe Ave	154	61	MOTT
Back Rd / Ryan Rd	98	42	MOTT
26th St / Cliffe Ave	62	28	MOTT
Crown Isle Blvd / Crown Isle Dr / Ryan Rd	60	23	MOTT
5th St / Cliffe Ave	50	18	Courtenay
Highway 19A / Vanier Dr / Veterans Memorial Pkwy	48	21	Courtenay
Old Island Hwy / Ryan Rd	48	17	Courtenay
Ryan Rd / Sandwick Rd	46	26	MOTT
17th St / Highway 19 Bypass	44	15	MOTT

Location	Total Collisions	Injury + Fatal Collisions	Jurisdiction
29th St / Cliffe Ave	36	17	MOTT
Old Island Hwy / Puntledge Rd	34	14	Courtenay
17th St / Fitzgerald Ave	33	14	Courtenay
29th St / Kilpatrick Ave	31	17	MOTT
6th St / Cliffe Ave	24	6	Courtenay
Headquarters Rd / Highway 19A	24	13	Courtenay
5th St / Fitzgerald Ave	23	7	Courtenay
Cliffe Ave / 19th St	23	12	MOTT
26th St / Fitzgerald Ave	22	9	Courtenay

Table 3 below summarizes all locations with three or more collisions involving active transportation users. Again, locations along corridors under MOTT jurisdiction feature prominently, along with several intersections around Downtown Courtenay.

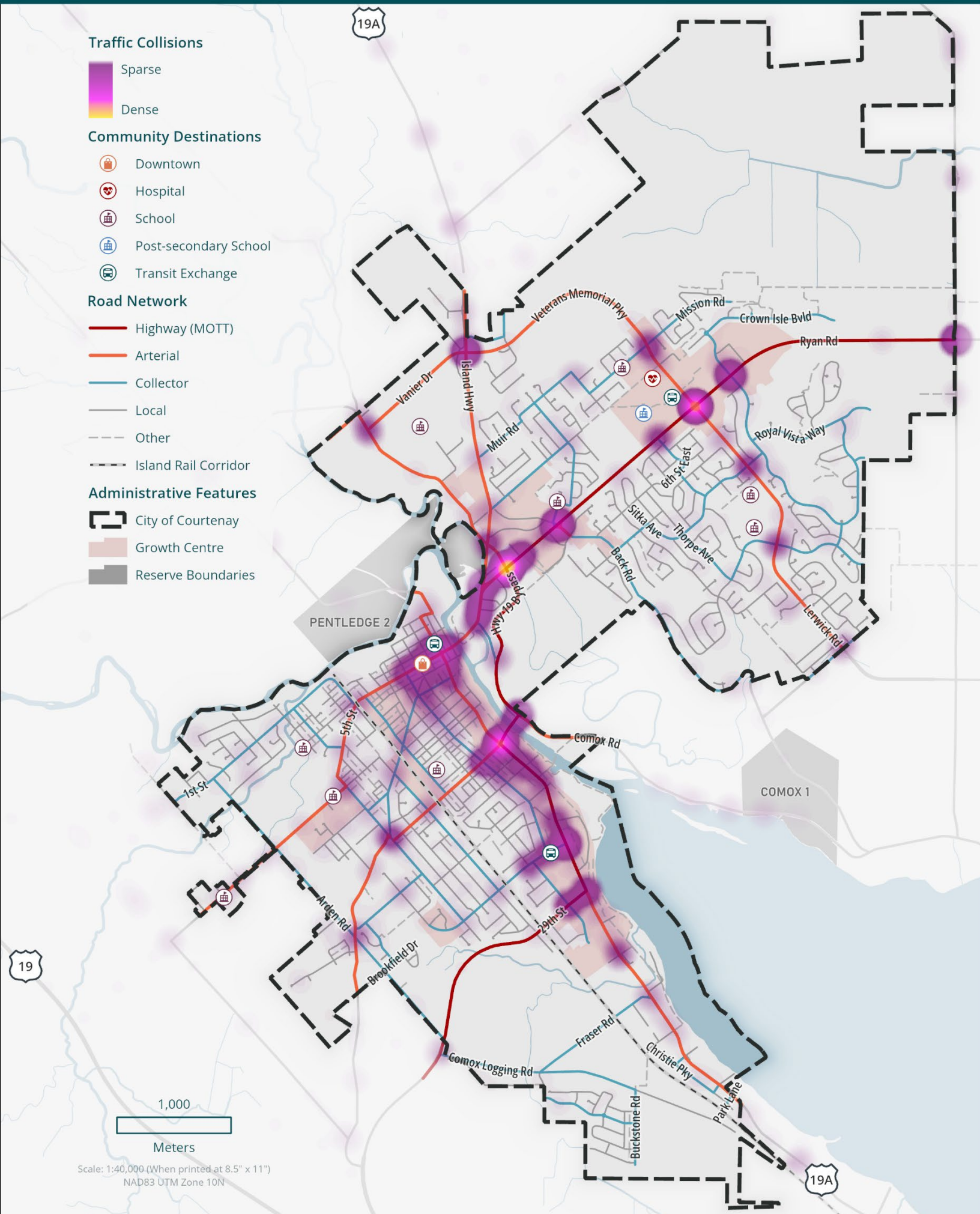
Table 3. Top Active Transportation Collision Locations in Courtenay, 2020-2024 (ICBC, 2025)

Location	Total AT Collisions*	Pedestrian Collisions	Cyclist Collisions	Jurisdiction
Ryan Rd / Back Rd / Centennial Dr	6	4	2	MOTT
Cliffe Ave / 26th St	5	4	1	MOTT
Duncan Ave / 5th St	4	4	0	Courtenay
Cliffe Ave / 4th St	4	3	1	Courtenay
Cliffe Ave / 17th St	3	2	1	MOTT
England Ave / 8th St	3	1	2	Courtenay
England Ave / 6th St	3	2	2	Courtenay
Cliffe Ave / 6th St	3	2	1	Courtenay
Ryan Rd / Lerwick Rd	3	3	0	MOTT

*Tallies the total number of collisions involving active transportation users. Where multiple different AT users were involved in a collision the tally of the columns to the right may be higher.

Courtenay Strategic Transportation Plan: *Traffic Collisions*

Map 3



3.2.2 Greenhouse Gas Emissions

The 2023 Comox Valley Community-Wide Greenhouse Gas Emissions Inventory provides a comprehensive understanding of community emission sources for climate change mitigation reporting and planning. The report identifies on-road transportation as a key GHG emission source, accounting for 198,129 tCO_2e in 2021, 46% of emissions in the Comox Valley. In Courtenay, on-road transportation emissions decreased 5.9% between 2018 and 2021, which could be partially explained by the COVID-19 pandemic reducing trip making in 2020 and 2021.

Combining GHG emission data with 2021 Census populations, per capita on-road transportation emissions in Courtenay are approximately 1.98 tCO2e, lower than the other member municipalities and the regional average. Key information on GHG emissions in Courtenay and the Comox Valley are included in **Table 4** below.

Table 4. Transportation Sector GHG Emissions, of Comox Valley Communities (2021)[2]

	Courtenay	Cumberland	Comox	Comox Valley
Population (2021 Census)	28,420	4,447	14,806	72,445
Total Emissions (tCO2e)	182,848	26,886	93,487	433,983
Total On-road Transportation Emissions (tCO2e)	92,340 (51%)	10,494 (39%)	43,188 (46%)	198,129 (46%)
Per Capita On-road Transportation Emissions (tCO2e)	1.98	2.16	2.56	2.73

[2] Comox Valley Community-Wide Greenhouse Gas Emissions Inventory (2023). Retrieved from https://cvrdagendaminutes.comoxvalleyrd.ca/Agenda_minutes/CVRDBoard/BRD/18-Apr-23/Dyson%20SR%20Comox%20Valley%20Community-Wide%20Greenhouse%20Gas%20Emissions%20Inventory.pdf

3.3 Transportation Networks

To help set the context for the Strategic Transportation Plan, it is important to understand where Courtenay's multi-modal transportation networks stand today. Mapping of existing pedestrian, cycling, transit, and road networks are included in this section, along with key findings on each of these networks, including progress made since the 2019 TMP. Key considerations relating to specific challenges or opportunities also identified by mode.

Transportation connectivity analysis completed as part of the Complete Communities Assessment (summarized in ***Section 2.4***) is also highlighted in this section, which seeks to understand how different areas of Courtenay can access daily needs based on existing transportation networks.

3.3.1 Pedestrian Network

All trips start as pedestrians, whether walking or rolling to a destination or connecting to another mode such as transit or a private vehicle. Supporting safe and comfortable access to a network of sidewalks, multi-use pathways, and other pedestrian facilities is a key function of Courtenay's transportation networks and developing livable communities. **Map 4** shows Courtenay's pedestrian network, with key findings on the current state of the network highlighted below:

3.3.1.1 Network Overview

Courtenay's sidewalk network is extensive, with 195 km of sidewalks across the city. Sidewalks are found throughout Courtenay, with the highest density being around Downtown Courtenay.

Multi-use pathways (MUPs) play an important role in the pedestrian network. About 17 km of paved and unpaved MUPs connect different parts of Courtenay. Notable examples include the Courtenay Riverway, Rotary Trail, and the Hawk and Idiens Greenways, and recently completed Lake Trail and Comox Road MUPs. These facilities are also part of the cycling network, discussed in ***Section 3.3.2***, and support both commuter and recreational use.

Trails are a key community asset, a network of which are found in parks, schools, and other community spaces in Courtenay. Trails primarily support recreational use but can also help pedestrians connect to key destinations where they provide more direct routes or pleasant pedestrian experiences. Some unauthorized or informal trails are also part of the broader network but may not be catalogued by the City.

Pedestrian crossings are crucial to a safe and comfortable pedestrian network, including pedestrian infrastructure at signalized intersections and dedicated crosswalks at non-signalized intersections. These assets are found across Courtenay, with new infrastructure, such as rapid rectangular flashing beacons (RRFBs), to increase pedestrian visibility becoming more common.

3.3.1.2 Pedestrian Connectivity

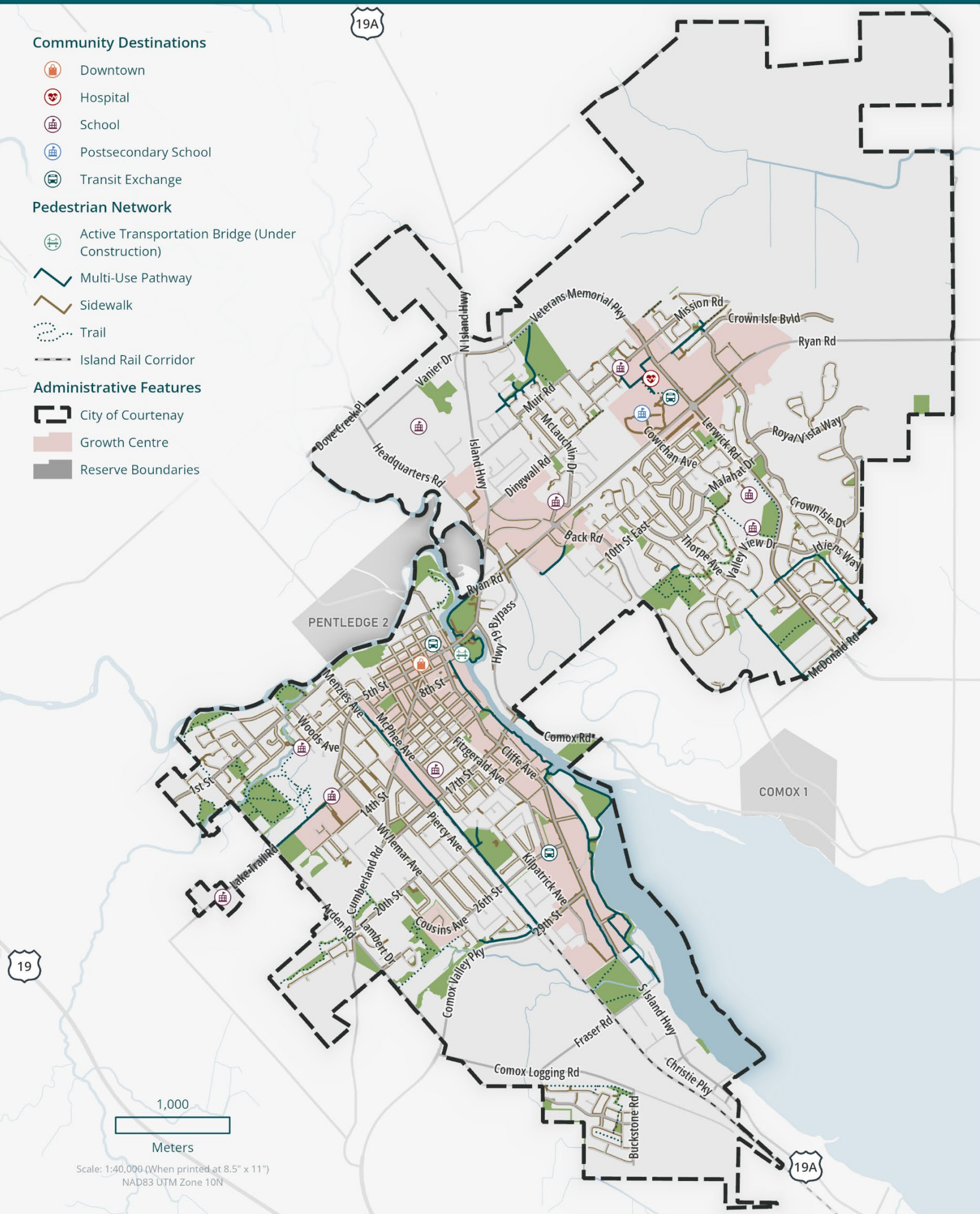
Access to pedestrian facilities is shown in **Map 5**, showing the distance to the nearest sidewalk or multi-use path. Approximately 33% of Courtenay is within 50 metres of a pedestrian facility, while over half of the city (53%) does not have access to a sidewalk or multi-use path within 150 m. Areas with higher pedestrian connectivity are generally older neighbourhoods in Courtenay with a grid road network or in newer subdivisions where sidewalks were built out during initial development.

3.3.1.3 Key Considerations

- Courtenay already has a robust pedestrian network; however, some significant gaps still exist. This includes some arterial and collector streets with either no sidewalk or a sidewalk on one side of the street, including Piercy Avenue, Willemar Avenue, Fitzgerald Avenue, Ryan Road, Lerwick Road.
- Some key community destinations are found in areas with limited pedestrian connectivity and surrounding residential density, such as Georges P. Vanier Secondary School, creating the need for multi-modal integration.
- Existing sidewalks should be reviewed to ensure they are appropriately designed to create an accessible and comfortable pedestrian environment, especially on major pedestrian routes. Some pedestrians may be too narrow, lack appropriate crossing treatments, benefit from amenities such as seating, or require a buffer to vehicle traffic.

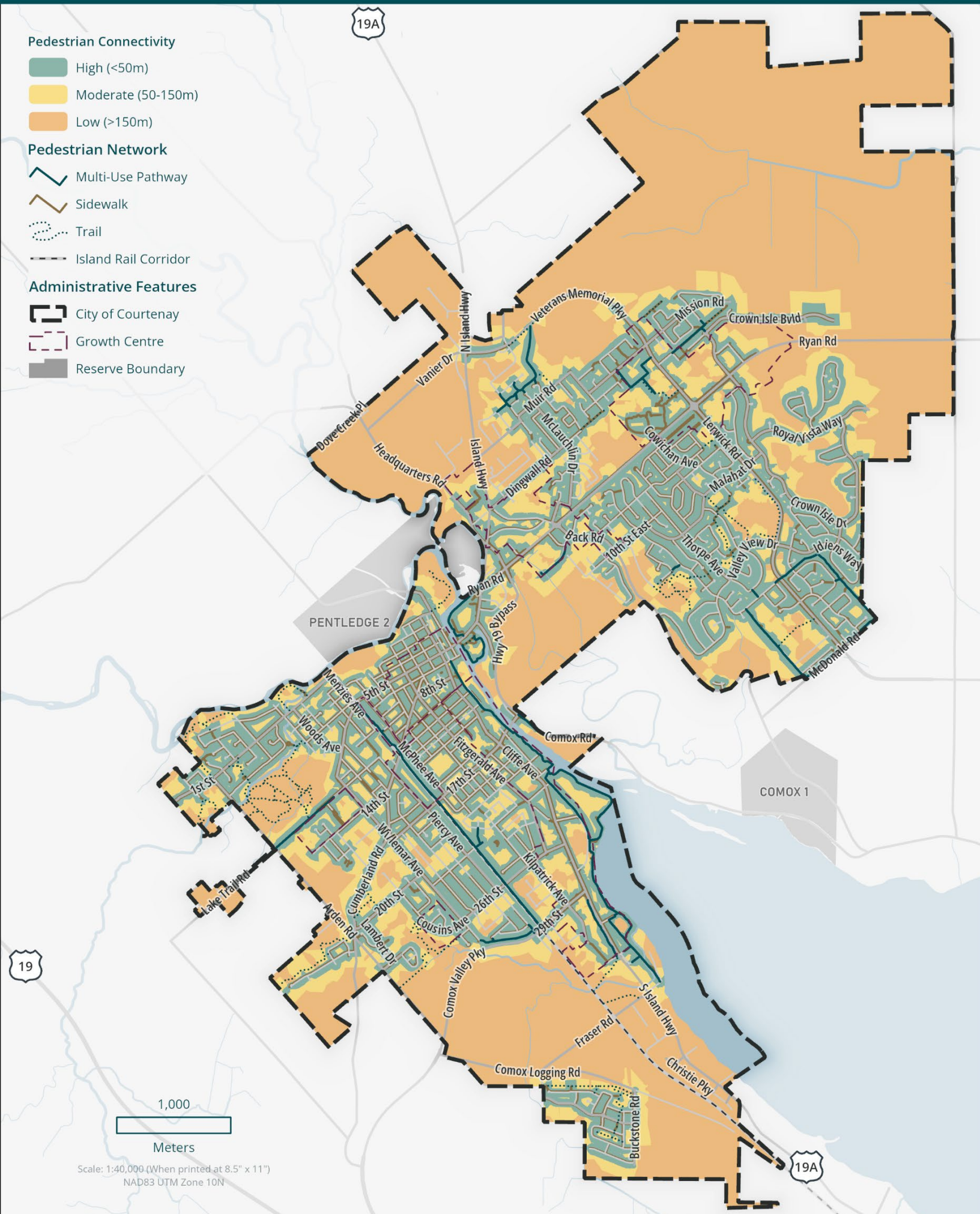
Courtenay Strategic Transportation Plan: *Pedestrian Network*

Map 4



Courtenay Strategic Transportation Plan: *Pedestrian Connectivity*

Map 5



3.3.2 Cycling Network

Cycling is becoming increasingly popular in Courtenay, with steps being taken to expand the city's cycling network and improve comfort and safety for cyclists and other micromobility users. As emerging mobility options become increasingly common, such as e-bikes and e-scooters, cycling and micromobility use will increasingly become a viable option for residents, commuters, and visitors to navigate the city. **Map 6** shows Courtenay's existing cycling network, with key findings on the current state of the network summarized below.

3.3.2.1 Network Overview

Courtenay has approximately 33 km of cycling facilities, including protected bicycle lanes, painted bicycle lanes, multi-use pathways, and neighbourhood bikeways. Guided by the Cycling Network Plan, new cycling facilities have been designed and constructed to increase network connectivity and improve conditions for cyclists. Important cycling corridors include:

- Protected bicycle lanes on 5th and 17th Street
- Painted bicycle lanes on Fitzgerald Avenue, Veterans Memorial Parkway, Lake Trail Road, Vanier Drive, Crown Isle Boulevard, and Willemar Avenue, among others
- Neighbourhood bikeway facilities on 10th Street and Hobson Avenue
- Multi-use pathways, including the Rotary Trail, Courtenay Riverway, and the Hawk and Idiens Greenways

Signed bicycle routes are not considered to be part of the city's cycling network due to the lack of comfort these facilities offer users, meaning they are not impactful to cycling uptake in Courtenay.

Limited parts of the cycling network are AAA infrastructure. Across the existing cycling network, 67% are facility types that meet all ages & abilities (AAA) standards (see ***Section 5.2*** for more information on AAA). It should be noted that some multi-use pathways, may not have sufficient width or appropriate surfacing to safely accommodate pedestrians and cyclists, and may meet a high comfort level for both user groups. Similarly, neighbourhood greenways may not feature appropriate speed and volume management measures to create safe and comfortable cycling conditions.

Several important cycling projects are currently under design and development, as directed in the 2023 update to the Cycling Network Plan. This includes 6th Street in downtown and connecting to the forthcoming 6th Street Active Transportation Bridge and a multi-use pathway paralleling Arden Road, as examples.

E-bike share is a new part of the city's cycling network, providing opportunities for people to access an e-bike throughout Courtenay. This service is provided by Evolve, part of the Evo Car Share service developed by BCAA. Time-based fares are paid on Evo's mobile app, which can also be used to locate e-bikes in dedicated parking locations in Courtenay and Comox. As of 2024, there was a fleet of 75 e-bikes, with planned fleet and geographic expansion in future.

3.3.2.2 Cycling Connectivity

Access to cycling facilities is shown in **Map 7**, showing the distance to the closest dedicated cycling facility or multi-use path. Analysis shows that approximately 42% of the geographic area of Courtenay is located within 400 m of a cycling facility.

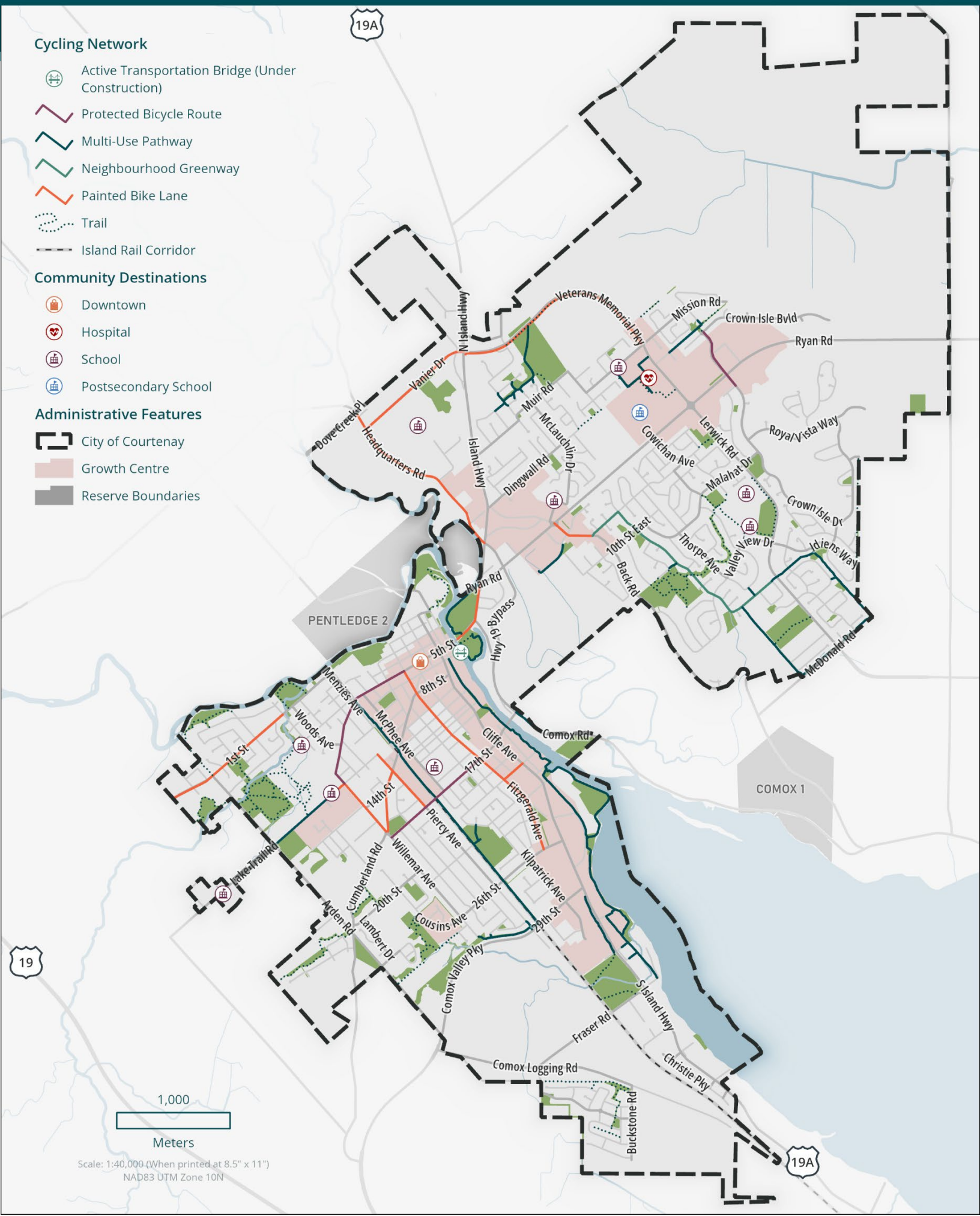
It is important to note that proximity to a cycling facility does not mean that that facility is integrated into a broader cycling network to support safe and comfortable travel throughout the community.

3.3.2.3 Key Considerations

- There is no primary high-quality active transportation connection to the future 6th St Bridge from East Courtenay. The new river crossing will create an opportunity with the active transportation network but must be built upon to realize it significant potential across the city.
- The AAA network is still developing and may not realize its full potential until built out such that cyclists can travel to destinations without having to ride on unsafe or uncomfortable routes.
- Grant funding for active transportation capital projects from senior government has become inconsistent. The City may need to seek new opportunities to build out the future cycling network.

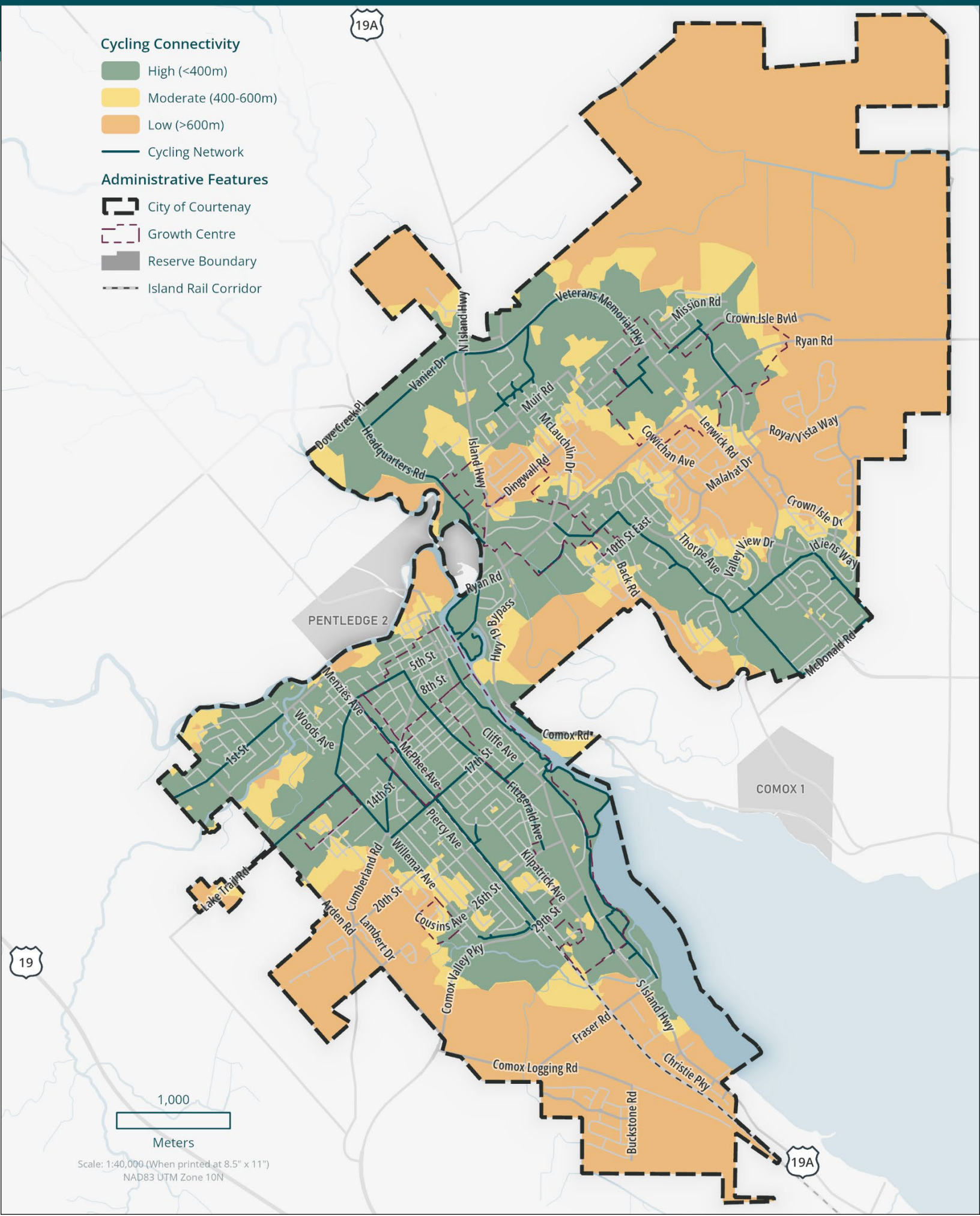
Courtenay Strategic Transportation Plan: *Cycling Network*

Map 6



Courtenay Strategic Transportation Plan: *Cycling Connectivity*

Map 7



3.3.3 Transit Network

Public transit is becoming increasingly important to Courtenay as the community and region grows and seeks out different mobility options. A variety of local and regional routes currently serve Courtenay, planned and operated by BC Transit, with future expansion and service levels directed by the *Transit Future Plan*. **Map 8** shows the existing transit network in and around Courtenay, with findings on the current state of transit summarized below.

3.3.3.1 Network Overview

Courtenay is the regional transit hub. Nearly every transit route in the Comox Valley stops and travels through Courtenay, connecting to neighbouring communities and key regional employment and commercial destinations in the city. Three of the five transit exchanges planned for the region are in Courtenay, supporting transfers between routes.

Route #1 is intended to be a frequent transit route to connect Courtenay, Comox, and key destinations, including North Island College and Comox Valley Hospital. This route is intended to meet frequent service definitions as ridership increases, and infrastructure improves; current headways range between 15 and 25 minutes during peak periods. The Transit Future Plan envisions this route to be extended to Cumberland in the future to connect all three of the member municipalities of the Comox Valley.

Local transit routes provide internal connectivity in Courtenay. Most neighbourhoods have access to local transit routes to access other destinations in the city or transfer to regional, frequent, or other local routes.

Paratransit service is available to supplement conventional transit service. The HandyDART system provides door-to-door service for people with disabilities who may not be able to otherwise access fixed transit routes in the city. Registration is required for HandyDART service and does not currently provide all-day service or operate on holidays.

Transit exchanges in Courtenay are moving or being improved to better support rider needs. The Downtown Exchange will be moving to England Avenue at 8th Street and result in the Route 1 being relocated to 8th Street and Cliffe Avenue, while the South Courtenay exchange will now be located at Cliffe Avenue at Anfield Centre. Upgrades to the North Island College exchange are underway in the existing location.

Some multi-modal integration is supported between transit and active modes. Most transit stops are connected to Courtenay's pedestrian network, while short-term bicycle parking is also available at transit exchanges. Most BC Transit buses have bicycle racks capable of holding two bicycles at a time, however due to the design of the racks and the obstruction of the headlights, they cannot be used after dark.

Transit stops are an important element of the transit network and an opportunity for the City to directly invest in the transit experience. Many of Courtenay's 136 transit stops do not have amenities that support transit rider comfort, such as shelters and benches. Currently, 22 stops (16%) include both a bench and a shelter. These improvements would be especially effective on routes with high ridership and on the frequent transit network. Transit stop amenities are shown in **Map 9**.

3.3.3.2 Transit Connectivity

Access to transit is shown in **Map 10**.Error! Reference source not found. representing the distance to the closest transit stop across Courtenay. Transit access is generally good in many of the growth centres, whereas some more suburban areas or new subdivisions may not have easy access to local or frequent transit.

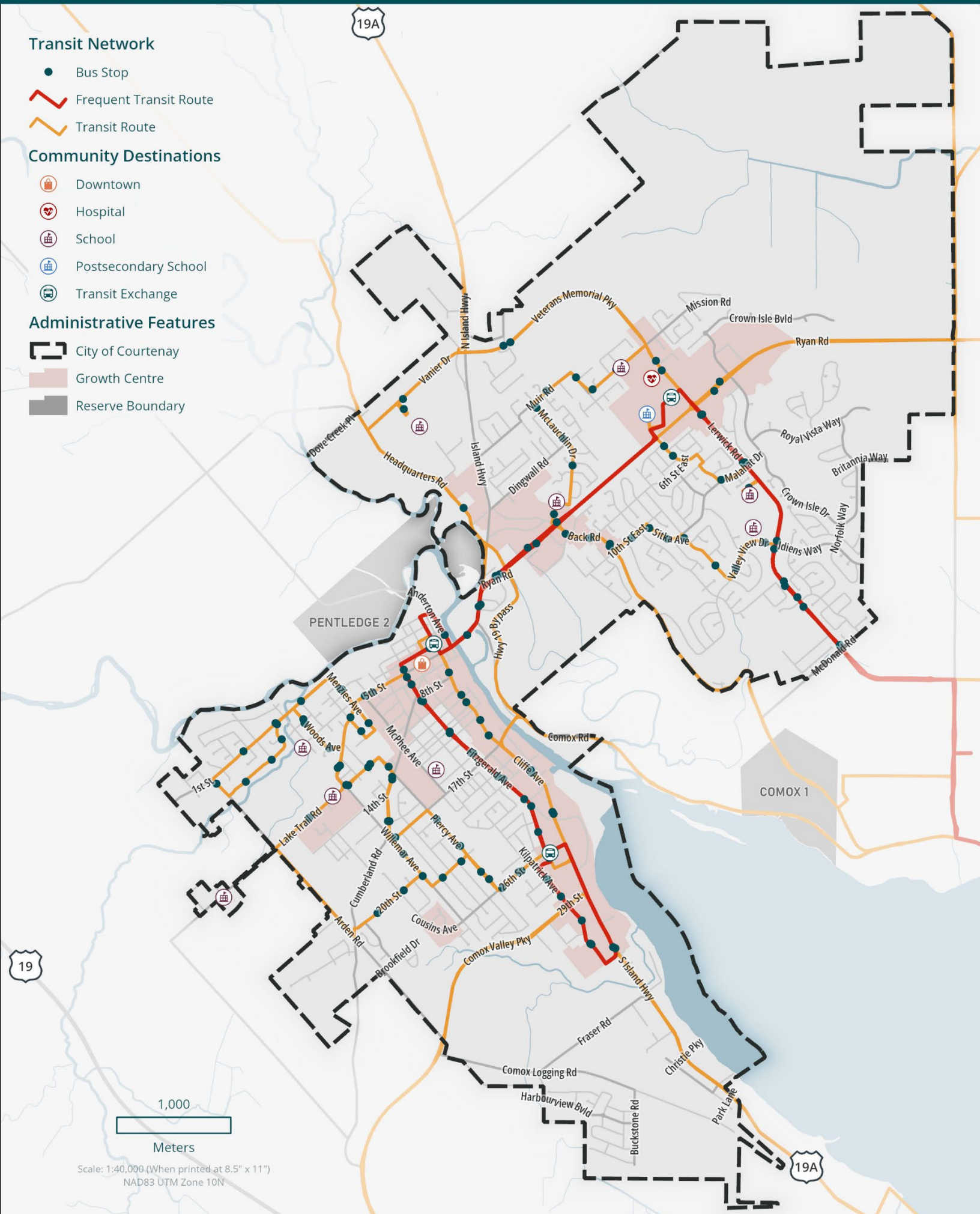
Map 11 shows the same analysis for only stops along Route 1 to show connectivity to the frequent transit network. With one route, access to frequent transit is more limited than to transit more broadly. Each of the primary growth centres is linked by frequent transit; however, only some of the secondary growth centres are further from frequent transit.

3.3.3.3 Key Considerations

- Current service levels do not always provide a viable alternative to private motor vehicles; frequent transit service will need to decrease the time between buses on existing route and be expanded to connect to more growth areas in Courtenay.
- Transit routes may need to be adapted or expanded to ensure appropriate service is provided to designated Growth Centres and new developments that can support transit service elsewhere in Courtenay.
- The City has limited control over transit service but can improve transit-supportive infrastructure. This could include transit priority infrastructure to limit the impact of traffic congestion on transit frequency and reliability, or improving transit stop design and amenities to create a more enjoyable transit user experience.
- New transit exchanges will result in adapted routing, while also creating an opportunity for a more welcoming transit experience and improved multi-modal integration.

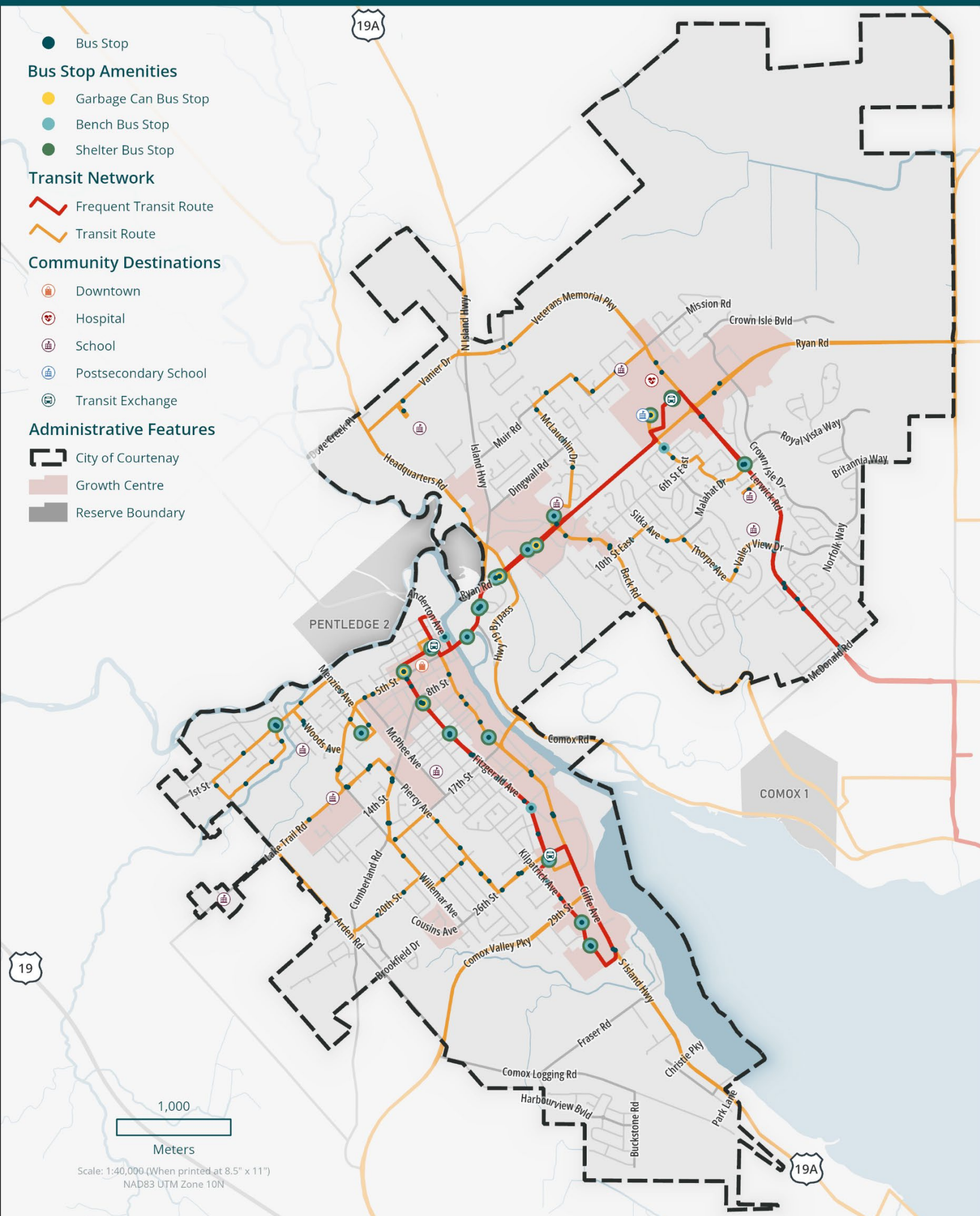
Courtenay Strategic Transportation Plan: *Transit Network*

Map 8



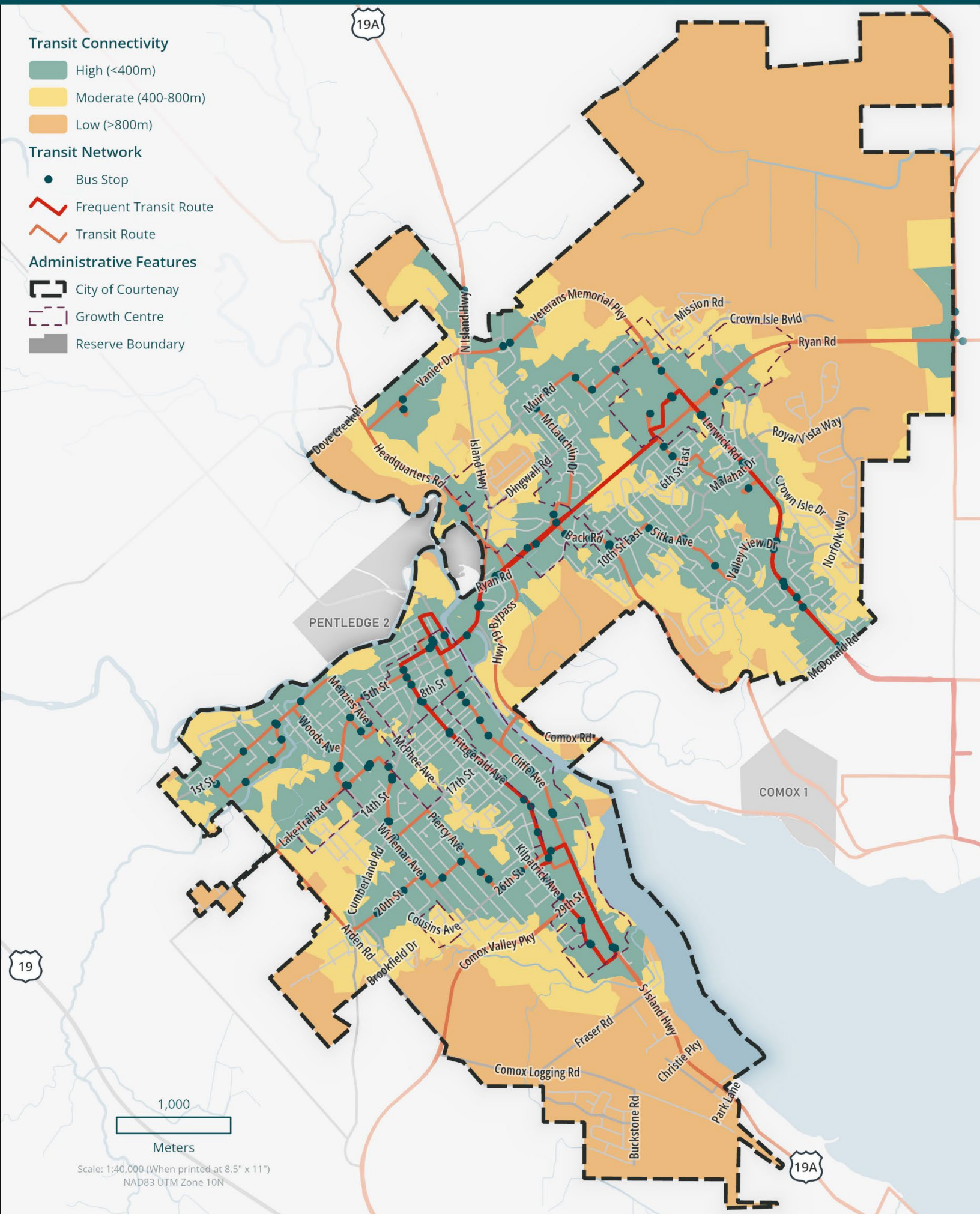
Courtenay Strategic Transportation Plan: *Transit Network - Bus Stops*

Map 9

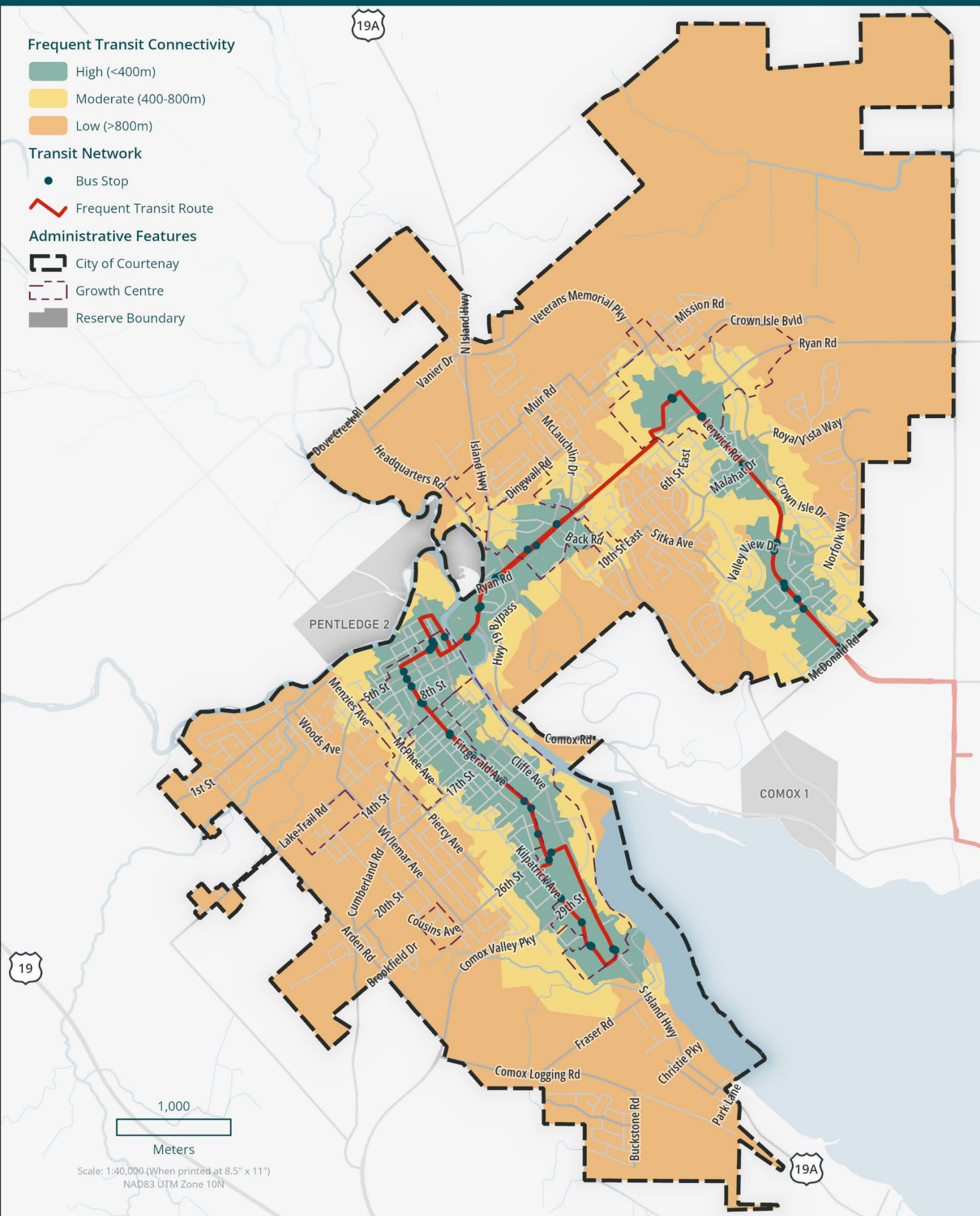


Courtenay Strategic Transportation Plan: *Transit Connectivity*

Map 10



Courtenay Strategic Transportation Plan: *Frequent Transit Connectivity* *Map*



3.3.4 Road Network

Courtenay's road network is the basis of its transportation networks, moving private and commercial motor vehicles and supporting cycling and transit infrastructure within the right-of-way. As such, the road network will be a key building block for the Strategic Transportation Plan. Improvements and expansion to the road network will involve multiple interest holders, including the MOTT. **Map 12** below shows Courtenay's road network, highlighting street classifications from the OCP. Key findings on the road network are shared below.

3.3.4.1 Network Overview

Courtenay has an extensive road network, stretching 196 km throughout the city. Most roads are local roads (53%), providing connections to local destinations and residential areas. Collector (22%) and arterial (12%) roads move traffic at higher speeds and volumes to reach other parts of Courtenay and the region.

Provincial highways play a key role in Courtenay's transportation system, meaning that the City does not have jurisdiction over some of the most important corridors and intersections to local and regional travel.

Regional vehicle traffic use Courtenay's roads to reach destinations in and beyond the city. As the regional centre, traffic from across the Comox Valley and beyond travels into or passes through Courtenay, creating significant demand on the road network and creating congestion challenges.

Speed management is a priority for Courtenay. In 2024, the City adopted the *Traffic Calming Gude and Policy* to inform where and when traffic calming measures should be deployed in Courtenay, and what types of strategies are appropriate.

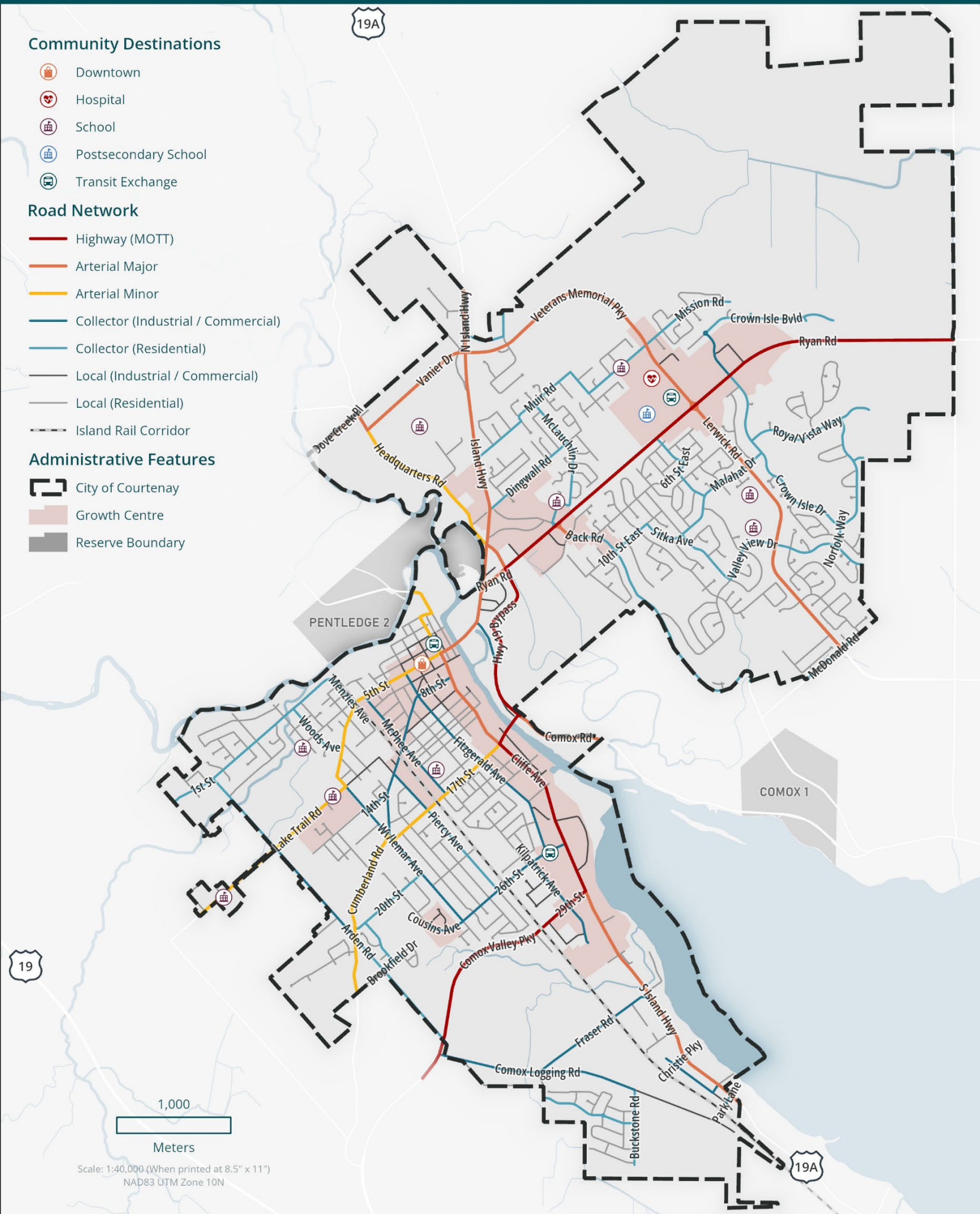
Courtenay's road network looks different in areas of the city. The road network was developed in different patterns: in a grid in some parts of Courtenay, typically in older neighbourhoods or near downtown and in dendritic patterns in newer subdivisions such as Crown Isle or The Ridge. Grid road networks typically allow for greater connectivity and shorter travel distances for all modes, whereas dendritic systems typically prioritize private motor vehicles and reduce cut-through traffic.

3.3.4.2 Key Considerations

- There is significant traffic congestion along primary corridors such as Ryan Road, Cliffe Avenue and Highway 19A, during peak travel hours. These routes were not designed for current travel demand resulting from local and regional growth, and the expansion of key employment destinations in Courtenay and beyond.
- The bridges across the Puntledge River, at 5th Street and 17th Street, are major pinch points and contribute significantly to congestion issues.
- The existing major road network is limited and lacks redundancy to help accommodate short-term pressures such as when collisions happen and during major infrastructure projects, such as the ongoing sewer conveyance project.
- There is not currently a primary route into Downtown Courtenay from the west, meaning that other key vehicle corridors may be unnecessarily congested.
- Goods movement routes in Courtenay are not clearly defined through the OCP or TMP. Directing heavy vehicle traffic to specific corridors is important to ensure that design and user characteristics are appropriate, and conflicts between modes can be avoided.
- Many corridors are still vehicle-oriented, and space may need to be reallocated to accommodate other modes, including cycling and transit-priority facilities. This could mean shifting vehicle traffic to other corridors to ensure that modes can be balanced appropriately.

Courtenay Strategic Transportation Plan: *Road Network*

Map 12



4.0 How We Pay for Transportation

The infrastructure and programs proposed in the Strategic Transportation Plan will be funded through various sources. Planning for expenditures in a way that is realistic for the City of Courtenay is key to ensuring that implementing the STP is sustainable, and that the City has the appropriate tools to support this investment. This section highlights some of the key funding sources and tools that the currently has access to and will leverage throughout the STP planning and implementation process.

Capital expenditures related to Courtenay's transportation network in the 2025 Financial Plan amount to approximately $25 million to be spent over 2025-2029. Investments include projects including the Lake Trail Road multi-use pathway and improvements to Ryan Road, Back Road, Cousins Avenue, and Braidwood Road, along with other year-over-year needs such as traffic signal and active transportation infrastructure improvements. This does not carry forward amounts from previous budgets for significant projects such as the 6th Street Active Transportation Bridge.

The City of Courtenay uses some of the following sources to fund transportation projects:

- **Development Cost Charges (DCCs)** fund growth-related transportation projects in with contributions from private development. The recently updated DCC bylaw includes a list of transportation projects to be implemented over the next 10+ years.
- **Grant Funding** has successfully supported numerous transportation projects, particularly for active transportation, including the 6th Street Active Transportation Bridge, 5th Street and 17th Street bike lanes, and the Dingwall Steps, among others.
- **Canadian Community Building Fund** (formerly the Gas Tax fund) transfers federal revenues to municipalities to support infrastructure development, including transportation.
- **Frontage Improvements** require private developers to enhance transportation facilities adjacent to the developed property, including sidewalks, bicycle lanes, and transit stops, or other infrastructure as negotiated with the owner.
- **General Revenue** from property taxes also significantly contributes to transportation investment where other sources do not adequately cover costs.

Courtenay's ongoing operations and maintenance of transportation networks are equally important to ensure these assets continue to function as intended. In 2025, Courtenay's Financial Plan included over $4.5 million for transportation and roads operations. This does not include other services which contribute to the overall transportation network and supporting amenities such as Parks and Recreation.

5.0 Best Practices + Emerging Trends

Understanding best practices and emerging trends is important to support the development of the Strategic Transportation Plan. By looking forward and seeking to align Courtenay's vision for transportation with successful approaches and new opportunities, the STP can more appropriately serve the city's evolving needs over the life of the plan.

Best practices and emerging trends are organized by mode in this section. This is not a comprehensive list of all possible outcomes and directions and instead focuses on select approaches that align with Courtenay's context, challenges, and overarching objectives.

5.1 Walking

Accessibility for All Ages and Abilities

Best practice in accessibility is to follow universal design principles – to include everyone in the built environment by making designs equitable, flexible, and simple to navigate. Universal design covers people of all ages and abilities, with a focus on those people facing accessibility challenges across the transportation network. This includes people with reduced mobility, vision, hearing, strength, dexterity, and comprehension. Accessibility is important in Courtenay due to its larger senior population and areas of steep topography.

The B.C. Active Transportation Design Guide lays out a universal accessibility design toolkit to improve pedestrian infrastructure and broader transportation networks in Courtenay, including: [3]

- Ensuring surfaces are smooth, firm, slip-resistant, free of tripping hazards, and well
- maintained year-round;
- Accessible curb ramps;
- Frequent resting spots, especially on hills;
- Detectable warning surfaces;
- Audible pedestrian signals;
- Pedestrian scale lighting; and
- Intuitive wayfinding.

[3] https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/transportation/transportation-infrastructure/engineering-standards-guidelines/traffic-engineering-safety/active-transportation-design-guide

Safety and Crossing Improvements

Pedestrian safety includes addressing personal safety (e.g., sightlines, lighting) and traffic safety (separation from motor vehicles, reduced speeds and volumes). Traffic calming and diversion are important tools and include vertical deflection (speed humps/tables/cushions, raised crossings and intersections), horizontal deflection (curb extensions, traffic circles, and chicanes), and volume management tools (full/directional closures, intersection channelization, etc.).

Safe intersection design principles include minimizing conflict between users, reducing speed at conflict points, ensuring clear sightlines, and making intersections as compact as possible. Specific best practices include providing pedestrian countdown timers (including leading pedestrian intervals), adding curb extensions and median refuge islands to reduce crossing distances, and enhancing crosswalks with additional pavement markings and flashing beacons where warranted.

Pedestrianizing the Public Realm

Streets are a critical component of a community's public realm and can offer spaces for people to socialize, recreate, shop and work. Places to rest, especially for an ageing population, and street trees to provide shade are important to facilitate walking for all ages and abilities. The Pedestrian Through Zone should be separated from the street with a buffer zone. The Pedestrian Through Zone should have a constrained width of at least 1.8 metres, which allows two people using mobility devices to pass one another. In areas of high pedestrian activity, the desired sidewalk width is 2 metres or greater. This gives space for people to comfortably walk at different paces, supporting higher volumes and a broader range of users.

Topography

Basic best practice strategies for mitigating the effects of steep topography include maintenance, providing rest areas, adding switchbacks, and providing accessible ramps and railings. Integrating the pedestrian and transit networks could also help to lessen the impact of steep topography and increase accessibility, as those with reduced mobility could use transit to avoid the steepest slopes.

Tactical Urbanism Projects

Tactile urbanism is a set of tools and techniques that can be used to pilot low-cost, quick-build improvements to streets, which can greatly enhance the pedestrian realm. Projects can last for hours, days, or weeks, and some become permanent. Cities across the world have implemented tactical urbanism pilot projects such as creating temporary curb extensions, parklets, and even full street closures. During the COVID-19 pandemic, temporary road space reallocation became more common, as cities across the world repurposed parking and traffic lanes to create wider sidewalks and safe spaces for pedestrians to walk and queue outside of businesses.

Safe and Active Routes to School

Safe routes to school programs encourage sustainable school transportation by planning for the six E's (engineering, education, encouragement, enforcement, evaluation and equity) to improve safety for all road users around schools – especially children and families. They can also be used to test innovative tactical urbanism tools such as temporary street closures. The City of Courtenay are currently developing School Travel Plans with numerous schools in the community in partnership with Comox Valley Schools to help guide investment in these areas.[4]

[4] https://www.courtenay.ca/safe-and-active-school

5.2 Cycling + Rolling

All Ages and Abilities Network

A complete and connected network of All Ages and Abilities (AAA) bicycle facilities is crucial to significantly increasing cycling mode share. Focusing on creating a safe, comfortable, connected, and convenient network of bicycle facilities can see significant gains in ridership and encourages more diverse cyclists. Physically separated facilities are required on corridors with high traffic volumes, while neighbourhood bikeways can serve quieter streets. Intersection treatments such as cross-rides, bicycle signals, and protected intersections can make a huge difference in improving the safety and comfort of a bicycle facility. Cities across Europe have demonstrated the benefits of AAA infrastructure, while Vancouver, Victoria, and other North American cities have started realizing cycling gains from improving the safety and comfort of their bicycle networks.

Rapid Implementation Strategies

Pilot projects are an effective way to reduce the implementation time of cycling facilities, especially on-street protected bicycle lanes, and can help build support for changes to the street design. Rapid implementation at a network level is more effective in increasing ridership than building higher-cost projects in isolation and can typically be achieved within the existing right-of-way. The District of Saanich and cities in Metro Vancouver have had success in using rapid implementation to expand their AAA bicycle networks. To help guide this type of cycling infrastructure development, Translink produced a Rapid Implementation Design Guide that has relevant guidance for communities across B.C.[5]

[5] https://www.translink.ca/-/media/translink/documents/cycling/regional-cycling-strategy/rapid_implementation_design_guide_for_bikeways_in_metro_vancouver.pdf

Electric Bicycles

The rapid growth in electric bicycles (e-bikes) for personal transportation and goods movement is a significant opportunity for active transportation. Deloitte predicts that over 130 million e-bikes will be sold by 2030, and the growth is outpacing electric cars[6], or in some countries, pedal bicycles.[7] E-bikes can extend the range of a cycling trip, help to navigate topography, and support people with reduced mobility to enjoy cycling, including seniors and older adults. Planning for e-bikes includes providing access to charging and designing bicycle infrastructure to be wide enough to include passing. The Province of B.C. provided a rebate for e-bike purchases to support uptake, a total of $6.5 million, with results showing that people who received a rebate reduced their travel costs and GHG emissions, and more physical activity after their e-bike purchase.[8]

End-of-Trip Facilities

Bicycle parking and other end-of-trip facilities (e.g., showers, lockers, and repair stands) help to make cycling more attractive and convenient. Both short-term (bicycle racks) and long-term (bicycle lockers, cages, and parkades) are important in making cycling a feasible everyday mode of transportation. Bicycle parking design should consider a range of bicycle shapes and sizes, including cargo bikes and bicycles with trailers. Bicycle racks can be branded and designed to enhance the streetscape, as long they remain fully functional. The B.C. Active Transportation Design Guide recommends that at least 50% of long-term and 10% of short-term bicycle parking be designed to accommodate e-bikes by providing an electrical outlet. The BC Active Transportation Design Guide provides a full overview of end-of-trip facilities.

[6] https://www2.deloitte.com/content/dam/insights/us/articles/722835_tmt-predictions-2020/DI_TMT-Prediction-2020.pdf
[7] https://www.cyclingelectric.com/in-depth/electric-bike-sales-around-the-world-pass-key-milestones
[8] https://news.ubc.ca/2025/09/bc-e-bike-rebates-benefits/

Micromobility

Micromobility includes bike share and scooter share systems with a variety of ownership and operation models. These systems have grown massively over the past few years, with several systems operating throughout Metro Vancouver and recent expansion to other communities, including Courtenay. Bike and scooter share can make multi-modal transportation more convenient, including connecting to transit. Bike share systems can be docked or dockless and can include e-bikes. Dockless micromobility services provided by private companies can be cheaper to launch than services funded and controlled by municipalities but are vulnerable to market fluctuations, with many examples of abrupt service changes and companies pulling out of markets.

Electric scooters (e-scooters) and other forms of small, one-person electric vehicles are not currently permitted on all roads in B.C., but the City of Courtenay, and numerous other communities, are participating in an extended pilot project to understand how e-scooters can be safely deployed.

5.3 Transit

Transit Optimization

Transit optimization seeks to identify the causes of service delays along existing routes and apply various transit priority measures, infrastructure enhancements, and operational policies to better use existing transit resources by improving speed and reliability. These measures can produce short-term benefits with relatively low capital expenditures. BC Transit identifies transit priority measures in its On-Street Infrastructure Design Guide[9] that summarizes some of these strategies. Many of the most effective tools are under municipal jurisdiction, many of which are discussed in this section.

Signals

Passive signal priority adjusts signal timing to create a "green wave" for transit, while transit-signal priority involves a set of tools and systems that can detect transit vehicles and modify signals to prioritize transit movements.

Transit Stops and Curb Management

Curb management can help transit by reducing conflicts between buses, parked cars, and other vehicles in bus stops. An example includes converting parking lanes into bus lanes during peak hours or on high frequency transit corridors. Bus bulges, boarding islands, floating bus stops, and improved platform designs and amenities can improve transit operations and safety and accessibility for pedestrians and cyclists.

Street Design

Tools such as queue jumps, turn/movement restrictions, and dedicated transit lanes help to prioritize transit along a corridor and at intersections.

[9] https://www.bctransit.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/BCT-Infrastructure-Design-Guide-2024.pdf

On-Demand Transit

On-demand transit customers can book transit trips on-demand either online or by phone, like ride hailing. This can increase the flexibility and coverage of transit services, and can supplement or replace fixed route service, especially in areas like suburbs that are hard to serve with traditional transit or during off-peak or nighttime service hours. Examples of on-demand transit systems include a recently established service in the Crawford neighbourhood of Kelowna, Calgary, and Edmonton.

Multi-Modal Integration

Enhancing active transportation facilities and ensuring comfortable connections to transit stops can enhance the transit experience and make transit more accessible. Improved sidewalks, bicycle facilities, and adding micromobility systems near transit stops can help resolve the 'first- and last-mile' problem of accessing transit. Multi-modal transportation hubs can also provide bicycle parking and other end-of-trip amenities.

5.4 Streets

Complete Streets

Complete Streets are a best practice design intended to move people, not just cars. They are designed and operated to enable safe and comfortable use for all, regardless of age or ability. They recognize that streets have different roles, functions, and characteristics depending on their context. Through attractive design, enhanced safety, and multi-modal infrastructure, streets can be transformed into spaces that:

- Increase safety;
- Encourage diverse transportation modes
- Promote a more active lifestyle;
- Decrease carbon dioxide emissions;
- Encourage a sense of community; and
- Support local businesses.

Vision Zero

Vulnerable road users, such as people walking and cycling, are disproportionally killed and injured by traffic collisions and need special consideration when designing streets. Governments around the world have implemented Vision Zero strategies, which aim to prioritize human health and safety by eliminating all traffic-related fatalities and serious injuries. Vision Zero is grounded in the Safe Systems Approach, which integrates the principles of Safer People, Safer Vehicles, Safer Speeds, Safer Roads, and Post-Crash Care to provide a comprehensive perspective on road safety, as shown in **Figure 3**. Reducing motor vehicle speeds and volumes is the most effective way to improve road safety for all road users.

Figure 3. Safe Systems Approach Principles (USDOT)

Street and intersection improvements (e.g., traffic calming, AAA cycling infrastructure, leading pedestrian intervals (LPIs), enhanced crosswalks, curb extensions) are also important Vision Zero tools.

Successful Vision Zero programs use all available data sources (e.g., ICBC, hospitalization data, police reports, etc.), build strong partnerships with related interest holders, and include bold, actionable implementation plans. In Helsinki, implementing Vision Zero, particularly reduced vehicle speed limits, resulted in no recorded traffic fatalities in 2024.[10]

Road Space Reallocation

Road space reallocation considers the need to rebalance the road space currently allocated or emphasized for one user group towards other users to improve access and/or mobility along a corridor. This can include converting one or more parking or driving lanes into bicycle lanes, transit and/or short-term curb uses, wider sidewalks, or parklets. It can also involve creating turning lanes, dynamic curbside spaces, and converting entire streets to shared streets or pedestrian-only spaces. Examples include King Street in Toronto (converted to transit priority), and Elgin Street in Ottawa (redesigned as a complete street). There are numerous examples of pedestrianized corridors or downtowns and shared streets, which are other typical applications for road space reallocation.

Green Infrastructure

Sensitively incorporating green elements within road rights-of-way are an important part of comfortable, resilient, and beautiful streets. This includes street trees, bioswales, and other forms of landscaping that provide shade, help manage stormwater, and contribute to natural ecosystems in urban areas, while enhancing streets as public spaces. Appropriate space must be allocated to green infrastructure to ensure they have sufficient soil, surface area, or infiltration to help plants thrive and to achieve benefits of natural elements.

[10] https://www.politico.eu/article/helsinki-no-traffic-death-roads-eu-accident-finland-driving-transport/

Goods Movement and Cyclogistics

Optimizing goods movement routes and deliveries can create more efficient street networks. Cities have implemented a variety of measures, such as time restricted or off-peak loading, which could help relieve congestion on busy commercial streets. Right-sizing delivery vehicles by using smaller, more nimble delivery vehicles can lower greenhouse gas emissions and make loading easier, while also adapting to growing demand for meal delivery, e-commerce, and other emerging curbside uses.

Cyclogistics integrates bicycles into the goods movement network. It is well established in Europe, with a growing presence in North America. Vancouver-based Shift Delivery uses electric cargo bikes, while on-demand courier services such as Door Dash and Uber Eats use both bicycles and motor vehicles. Electric cargo bikes spend much less time looking for parking than trucks and require smaller spaces, which could free up some on-street parking to be reallocated to other uses. Cyclogistics tend to be most successful in dense urban areas where there is a high need for deliveries within a relatively compact area. As Courtenay continues to grow and intensify, this emerging approach to urban delivery should become more common.

Parking Management

Modern approaches to public parking management include consideration for both off-street and on-street parking and balancing broader needs for curb space. Pay parking systems are typically implemented in commercial and mixed-use areas in which demand for parking is high. On-street parking is typically priced higher to encourage turnover, whereas off-street parking is typically priced lower to support longer stays.

Proactively managing on-street parking can help balance the needs of residents, employees, and other users to access on-street parking, particularly in areas where off-street parking is limited, or major commercial, institutional, or employment uses nearby may create high parking demand during peak hours.

Goods Movement

The speed and reliability of trucks are essential components of a goods movement network and broader economic development priorities. The interface of truck routes with corridors intended for active transportation and smaller vehicles must be carefully designed to prioritize the safety of vulnerable road users. To support safety and reduce delay times, the number of at-grade interfaces should be limited across the broader goods movement network. The industry is also working to electrify the truck fleet which will require specific high-capacity charging stations, and increase the weight of commercial vehicles, which could change needs related to charging infrastructure and road maintenance.

6.0 Summary

This report sets out a baseline understanding of Courtenay's population, land use, and transportation networks to inform the Strategic Transportation Plan process. Building on where we are today will help make the STP realistic and tailored to Courtenay's needs, while capturing the City's broader vision for its growth and development.

Listed below are several overarching themes that will be crucial to the Strategic Transportation Plan. These themes, organized into issues and opportunities, have emerged from the background analysis, and including various multi-modal, governance-related, or location-specific topics. Moving forward, these issues and opportunities will be explored in upcoming technical analysis and engagement with the public, partners, and interest holders to set the direction for the STP.

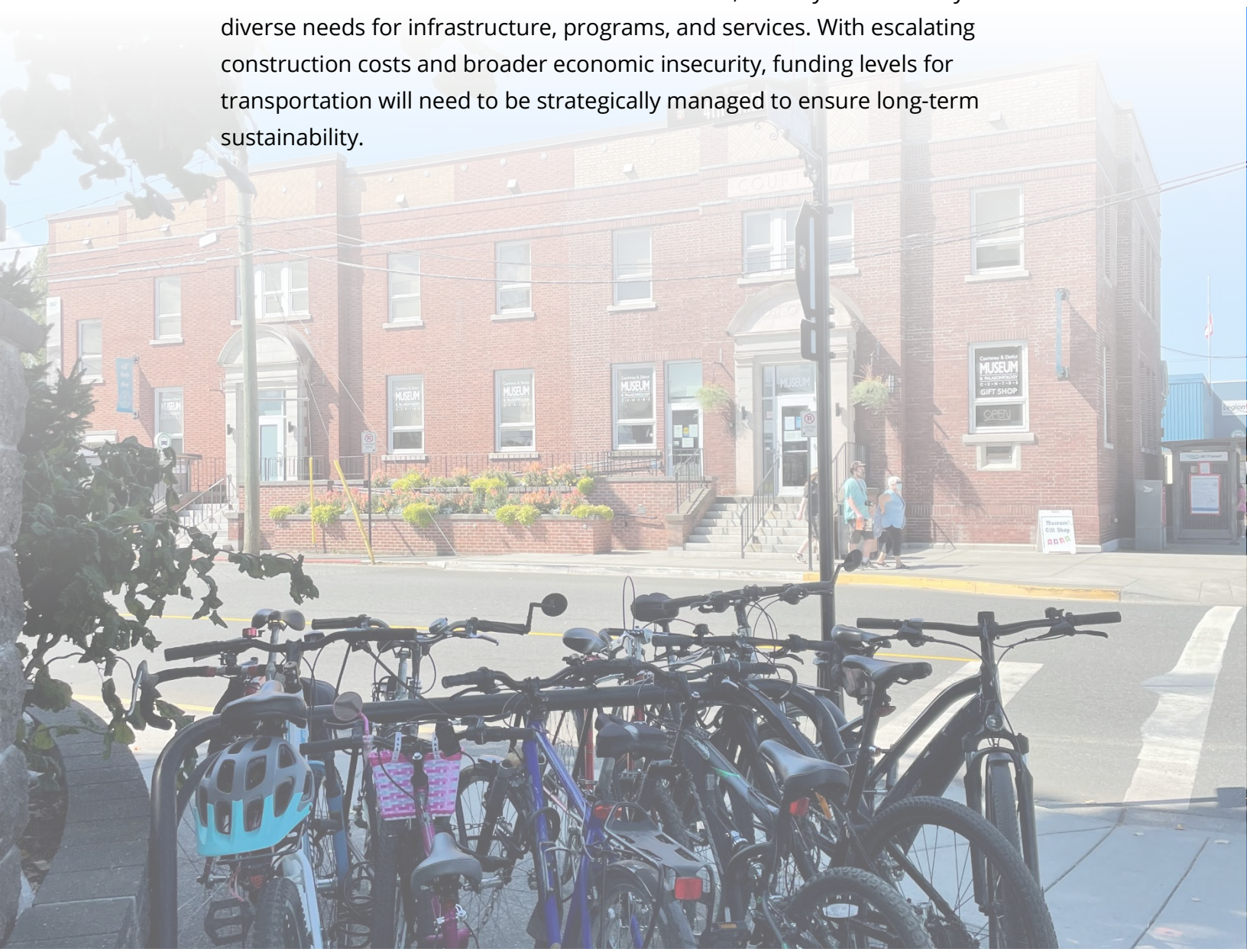
6.1 Issues

The City of Courtenay is faced with a variety of key challenges to its transportation networks. These issues relate to many of the city's inherent barriers, such as natural features, but are also connected to how existing transportation networks have been developed and how Courtenay has grown and changed over time. The list of key issues could change as more input is collected from the public and interest holders.

- **Presence of Provincial Highways** – The network of provincial highways in Courtenay, including Highway 19A / Cliffe Avenue and Ryan Road, and Comox Valley Parkway, are crucial to the city's transportation system. Since the City does not have jurisdiction over these high traffic volume, region-serving corridors, integrating provincial highways with broader transportation priorities can be challenging. Continuing collaboration with MOTT will be crucial to ensure that future changes to these roads align with the Strategic Transportation Plan.

- **River Crossings** – The three existing bridges across the Courtenay and Puntledge Rivers are key pinch points in Courtenay's, and the region's, transportation system. Limited capacity on these crossings contributes to congestion for motor vehicles moving between East and West Courtenay and to different parts of the Comox Valley and beyond. New or expanded crossings will be considered in the STP to help alleviate concerns and meet different needs.
- **Road Safety** – Like many communities, road safety challenges are prevalent across Courtenay's transportation networks, particularly on corridors with high speed and volume traffic. Current conditions affect the safety of all users, but active transportation users are more likely to be injured or killed when involved in a collision.
- **Local + Regional Growth** – Courtenay and the Comox Valley region are experiencing strong population growth, which is projected to continue for years to come as new housing development and land use intensification occur. With more people in the city and adjacent communities, demand on Courtenay's transportation networks will also grow with the many key destinations in the City and as a regional transportation hub.
- **Balancing Needs from New Development** – Courtenay's Official Community Plan allows for higher density residential and mixed-use development to meet local land use needs and respond to provincial legislative changes for Small-Scale Multi-Unit (SSMUH) housing. As this growth occurs, both City- and developer-led investments will be required in transportation networks to meet the needs of new residents, employees, and visitors.
- **Existing Development Patterns** – Many existing or planned subdivisions are relatively low-density without a grid network, which creates challenges for efficient network development across all modes. This means that there is generally limited user density, fewer direct routes or corridors, and some developed areas that are disconnected from the rest of Courtenay.

- **Boundary Expansion** – Within the Regional Growth Strategy several areas are identified as potential expansion municipal expansion areas for the City of Courtenay. This includes Royston, already a significant population centre, and numerous other low-density residential areas in the CVRD's electoral areas. Efficiently expanding services to these areas and incorporating existing transportation infrastructure will be crucial to integrating an expanded municipality with key mobility objectives.
- **Investment Constraints** – Like other communities, the City of Courtenay must meet diverse needs for infrastructure, programs, and services. With escalating construction costs and broader economic insecurity, funding levels for transportation will need to be strategically managed to ensure long-term sustainability.



6.2 Opportunities

In response to many of the challenges identified above, opportunities to enhance and adapt Courtenay's transportation networks to address key issues and be proactive in planning for future mobility needs. The high-level opportunities shown here will be further explored through engagement and technical analysis for the STP to understand where and when each could be actioned.

- **Transit Service Enhancement** – Courtenay and its regional partners are already investing in new transit infrastructure and improved service, by developing new transit exchanges and working towards the vision of the Transit Future Plan. Municipal investments in transit-priority infrastructure to improve service frequency and reliability will continue to support shifting vehicle trips to transit.
- **Cycling Network Development** – As Courtenay's cycling infrastructure continues to grow, residents and visitors will be able to see the benefits of an interconnected network of high-quality cycling facilities. A robust network will allow cyclists of all comfort levels to reach their desired destinations without riding in unsafe, uncomfortable, or inconvenient routes.
- **Population and Employment Density** – Growth in the city is both a challenge and opportunity, as previously discussed. By creating opportunities for higher density residential, commercial, and institutional development, more people will live close to transit, cycling, and pedestrian networks, allowing these investments to be well used and supporting transit service through increased fare collection.
- **Transportation Equity** – By investing in multi-modal transportation improvements, the City can help to build mobility options that are affordable and accessible to broad segments of Courtenay's diverse population, serving vulnerable and underserved populations.
- **Island Rail Corridor** – The Island Rail Corridor (IRC) connects to the heart of Courtenay. While the City already uses part of the corridor for the Rotary Trail, further opportunities to enhance the IRC as a mobility corridor could be explored. This could include future rail service, enhancing active transportation uses, or

various other options currently being explored through the visioning process in collaboration with the CVRD and K'ómoks First Nation. Many outcomes also depend on decisions made on the IRC's future elsewhere on Vancouver Island.

- **Transportation Technologies** – Various existing and emerging transportation technologies can support the goals of the STP. This includes digital or contact-less payment for transit fares, real-time transit data, car and micromobility share booking, real-time parking occupancy, improving corridor efficiency, and many other applications. As such, the City can leverage technology to create more opportunities for transportation options and optimize transportation networks to improve access. However, a balanced approach is required to not introduce new barriers for people with limited digital literacy or resources to afford digital devices.
- **Regional Collaboration** – Working closely with K'ómoks First Nation, Village of Cumberland, Town of Comox, and CVRD will support integrated transportation decision-making to address regional challenges that affect all these communities. By aligning priorities across the region, major transportation projects can be well-positioned for provincial and federal funding opportunities.
- **Future Possibilities from Connecting Courtenay** – The existing TMP presented several "big ideas" for new or improved roads and additional bridge crossings that would represent significant changes to the transportation network in the long-term. These ideas will be re-examined through the STP process, where valuable to consider some of these transformational projects.
- **Ongoing Projects** – Current transportation investments are already addressing some key barriers in Courtenay's transportation system. For example, the 6th Street active transportation bridge will greatly improve walking, rolling, and cycling connections between East and West Courtenay. Other active transportation and transit projects have already undergone extensive study and design work that will soon be actioned by the City.

Let's move, Courtenay

STRATEGIC TRANSPORTATION PLAN