

# ONE HUNDRED YEARS OF TRANSIT HISTORY

The City of Vancouver was only four years old when the first streetcar rolled down Main Street on June 26, 1890. It was the fourth electric streetcar system in Canada -- six cars and ten kilometres of track. For a nickel fare, passengers perched on hard wooden benches and raced through town at speeds up to 15 kilometres per hour.

Electric streetcars remained the backbone of the transit system for the next 60 years.

In 1891, city cars were joined by the first of the interurbans, the Central Park Line to New Westminster. By the outbreak of World War One, interurban trams ran out to Chilliwack and Steveston as well.



Buses joined the transit fleet in the 1920s. They quickly proved their worth following World War Two motor buses and electric trolley coaches began to replace the streetcar routes. In 1955, the last of the streetcars left Vancouver's streets.

More recently, Vancouver transit has been modernized with the arrival, in 1977, of SeaBus and, in 1986, of the SkyTrain rapid transit system.

Over the past 100 years, transit in Vancouver has grown up with the city. To

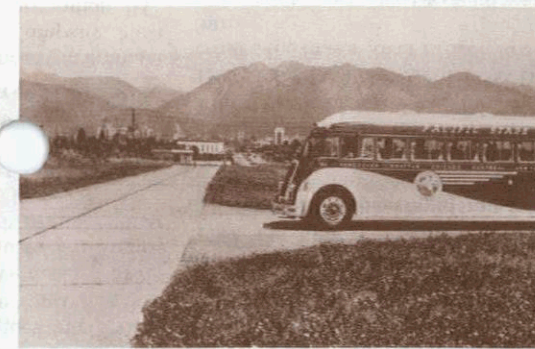
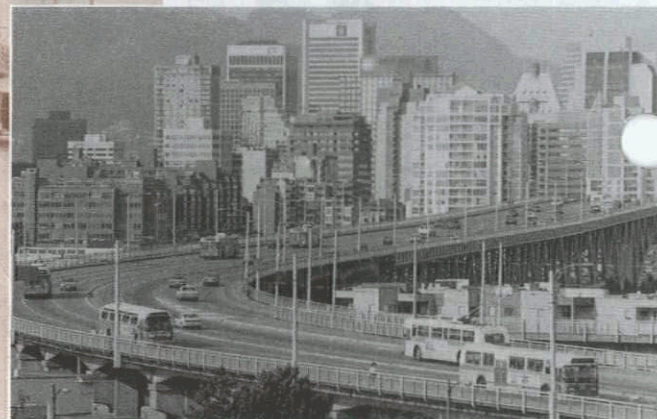
commemorate the centenary, The Buzzer has compiled this photograph album, comparing several historic street scenes with the same views today.

So, here's looking at you, Vancouver!



**THEN:** A police officer directs traffic at the south end of the old Granville Street Bridge in the 1920s.

**NOW:** The modern Granville Bridge with a very different downtown in the background.



**THEN:** One of PSL's "Teardrop" buses at 27th and Cambie, close to today's Queen Elizabeth Park, in 1937.

**NOW:** Cambie is a busy thoroughfare and the construction crane indicates that development continues.



**THEN:** A streetcar arrives at the end of the line at Fraser Street and South West Marine Drive in 1940.

**NOW:** The route is served by trolley coaches and the northeast corner of the intersection is occupied by a hotel.



**THEN:** A PCC streetcar leaves Kootenay Loop on East Hastings in 1955. When introduced to Vancouver in 1939, the PCC was the very latest in streetcar technology.

**NOW:** Kootenay Loop is an important rendezvous for buses.

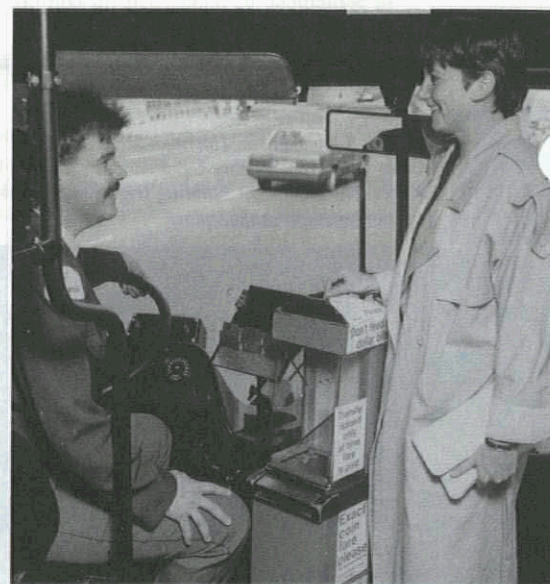






**THEN:** In 1906 a streetcar conductor collects the nickel fare from the passenger while the motorman looks on.

**NOW:** Fares are paid as the passenger boards the bus. Many passengers enjoy the convenience of prepaid fares.



**THEN:** A fleet of 13 streetcars on Main Street during a busy afternoon in 1947. Looking south on Main from Hastings.

**NOW:** Trolley buses on Main Street pass the Carnegie Library, a landmark since 1902.



## Centennial Celebration

### MINI-MUSEUM IN A BUS

Throughout 1990, a specially restored 1957 GM bus sporting the old BC Hydro cream-coloured livery will be visiting shopping malls and municipal halls around the Lower Mainland. Inside, the bus has been fitted out as a mini-museum, full of photographs and memorabilia highlighting 100 years of transit history. Also on view is an 8-minute video telling the story of transit in the city. Look for the bus in your neighbourhood.

### TRANSIT IN BRITISH COLUMBIA: THE FIRST HUNDRED YEARS



is a beautiful coffee-table history published for the centennial. The book is illustrated with hundreds of photographs, many never before seen in print. A perfect gift for anyone who recalls riding the old electric streetcars and interurbans, or who has an interest in Vancouver's colourful past. Available in bookstores and at the Transit Centennial Centre.

### SHARE THE MAGIC, THE HISTORY AND THE PRIDE OF 100 YEARS OF TRANSIT

VISIT THE TRANSIT CENTENNIAL CENTRE  
at Stadium SkyTrain Station

Exhibits include a working scale model of the interurbans and street railways, a gallery of historic photographs, a 30-minute video which uses rare old film footage to take viewers on a guided tour of transit history, and much more. Admission is free and there is something to interest the entire family.

Open Mon-Wed 10 to 5 Thurs-Fri 10 to 9  
Sat, Sun and holidays noon to 5

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## Centennial Celebration

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# The Buzzer

(B.C. Electric and Buzzer logos from the 1920s)

JUNE 26  
1890

JUNE 26  
1990





crosses the harbour in 12 minutes.



**THEN:** Looking north on Granville Street from Georgia in 1910. The original Hudson's Bay store is on the right.

**NOW:** This section of Granville Street is part of a transit-only thoroughfare.



try to test times longer than it has taken the century began.

**1922** On the first day of the year, traffic switches from driving on the left side of the road to driving on the right side.

**1977** On June 17, Seabus goes into operation with two catamaran passenger ferries running between downtown Vancouver and the foot of Lonsdale Avenue in North Vancouver.

routes. By the year 2006 the entire fleet will be accessible to those who use a wheelchair or have difficulty climbing stairs.

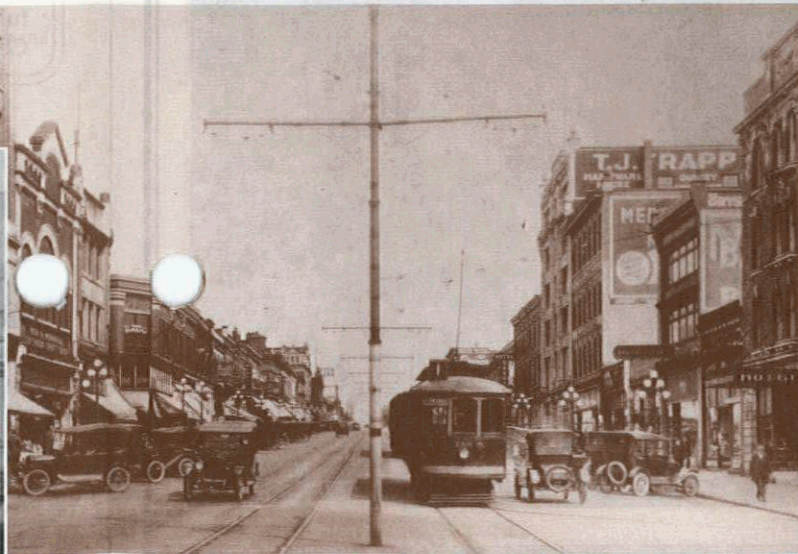


**THEN:** A busy day on Hastings Street in 1936, looking west from Victory Square..  
**NOW:** The Dominion Building (right) still looms over the cenotaph in the square.



**THEN:** A busy Columbia Street in New Westminster in 1922.

**NOW:** A recent photograph shows some of Columbia Street's old buildings still standing.

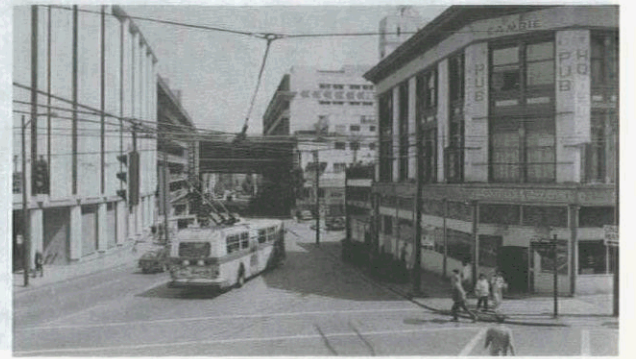


and New Westminster.



**THEN:** In 1896, looking east on Cordova from Cambie. The original BC Electric head office is on the left, shaded by a large canopy.

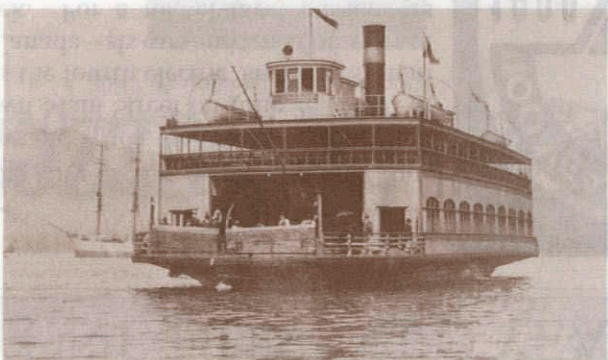
**NOW:** At the same intersection today the old buildings have disappeared, but transit service continues.







**THEN:** Looking north on Main St. from Broadway in 1907. The Mount Pleasant Methodist Church is on the left.  
**NOW:** When the office building on the corner was built before World War One, the owner was told it was too far out of town.



**THEN:** The "St. George," ca. 1910, one of the original vessels providing service to North Vancouver. (Brian Kelly Collection)  
**NOW:** The speedy SeaBus passenger ferry, introduced in 1977,

**THEN:** Two streetcars wait at the foot of Lonsdale Ave. in North Vancouver. Service began on the North Shore in 1906. (North Shore Museum)  
**NOW:** Looking north on Lonsdale, the Paine Hardware store is still visible on the right side of the street.



## A VANCOUVER TRANSIT CHRONOLOGY 1890 - 1990

**1890** On June 26, the first streetcars go for a run on Main Street, then called Westminster Avenue.

**1891** On October 8, Canada's first interurban rail line, between Vancouver and New Westminster, opens for through service. In the same year the New Westminster street railway begins operation.

**1897** The B.C. Electric Railway Company, based in London, England, takes control of all public transit in Vancouver, Victoria and New Westminster.

**1906** On Labour Day, the first streetcar chugs up Lonsdale Avenue, bringing public transit to North Vancouver.

**1909** On September 6, the first open-air, sightseeing car carries the Governor General and a host of dignitaries to the opening of the Granville Street Bridge. Observation cars would be a popular feature of the transit system for the next 40 years.

**1910** Beginning in October, passengers ride the Fraser Valley Interurban all the way from Vancouver to Chilliwack.

**1912** Riding a wave of economic expansion, the population of Vancouver reaches 122,000. The city is four times larger than it was when the

**1923** The first motor buses go into operation in Vancouver, carrying passengers along Grandview and Renfrew to Rupert Street. Buses are used in outlying areas to supplement streetcar service.

**1929** On January 1, the municipalities of Point Grey and South Vancouver amalgamate with Vancouver, more than doubling the size of the city at one stroke.

**1939** The first of the new President's Conference Committee (PCC) streetcars goes into service. Eventually, 36 PCCs joined the Vancouver fleet.

**1948** B.C. Electric officials have decided to replace streetcars with trolley buses. On August 16, the first Brill trolley coach begins regular service.

**1955** On April 24, Vancouver's last streetcar makes its final run.

**1958** The last interurban electric passenger tram makes its final run to Steveston on February 28.

**1961** On August 1, the provincial government nationalizes the B.C. Electric Company. Next year it creates a new Crown corporation, B.C. Hydro and Power Authority.

**1973** The Bureau of Transit Services takes over planning and funding of transit in B.C.

**1978** The Urban Transit Authority, a new Crown corporation, takes over the duties of the Bureau of Transit Services.

**1980** On April 1, the Metro Transit Operating Company takes over the operation of transit in Greater Vancouver and Victoria.

**1982** The Urban Transit Authority becomes BC Transit.

**1985** The Metro Transit Operating Company is merged with BC Transit.

**1986** SkyTrain begins service in time to handle the millions of Expo 86 visitors.

**1989** On July 31, Premier Bill Vander Zalm announces a \$1 billion rapid transit construction program for the Vancouver region, including extensions to SkyTrain, articulated SuperBuses, a new rapid transit connection to Richmond, and a third SeaBus ferry.

**1990** On March 16, regular SkyTrain service crosses the Fraser River to Scott Road Station in Surrey.

In September, 85 wheelchair-lift-equipped conventional buses, representing 10 per cent of the Vancouver Regional Transit System fleet, begin providing service to disabled passengers on 22



**THEN:** An interurban tram leaves the BC Electric building at Carrall and Hastings in the 1920s. The depot was on the ground floor and the company offices above. **NOW:** Used by BCER until 1958, the building now houses a bank and engineering offices.



**THEN:** In 1891, a New Westminster city streetcar and an interurban tram on the newly completed Central Park Line, near Kingsway.  
**NOW:** SkyTrain follows much of the same route between Vancouver