



# Connecting Canada: Lessons from mapping intercity connections

Sean Marshall



# Who I am

- Geographer, based in Toronto
- Frequent traveler, often by bus and rail
- Transportation advocate; co-founder of Walk Toronto
- Freelance writer and consultant, including work for municipalities, community organizations
- Past contributor for TVO on intercity bus and rail issues in Ontario

# Mapping Canada's intercity links

- In 2020, I began developing an intercity transportation map for Ontario to show where services existed and where gaps were
- Contacted by Infrastructure Canada in 2023 to develop a Canada-wide map





# Importance of inter-community transport

- Students
- Employment
- Medical and social services
- Seniors
- Tourism
- Above all, it's an equity issue



# 1983 Ontario Intercity Guide

## ONTARIO INTERCITY GUIDE

LEGEND    *LÉGENDE*

- 
- LONDON**
- Major Transportation Centre**  
Cœur des transports
- Transit**  
Community with intercity service  
Collectivité avec service interurbain
- ✈ Major Airport**  
Aéroport principal
- ✈ Minor Airport**  
Aéroport secondaire
- Scheduled Bus Service to / From Toronto International Airport**  
Service d'autobus à horaire fixe desservant l'aéroport international de Toronto
- Daily Scheduled Bus Service**  
Service d'autobus quotidien à horaire fixe
- Non-daily Scheduled Air Service**  
Service aérien non quotidien à horaire fixe
- Daily Scheduled Bus Service**  
Service d'autobus quotidien à horaire fixe
- Non-daily Scheduled Bus Service**  
Service d'autobus non quotidien à horaire fixe
- Daily Scheduled Rail Service**  
Service ferroviaire quotidien à horaire fixe
- Non-daily Scheduled Rail Service**  
Service ferroviaire non quotidien à horaire fixe
- Community with multiple service**  
Collectivité desservie par plusieurs moyens de transport

\* Some service may not operate on weekends or holidays.  
Certains services ne sont pas assurés en fin de semaine et les jours fériés.

FOR CURRENT SCHEDULE, FARE AND ROUTING INFORMATION  
CONTACT CARRIERS LISTED IN THE DIRECTORY ON THE REVERSE  
SIDE OR YOUR TRAVEL AGENT.

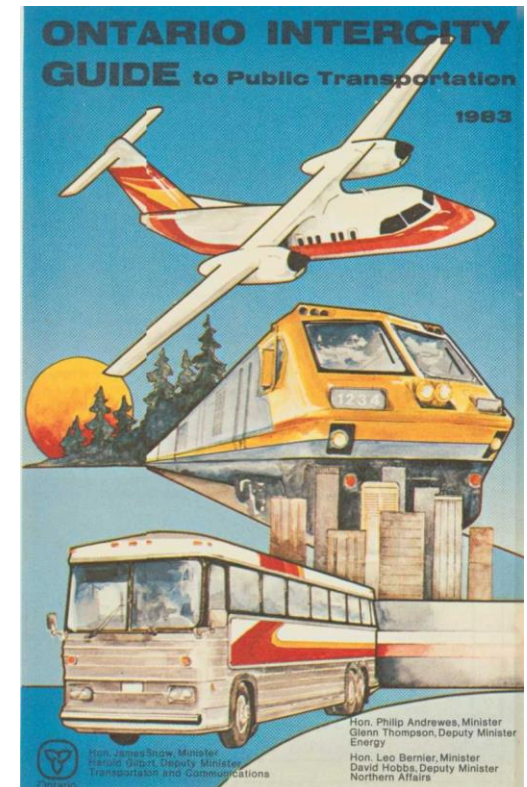
THIS SCHEMATIC MAP IS NOT TO SCALE  
CETTE CARTE SCHÉMATIQUE N'EST PAS À L'ÉCHELLE

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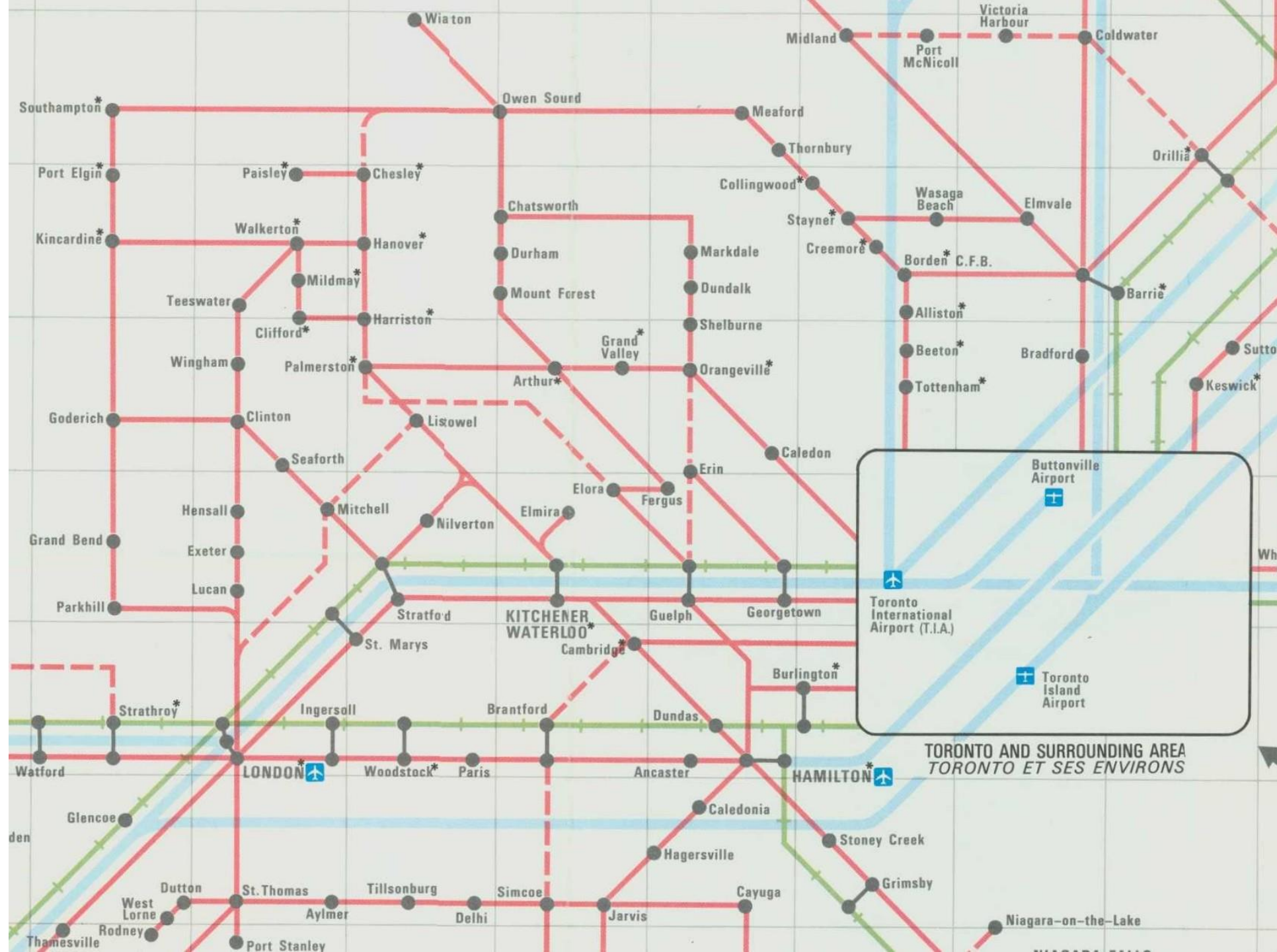


Hon. Philip Andrewes, Minister  
Glenn Thompson, Deputy Minister  
Energy

Hon. Leo Bernier, Minister  
David Hobbs, Deputy Minister  
Northern Affairs



1983



2019



# What happened?

- Railway cuts in 1990 and 2012
- Bus industry consolidation and cutbacks
- Degradation of networks
- Rise of MegaBus
- Decline and fall of Greyhound - abandoned Western Canada in 2018, Ontario & Quebec in 2020
- GO Transit expansion – created new links but drew patronage from existing intercity carriers



# Intercity buses can work, even in the North

- Private sector:  
Kasper Transportation in Northwestern Ontario
- Public sector:  
Ontario Northland in Northeastern Ontario
- Fills gap left by Greyhound's departure in 2018, while serving new routes



# Regional services in Southern Ontario

- New municipal-led rural and interurban transit in Niagara, Waterloo, York, and Durham Regions, as well as Simcoe County
- Rural services in Greater Sudbury, Chatham-Kent, and Bay of Quinte region
- Intercommunity transit grants 2020 - 2025



# Post-Greyhound

- Ontario Intercommunity Transportation Grants funded over a dozen new services in Southern Ontario – those are coming to an end
- New private-sector intercity carriers: Onex Bus, Intercity Bus, Rider Express, Flixbus
- De-regulation allows for multiple operators on a single route





# Mapping Canada's intercity bus links



# Demonstration

<https://walkitect.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=eaca22eb7e7149b9b4bbace2d9cb3a41>

# Map features

- Routes depicted by type and frequency (intercity, regional, etc.)
- Links to carriers' websites for detailed information and booking
- Major bus stops and terminals included
- Gaps are immediately apparent – no bus service across the Quebec – New Brunswick border, for example



# Challenges

- Trade-offs between community-led services and large network-based services
- Major gaps remain despite new services, especially in Western Canada



# Challenges

- Need for sustainable, long-term support for intercity and rural transportation
- Collaboration between all levels of government and private-sector partners
- Central bookings, joint terminals, through-ticketing and scheduling





# Leverage existing resources

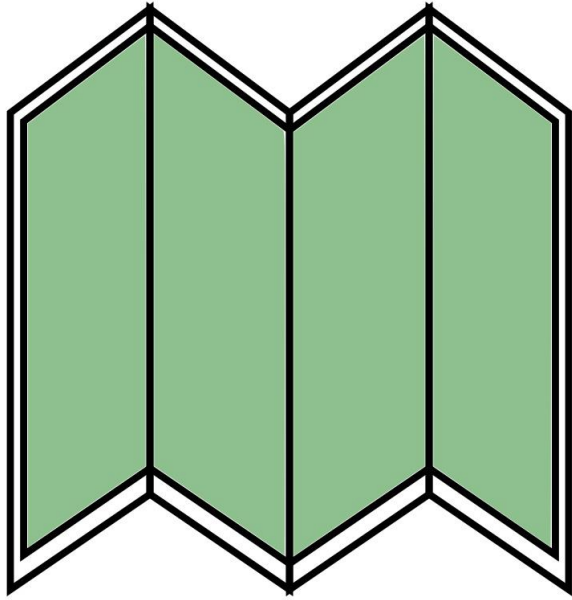
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# Next steps

- Publicize this mapping project
- Partner with local and regional agencies to maintain the map and directory
- Connect with other online services (BusBud, Betterez)
- Use map to advocate for schedule and terminal integration, through ticketing, local connections, better stop locations



# Thank you!

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