

3. Transportation

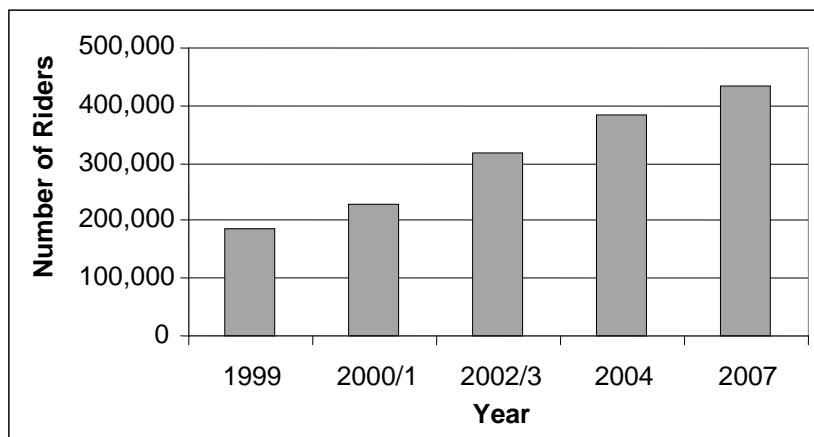


3.1 Public Transit Usage

Currently there are 47 employees working for Watson and Ash Transportation Co.: the operators of Comox Valley Transit.⁷¹ The bus service has increased all rides. Buses run by the hour until 10 pm with rides now operating on Sundays.⁷²

All public buses are low floor buses with the ability to get inches away from the sidewalk making it easier to walk onto a bus. Each bus has spaces that can accommodate two wheelchairs. As well, for commuters who enjoy biking, there are bike racks on the front of every bus.

Figure : Public Transit Usage - Comox Valley



Source: Watson and Ash Transportation Co.

The growth of the ridership on the Comox Valley Transit is the largest in the province at 22% in the past year.⁷³ The April 1, 2008 to March 31, 2009 reporting period saw a ridership increase of 68,000 over the previous reporting period.⁷⁴ In Figure 15 below, students are the largest users of the system (40%), followed by adults (27%) and seniors (6%).

⁷¹ Profile Canada. Company Profile – Watson and Ash Transportation Co.

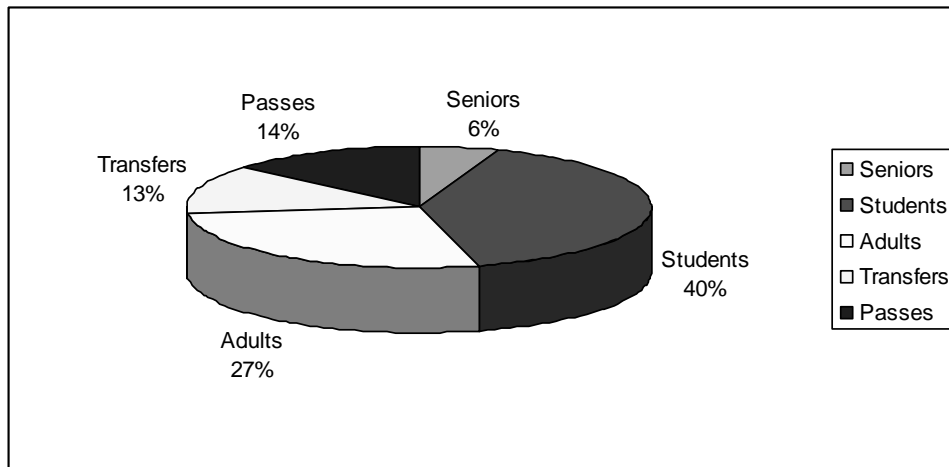
⁷² Comox Valley Transit System. Route 1 - Town Shuttle Loop.

⁷³ CVRD, Comox Valley Transit Has Fastest-Growing Ridership in BC For Second Year In A Row.

⁷⁴ Karen Sankey, Operation Manager, Comox Valley Transit. Telephone conversation July 2009.

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Figure : Percentage Breakdown of Ridership for 2008/09



Karen Sankey, Operation Manager, Comox Valley Transit. July 09.



3.2 Accessible Services

Accessible services provide an alternate system to patrons who have mobility difficulties, or use wheelchairs or scooters. The Comox Valley offers two types of accessible services: handiDART and the Community Bus service.

Fares for handyDART and the public transit system remain the same as in 2004.

3.3 HandiDART Usage

HandiDART is a direct pick-up and drop-off at desired locations, allowing people who cannot find their way to other public transportation the ability to travel in the community. They operate from Monday through Friday, 8 am until 4pm, and Saturdays from 10 am until 4 pm. No service is available on Sundays.

HandyDART now operates five vehicles and has two spares: an increase of one vehicle and one spare since 2004. Vehicle capacity limits the number of passengers to four. On average the length of time for pick up/drop off is an hour. Each vehicle is equipped to hold 4 wheelchairs or 2 scooters.⁷⁵

3.4 Mobility Impairment Permit Holders

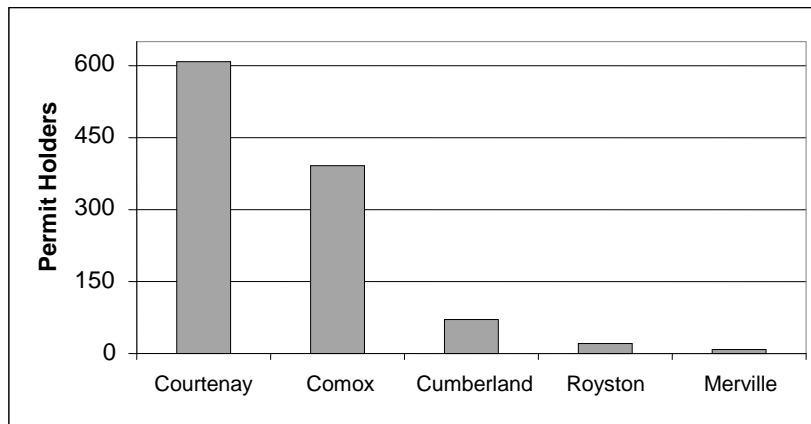
Mobility impairment permits grant special access privileges to people with disabilities. These permits increase the comfort level of permit holders, and promote access to community amenities.

⁷⁵ Comox Valley Transit System. HandyDART.

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The number of permit holders continues to increase throughout the province. The Comox Valley increased to 1,101 permit holders in 2007 from 425 in 2004.

Figure : Mobility Impairment Permit Holders - Comox Valley



Source: Social Planning and Research Council of British Columbia (SPARC BC).

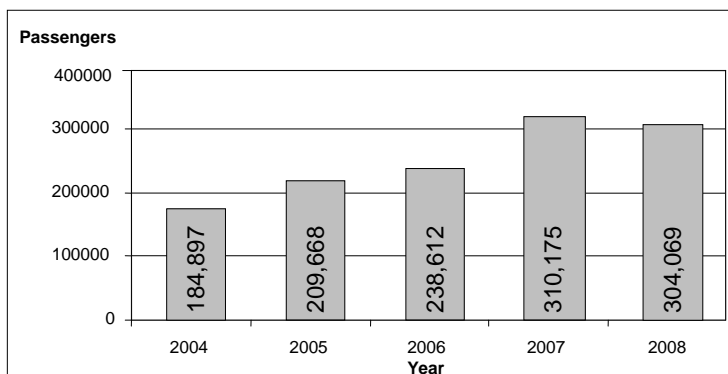
Through SPARC's (Social Planning and Research Council) new reporting system, we are now able to view how many individuals in each town are Mobility Impairment Permit holders. These are accurate numbers for people who have current up-to-date permits. Although a few people may use expired permits, it is not possible to know how many vehicles continue to display permits that have expired.



3.5 Comox Valley Airport Usage

The Comox Valley Airport, since the new terminal opened in 2004, has added flights and airlines to their roster. Passenger volume through the airport continues to increase.

Figure : Comox Valley Airport Annual Passenger Volume



Source: Comox Valley Airport Administration.

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When the new terminal opened in 2004, 102 staff members were employed; in 2008 the number has increased to 180 staff. The number of passengers has grown steadily from 44,558 in the first four months of 2003 to 238,612 in the first months of 2007. By 2008, the total passenger volume was 304,069, and the first quarter of 2009 has the count at 61,000, down from the highest quarter 75,148 in 2008.⁷⁶

In addition to the airlines available in 2004, Central Mountain Air, Pacific Coastal Airlines, and West Jet, there are now flights available on Air Canada, Sunwing Vacations, and Transat Holidays.

⁷⁶ Tourism British Columbia Research & Planning, *Tourism Indicators – Data Tables*, April 2009.