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Report: Halifax hasn't kept pace with green transit movement

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The west coast is the best coast in Canada when it comes to having the greenest urban transportation, according to a new study on environmentally friendly public transit.

Victoria and Vancouver placed first and second respectively in a survey of 27 metropolitan areas, says the study, funded by a Toronto charity and prepared by researchers in that city and Vancouver.

Halifax didn't crack the Top 10 — it achieved a C grade in placing 11th — but the study's authors were tough on all municipalities canvassed. None received an A.

The inaugural GreenApple Canada report, commissioned by the Appleton Charitable Foundation, said Victoria

and Vancouver are at the head of the public transit class because they have better "sustainable urban transportation practices" than other Canadian centres.

Both British Columbia cities have high-density housing, which means transit systems can be more cost-effective, and many hybrid taxis are on the roads there. In Victoria, 36 per cent of municipal vehicles use alternative fuels.

Canada's two largest cities, Toronto and Montreal, tied for fifth place.

A news release from the charitable foundation says the ranking examined such policy categories as air-quality measures, anti-idling laws and public transit infrastructure.

The urban areas surveyed represent two-thirds of Canada's population. Rankings were released Friday at an

event in Vancouver.

Halifax Regional Municipality didn't get trashed in the GreenApple report, but was chastised for its lack of a bylaw prohibiting vehicle idling and for the apparent absence of hybrid taxis — cabs with propelled by gasoline-electric motors.

"Halifax could also show leadership by providing a discounted transit pass to its (municipal) employees, similar to what other major cities have begun to do," the report says.

It says the city should be commended for its "high percentage of residents walking, bicycling or taking public transit to work." The report says these methods accounted for about a fifth of all trips to workplaces.

"This is the second-best showing for an urban region of this size in Canada."

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