



Fast

FACTS

CANADIAN CENTRE FOR POLICY ALTERNATIVES - MANITOBA

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All Aboard! Moving Transportation Equity Forward in Winnipeg

Transportation is essential for getting almost everything we need in our daily lives. Finding a job or getting to work, getting groceries, seeing friends and family, accessing healthcare or social services all require the ability to get there. But accessing transportation is a major problem for many low-income and Inner City residents who struggle to get to where they need to go, when they need to be there. Understanding this issue is the focus of year's State of the Inner City report.

Transportation disadvantage is the inability to travel to where and when one needs to go without difficulty. A person is more likely to experience transportation disadvantage if they are low-income, minority status, and lack a motorized vehicle. Many people in Winnipeg, especially in the Inner City, suffer from transportation disadvantage.

A lack of affordability contributes to transportation disadvantage. After paying for rent and other expenses many low-income Winnipeggers struggle to afford to take transit. This means that many people are either walking long distances or going without other necessities in order to afford to take transit. The recent 25 cent fare increase on Winnipeg Transit has hit low-income residents hard.

When people are dependent on transit, it's essential that buses run on time. But

Winnipeg Transit is struggling with both schedules and capacity because the City and the Province don't invest in transit the way other cities and provinces have.

The transportation service for physically disabled persons should be reasonably equivalent to the service provided to able-bodied persons by the regular fixed route system. But advocates and users of Handi-Transit say that the service currently provided by Handi-Transit is nowhere near equivalent to the service that able-bodied persons receive.

For people who experience transportation disadvantage, safety is also a major concern. For transit riders, people have said they are nervous at times walking to, and waiting at bus stops. Indigenous women have expressed fears about walking alone at night as well as concerns about safety and discrimination when taking taxis.

One way to begin to address transportation disadvantage is to bring in the concept of transportation equity into the conversation around transit and active transportation. Transportation equity is the idea that everyone, regardless of physical ability, economic class, race, sex, gender identity, age or ability to pay should have access to

there is an alternative.

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public transit and active transportation options. Bringing equity into the conversation on transportation planning means asking questions like ‘who benefits from this investment?’ and ‘who might it disadvantage?’

Equity is not the same thing as equality. Equality means treating everyone the same. Equity on the other hand means acknowledging that people have unequal access to opportunities and services and demands that people are given what they need to achieve equal outcomes.

The time to act on equity is now: policy documents directing transportation in Winnipeg-The Winnipeg Transit Master Plan and *Our Winnipeg*-are being developed and renewed. Meaningful consultation with individuals who experience transportation disadvantage should inform the development of these documents. In addition, land use planning policies need to connect and protect low-income communities. Better monitoring and data collection on transportation with disadvantaged populations is needed because currently there is no data on how many Winnipeggers qualify as transport disadvantaged or what their experiences look like. Understanding the problem can produce better public policy.

Greater investment in transit and active transportation options is required. Unfortunately, the opposite has taken place. In 2017 the Province of Manitoba announced it would freeze funding to Winnipeg Transit at 2016 levels, leading to a \$10 million shortfall in the operating budget. A recent poll showed that four out of five Winnipeg voters in favour of the Province restoring the 50/50 funding agreement.

But additional investment is also needed. Other cities are investing significantly more than in Winnipeg. Winnipeg spends approximately \$207 per person on transit, Edmonton spends closer to \$334 and Ottawa spends over \$386 per person. *The Alternative Municipal Budget 2018* recommends an investment of \$25 million per year over four years to

Winnipeg Transit in order to reach parity with these other cities. *The Alternative Budget* recommends increasing the active transportation budget by \$0.667 million per year over the next five years with the expectation that this amount be matched the two senior levels of government.

Encouragingly, the City is moving ahead with a low-income bus pass. Ensuring that people can afford to take the bus is an important tool in fighting poverty and improving health outcomes. It can also reduce violence that drivers face as ninety percent of attacks against drivers involve fare disputes. The specifics of the design of the low-income pass however needs to consult community-based organizations that serve the targeted population. Low-income individuals themselves should also be consulted to ensure that the pass meets their needs.

Other aspects of improving transportation equity includes improving service for transit-dependent populations; improving the active transportation network; ensuring adequate snow removal and addressing safety concerns-especially for Indigenous women.

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