



**Union of British Columbia Municipalities**

**Submission to the Special Committee to  
Review Passenger Directed Vehicles**

**November 30, 2023**

## **Overview of Union of British Columbia Municipalities**

The Union of British Columbia Municipalities (UBCM) is the association representing the interests of all local governments in British Columbia, as well as member First Nations. UBCM has provided a common voice for local government since 1905.

The main forum for UBCM policy-making is the Annual Convention, where local and Indigenous governments from all areas of the province come together, share their experiences and take a united position. Resolutions developed by member Indigenous or local governments, and endorsed by the full UBCM membership, are then conveyed to other orders of government and other organizations involved in local affairs. UBCM advocates for these member-driven policy positions through a range of activities, including presentations to Cabinet, involvement in intergovernmental committees, regular meetings with Ministers, and engagement with senior government officials.

Because shifts in provincial or federal government policies, or in economic, social or political conditions, can have an immediate effect on local and Indigenous governments, UBCM stands as a "listening post". UBCM initiates, monitors, interprets, and reacts where such changes could have an effect on Indigenous and local governments and the communities they serve.

### **UBCM Policy on Passenger Directed Vehicles**

All UBCM resolutions cited in this submission are included for reference in **Appendix A**.

Ever since the provincial government began considering the possibility of transportation network services in British Columbia, local and Indigenous governments—particularly those in rural and remote areas—have seen transportation network services as an opportunity to provide innovative transportation solutions to residents and businesses. Effective transportation systems support the health and wellbeing of residents, while enabling robust business, industrial, and economic activity throughout the province. Remote and rural communities have been disappointed to see transportation network services established only in areas with the highest population density.

In its most recent resolution on the topic in 2022, the UBCM membership called on the provincial government to amend the regulatory framework to establish a transportation network

service solution that would enable viable, competitive, and safe services throughout the province, including in small rural and remote communities. (2022-NR55)

Previously in 2019, the UBCM membership asked the Province of BC to amend the *Passenger Transportation Act* to establish an area-based, tiered, regulatory solution that will enable viable and competitive transportation network services in small rural and remote communities as well as other communities outside of the Lower Mainland. (2019-LR1)

As early as 2017, UBCM members requested that the Province implement a viable, flexible, ride-sharing service regulation in BC with attention given to regulatory solutions that will help solve those passenger transportation challenges that are unique to small, rural, and remote communities. (2017-B57)

### **UBCM Policy on Transportation in Small, Rural & Remote Communities**

Small communities are keenly aware of the gaps in transportation services in small, rural, and remote communities, which include lack of or insufficient public transportation within communities; lack of regional or inter-community transportation; and lack of passenger-directed transportation options.

In 2015 the UBCM membership called on the provincial government to provide adequate funding to support local and intercommunity transportation in rural communities. (2015-B9)

UBCM members in 2012 requested that the Province develop a transportation strategy to critically assess and determine solutions towards the sustainability of passenger directed vehicle operations including both public transit and taxis in rural communities. (2012-B115) This was prior to the advent of transportation network services in BC.

### **Conclusion**

UBCM appreciates the opportunity to provide the perspectives of BC local and Indigenous governments to the Special Committee for consideration, and is available to answer questions or provide further information.

**APPENDIX A****UBCM Resolutions on Passenger Directed Vehicles or Rural Transportation**

2022-NR55	Transportation Network Services in Rural & Remote Communities
2019-LR1	Enabling Viable & Competitive Transportation Network Services in Small Rural & Remote Communities
2017-B57	Regulation of Ride-sharing Services in Small, Rural & Remote Communities
2015-B9	Public Transportation in Rural Communities
2012-B115	Provincial Development of Rural Transportation Strategy

Whereas the Province of BC has created a regulatory framework permitting transportation network services to operate in BC, which provides a passenger transportation option to address the significant public need for vehicles-for-hire and, in turn, reduce impaired driving, improve the ability of seniors and persons with barriers to access needed resources, and stimulate economic development;

And whereas the Province's regulatory framework is so onerous that it effectively prohibits the establishment of transportation network services in small, rural, and remote communities where it has the greatest potential to address areas under served by traditional public transportation options, and has contributed to the proliferation of unregistered transportation network services operating across the province, which poses a safety risk to consumers:

Therefore be it resolved that UBCM requests that the Province of BC amends its regulatory framework to establish a transportation network service solution that will enable viable, competitive, and safe services throughout the province, including in small rural and remote communities.

**Convention Decision:                      Endorsed**

Provincial Response

***Transportation and Infrastructure***

*The ministry and its government partners continue to support the commercial passenger transportation industry and its members through the COVID-19 recovery period. In September 2019, government brought into force legislation and regulations to modernize the sector and enable ride hail operators within the existing framework overseen by the independent Passenger Transportation Board (the Board).*

*The Board is responsible for reviewing and issuing decisions on ride-hail applications and for setting the terms and conditions of licenses for approved operators. The Board has approved 25 ride hail licenses, of which 10 have been approved to operate in Region 4 (Okanagan-Kootney-Boundary-Cariboo) and/or Region 5 (North Central/other regions in BC).*

*Under the Passenger Transportation Act, the Legislative Assembly must appoint an all-party special committee on or before July 1, 2023 to review the legislative framework enacted in 2019. The special committee must as part of its review consider whether the Act promotes passenger directed vehicle services, including transportation network services, in small, rural or remote communities. Within one year of its appointment, the special committee must submit a report on its review and in doing so may include any recommendations the committee considers appropriate.*

Whereas the Province of BC has created a regulatory framework permitting transportation network services to operate in BC, which provides a passenger transportation option to address the significant public need for vehicles-for-hire and, in turn, reduce impaired driving, improve the ability of seniors and persons with barriers to access needed resources, and stimulate economic development;

And whereas the Province's regulatory framework is so onerous that it effectively prohibits the establishment of transportation network services outside of the Lower Mainland, and particularly in small, rural, and remote communities where it has the greatest potential to address areas underserved by traditional public transportation options:

Therefore be it resolved that UBCM ask the Province of BC to amend the *Passenger Transportation Act* to establish an area-based, tiered, regulatory solution that will enable viable and competitive transportation network services in small rural and remote communities as well as other communities outside of the Lower Mainland.

**Convention Decision:                    Endorsed**

#### Provincial Response

##### ***Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure***

*The Province has worked hard to deliver on its commitment to bring transportation network services, known as ride-hail, to BC. Ride-hailing is a complex issue and the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure held extensive consultations with industry stakeholders, such as the Accessibility Secretariat, BC Chiefs of Police Association, municipalities, transit authorities and passenger transportation companies to make sure ride-hailing is done right in BC.*

*The changes to the Passenger Transportation Act and the Passenger Transportation Regulation, which came into force on September 16, 2019 allow the entry of ride-hail to BC and requires drivers to have a Class 4 licence and undergo a police record and driving record check. Passenger safety in the ride-hailing industry is a priority and these requirements make BC a leader in promoting safety in this industry.*

*Many companies have applied to offer ride-hailing services in BC and the independent Passenger Transportation Board is responsible for reviewing and issuing decisions on applications. The Board is also responsible for determining supply, boundaries and rates for ride-hail companies, and has established five regions of operation for the province. Each region has a dozen or more companies interested in offering ride-hail services, including those with rural and remote communities.*

*The Passenger Transportation Act includes a requirement for the Legislative Assembly to appoint a special committee on or before January 1, 2022. This committee will be tasked in part to review whether the Act promotes commercial passenger transportation services, including ride-hail, in small, rural or remote communities.*

#### Federal Response

Whereas the Province of BC has expressed its intent to create a regulatory framework that permits ride-sharing services and transportation network companies to operate in BC;

And whereas the assessment of the possible impacts of allowing new entrants into the passenger transportation field has focused primarily on large urban communities with robust, established, passenger transportation options, which is often not the reality for small, rural, and remote communities where ride-sharing and transportation networking offers uniquely viable solutions in the absence of other options:

Therefore be it resolved that UBCM ask the Province of BC to implement a viable, flexible, ride-sharing service regulation in BC with attention given to regulatory solutions that will help solve those passenger transportation challenges that are unique to small, rural, and remote communities.

**Convention Decision:                      Endorsed**

Provincial Response

**Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure**

*As current laws do not accommodate changes in technology and consumer demand, consultations and research are being undertaken by the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure to determine how to modernize the Passenger Transportation Act to allow for expanded service options while creating a level playing field for all passenger transportation service providers in communities across BC.*

*The Ministry's main concern is to ensure the system we put in place will continue to prioritize the provision of safe, fair and accessible passenger transportation.*

*In October 2017, we engaged Dr. Dan Hara of Hara Associates to lead a stakeholder consultation to identify opportunities to modernize passenger transportation legislation to allow taxis to compete on a level playing field with new entrants entering the marketplace.*

*In January 2018, an all-party Standing Committee of MLAs heard from stakeholders and experts on issues including public safety, vehicle insurance, the impact of introducing ride hailing on communities and the concurrent provincial and municipal regulation of the industry.*

*The Ministry understands that people want more options for getting around quickly, safely and affordably. Government is expected to release a report in the spring of 2018 that will include considerations from both the consultation and the Standing Committee reports, with legislative changes anticipated for fall 2018.*

WHEREAS many rural, resource-based communities do not have public transit or taxi service;

AND WHEREAS the absence of local and intercommunity public transportation causes significant disadvantage to rural residents:

Therefore be it resolved that the Province of British Columbia provide adequate funding to support local and intercommunity transportation in rural communities.

**Convention Decision:**                      **Endorsed**

#### Provincial Response

##### **Ministry of Transportation & Infrastructure**

*The Province is willing to partner with communities to provide local transportation through BC Transit, but local governments must also be prepared to commit their share of transit funding. Although the transit feasibility study done in 2010 recommended alternative transportation modes for the community, such as volunteer driver and car share programs, BC Transit would be pleased to discuss potential transit options with Vanderhoof staff.*

*Work to date on inter-community transportation has included discussions with over 80 community and First Nations leaders representing 13 municipalities and districts and 13 First Nations communities along Highway 16 to discuss rural transportation challenges. The meetings focused on finding practical ways to connect residents with services and amenities in major centres, such as getting to medical appointments, doing grocery shopping or simply visiting family and friends.*

*Ministry staff will continue to work with community partners to identify practical, affordable and sustainable transportation solutions. The Omineca Beetle Action Coalition is facilitating discussions between adjacent communities to identify options to address intra-regional needs. OBAC was represented at the transportation symposium co-hosted by the First Nations Health Authority and the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure on November 24, 2015.*

*The recommendations and feedback from over 90 participants actively engaged in the symposium discussions were used to develop the foundation of the \$3 million Action Plan for the Highway 16 corridor, which includes up to \$750,000 over three years for community transportation conditional grants. This funding will be available to eligible First Nations, local governments and non-profit organizations wishing to establish or expand community-based transportation services.*



WHEREAS public transportation and commercial passenger vehicles are critical components of a network for the efficient movement of people, but commercial operators of passenger directed vehicles in rural communities face unique challenges in terms of developing and sustaining economically viable operations due to inconsistent ridership demand, which can result in reduced levels of service available to the public;

AND WHEREAS the integration of a service to incorporate passenger directed vehicles with traditional public transportation may create synergies and increase the viability for these operations, improving the access to and availability of passenger directed vehicles in rural communities:

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that UBCM request that the Province of BC develop a transportation strategy to critically assess and determine solutions towards the sustainability of passenger directed vehicle operations including both public transit and taxis in rural communities.

**Convention Decision:**                      **Endorsed**

#### Provincial Response

##### **Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure**

*BC Transit provides services in over 140 communities across the Province, serving 80 percent of the population. Transit service in rural BC has been very successful, offering services to small communities which, elsewhere in Canada, would generally not have public transit. While the Ministry recognizes the importance of public transportation, local issues relating to public transit and taxis in rural communities are better addressed by local governments and service providers. As such, BC Transit has agreements in place with 58 local government partners for the delivery of transit services, cost shared between BC Transit at 46.96 percent and local government at 53.31 percent.*

*Communities wishing to establish transit service can discuss preliminary options with BC Transit, or request a formal feasibility study. If communities have a demand for taxi or other commercial passenger transportation services, a service provider can apply to the Registrar of Passenger Transportation (<http://www.th.gov.bc.ca/rpt/index.htm>) for a license to deliver those services.*