

British Columbia Electric Railway (BCER)

Transit in B.C.'s three major urban areas (Vancouver, Victoria, New Westminster) was introduced by companies other than the BCER. These companies eventually merged to form the Consolidated Railway & Light Co. But a tragic event in 1896 ensured that Consolidated Railway would not operate the province's transit. A river bridge in Victoria collapsed, killing 55 people. Although an inquiry would later put blame on the city, Consolidated suffered from shaken investor and customer confidence and went into bankruptcy. The company was sold to the Colonial Railway and Investment Company of eastern Canada. This company in turn sold it to a new London based company. The British Columbia Electric Railway Company began an association with the province which lasted 65 years. (Or more, because although the company was appropriated by the province of British Columbia on August 1st, 1961, and renamed BC Hydro and Power Authority on March 30, 1962, it was not dissolved until May 10, 1983.)

The BCER was more than just a [street and interurban railway](#) -it built hydro-electric dams and provided the province with most of its electric and natural gas energy. In 1962 it was [provincialised](#), and renamed British Columbia Hydro & Power Authority. Over the following years, the Crown corporation lost its transit, railway and natural gas divisions, retaining just its electric power obligations.

Planning and funding transit operations were returned to the government itself under the Bureau Of Transit Services (BTS) in the mid 70s. The BTS became the Urban Transit Authority in 1978 and BC Transit in 1982. BC Hydro continued to operate the transit services in Vancouver and Victoria.

In 1980, BC Hydro's transit divisions in Vancouver and Victoria became a separate organisation, Metro Transit Operating Co, before being merged into BC Transit in 1985.

BC Transit is currently responsible for all transit services in B.C., but this will change in 1999 when the Greater Vancouver Regional District will take over transit responsibilities for the lower mainland area of the province.

More Information

 Chart showing the corporate history of BC Transit. This is very

BCER history

preliminary and incomplete. Companies on Victoria Island, and other areas of the province have yet to be added.

Books about the BCER and transit in British Columbia.



Transit In British Columbia: The First Hundred Years , Kelly & Francis, Harbour Publishing, 1-55017-021-X, 338.4'09711

Lighted Journey: The Story of the B.C. Electric, Maiden, 338.3909

The Story Of B.C. Electric Railway Company, Ewert, Whitecap Books, 092062054X

Gaslights to Gigawatts, Hurricane Press