

MOVING THE NEXT GENERATION: CUTA'S YOUTH SUMMIT ON SUSTAINABLE URBAN TRANSPORTATION



Delegates, volunteers, BC organizing committee and task force members share a moment in the sun at the 2008 Youth Summit in Vancouver

The rewards of sustainable transportation include environmental health, economic prosperity and a desirable quality of life. To harvest these fruits tomorrow we must begin work today—and where better to start than with our future leaders? Canada's young people offer boundless energy, radiant intelligence and an unvarnished idealism, not to mention their own very personal stake in building a more sustainable future.

From concept to fruition

Almost a decade ago CUTA launched the idea that Canada's youth could help accelerate change, and has since seen that idea blossom. In 2008, CUTA hosted the fourth Youth Summit on Sustainable Urban Transportation in Vancouver. Together with the first three summits (2002 and 2004 in Ottawa, and 2006 in Montreal), this event brought together young adults from regions across Canada to discover the promise of sustainable transportation while building skills that would help them lead initiatives in their own communities.

Each Youth Summit has been an opportunity for dozens of curious and committed young people aged 17 to 25 to share experiences and ideas among themselves and with volunteer

professionals. The event involves several days of presentations and workshops on sustainable transportation, urban planning, government, advocacy and career development. Mandatory sessions create a common understanding of key issues, while optional sessions let delegates focus on the issues that most interest them. Fun events like scavenger hunts and group dinners give delegates an opportunity to bond as friends.

Before and after each summit, participants meet with their local transit system to talk about sustainable transportation in their community. These meetings build a bond between transit systems and summit delegates, who often play an important ongoing role as local transit ambassadors.

Another key feature of the Youth Summit is a support system that pairs each delegate with an Alumni member from a previous event. This arrangement gives delegates somewhere to turn for advice after the summit, as they work to communicate the message of sustainable transportation and launch projects that will change the future of their communities.

Each summit is organized by a task force that includes representatives of CUTA and its organizational partners, plus six Alumni from different regions of Canada. The task force sets priorities for the topics and issues that will be the focus of the next summit.



Delegates to the 2008 Youth Summit in Vancouver enjoyed working sessions (top) and team-building exercises (bottom)

A living legacy

The Youth Summit creates ambassadors for sustainable transportation—young Canadians who embrace today's initiatives while preparing to lead tomorrow's. The summit equips delegates with the conviction that they can and should make a difference, and that they have the tools to begin taking action in their community.

Delegates improve their understanding in several important areas:

- Sustainable transportation principles in key areas like land use and transportation planning
- Actions they can take to fight pollution and climate change
- Strategies their communities can adopt
- Previous projects and lessons learned
- Decision-making roles of governments and non-governmental organizations
- Ways to get involved and influence decisions

About 320 delegates from across Canada have attended one of four CUTA Youth Summits. A number of them have gone on to pursue post-secondary or graduate degree programs in transportation planning, urban planning or community development. Several delegates have found internships or permanent positions in the sustainable transportation industry. Many have played other important roles in their communities:

- Participating on municipal advisory committees
- Promoting university U-Pass programs
- Creating local advocacy groups such as Saskatoon's SMART (Students Mobilizing for Affordable and Reliable Transportation)
- Organizing a national youth climate change conference
- Creating a sustainable transportation program and guide for elementary school teachers
- Speaking at public consultation sessions on the City of Montreal's transportation plan

A special legacy of the 2008 Youth Summit was a report from Canadian youth to the UITP (the International Association of Public Transport) as part of its Youth Parliaments program. A total of five Youth Parliaments were held in Canada, Germany, South Africa, Turkey and Mexico, bringing young people together to address the global transit industry. A group of 20 Youth Summit participants developed and presented Canada's report in Vancouver—a process that allowed them to highlight issues that concern them and offer proposals for action. CUTA incorporated their report into the first phase of its Vision 2040 project, and will present it to the 58th UITP Congress in Vienna in 2009.



UITP representative Alessandra Gorini (right) at the presentation of Canada's Youth Parliament report by 2008 Youth Summit delegates Pooyaa Rafiee (left) and Anne-Louise Chauvette (middle)

Measuring success

The 2002, 2004, 2006 and 2008 Youth Summits on Sustainable Urban Transportation have received national and international recognition. Post-summit surveys from 2008 clearly demonstrate the importance of sustainable transportation to Canada's youth. Virtually all delegates agreed that the event should be repeated, and the vast majority rated their Youth Summit experience as excellent. A number of them have already launched their follow-up action projects.

The reaction of transit industry stakeholders to CUTA's four Youth Summits has also been very positive. Partners from across Canada have been inspired by delegates' enthusiasm for sustainable transportation. Feedback from transit systems has also been especially warm—with experienced transit administrators getting a huge lift from youth delegates who are full of new ideas and the motivation to create change. These, indeed, will be our sustainable transportation leaders of tomorrow.



(left to right) Guest speakers at the 2006 Youth Summit in Montreal included the Hon. Lawrence Cannon, Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, Glen Murray, then Chair of the National Round Table on the Environment and the Economy, and Derek Drummond, Professor of Architecture at McGill University

2002 Youth Summit Alumni

David Cooper

When David attended the 2002 CUTA Youth Summit in Ottawa, he was graduating from high school and thinking about how to get involved in the transit industry. He left the summit with guidance and knowledge in transit-related fields like urban planning and collaborative community building. David pursued an urban planning degree at Ryerson University, and worked in the Transit Planning Division of Calgary Transit for three rewarding summers. He is an example of the summit's positive impact on delegates' professional development, and a testament to its ability to promote public transit as an industry of choice for their future careers.



Calgary Transit

"I look forward to being a part of the public transit industry for years to come."

2004 Youth Summit Alumni

Elicia Elliott

Elicia saw a poster for the 2004 Youth Summit when she was studying science at the University of Saskatchewan. As a diehard environmentalist, she wanted to learn more about the relationship between the environment and transportation. She found the conference a very enriching experience, letting her learn about what was going on in the world of urban transportation and meet many people with similar interests and questions. Despite her love for physics she knew she could make a real difference in transportation, so switched her major to urban planning. Five years later, she is working as a Transportation Planner with Stantec Consulting on light rail transit, bicycle and pedestrian planning projects in Alberta.

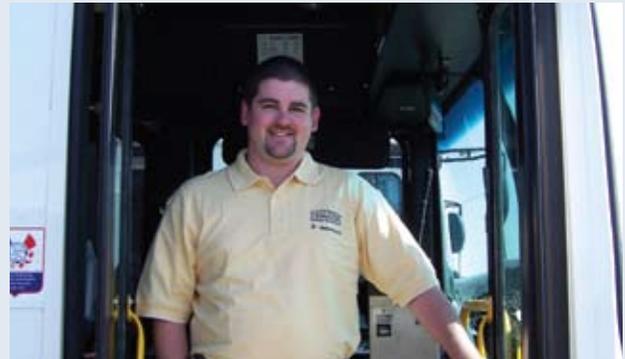


"I have been a delegate, task force member and speaker at CUTA summits—and I couldn't be happier about the educational and professional choices I've made."

2004 Youth Summit Alumni

Dave Reage

Shortly after Dave participated in the 2004 CUTA Youth Summit on Sustainable Transportation, he finished his Master's Degree in Urban and Rural Planning and then entered the transit industry with a consulting firm. Dave is now the Planning and Project Delivery Coordinator for Metro Transit in Halifax, where his responsibilities include project management and service and infrastructure planning. He also represents Metro Transit on the American Public Transportation Association's Bus Rapid Transit Technical Standards Working Group, a group of transit professionals from across North America who are developing technical manuals to help transit providers implement BRT services.



Halifax Regional Municipality

"I attended the 2004 summit thinking public transit might be an interesting industry to work in. After I had the opportunity to learn, gain great experiences and meet wonderful like-minded people at the summit, I was sure of it. I've never regretted my career choice."

2006 Youth Summit Alumni

Simon L'Allier

For Simon, participating in the 2006 Youth Summit led to important transitions in his personal and intellectual development. First, it strongly influenced the topic of his Master's degree in political science (an evaluation of public consultation undertaken for the City of Montreal's transportation plan). It also brought him to the University of British Columbia's School of Community and Regional Planning, where he began a graduate degree in urban planning with a special interest in transportation.



"The Montreal summit was a profound revelation that opened my eyes to the many dimensions of urban transportation and its academic and professional opportunities."

2006 Youth Summit Alumni

Julie Rogal

Julie got interested in public transportation in 2005, when she spent a work term at TransLink as a Simon Fraser University co-op student. Her interest in transit soon turned into a passion when she began to work directly with persons with disabilities on accessible transportation initiatives. In 2006, she attended the CUTA Youth Summit in Montreal, where she met many motivational delegates and speakers. The summit inspired her to develop a proposal for a travel training program at TransLink, and a few months later she began to work for the organization's Access Transit Office on system accessibility initiatives—including the development of a new travel training program for the Metro Vancouver area.



TransLink

"The Youth Summit gave me the knowledge, inspiration, resources and support I needed to start my own sustainable transportation initiative in Vancouver."

2008 Youth Summit Alumni

Pascale Vaillancourt

Pascale found the Youth Summit to be a unique experience. Although she has worked in communications and marketing for the Société de transport de l'Outaouais (STO) for several years, she found all the summit sessions interesting and exciting. She learned more about the importance of sustainability and the potential for combining various travel modes to reduce congestion and give cities back to their residents.



Société de transport de l'Outaouais

"The Youth Summit improved my ability to use colours, words and images to promote green travel modes, and to change the perceptions and habits of individuals."



The Canadian Urban Transit Association (CUTA) is the voice of Canada's public transit industry. For additional information including research reports, industry updates, news bulletins and more, please contact us or visit our website.



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