

Getting Around to Age in Place

Meeting Older Canadians' Mobility Needs
via Public Transportation

Greater Saskatoon

Summary Report

Produced by Mathew Page, Meredith Alousi-Jones, Sarah Sagner, Adele Valero, Thiago Carvalho dos Reis Silveira, Merrina Zhang, Isabella Jimenez, and Ahmed El-Geneidy.

All photos and maps used in this report have been sourced from the Transportation Research at McGill (TRAM) lab.

June 2025

For citation, please use:

Page, M., Alousi-Jones, M., Sagner, S., Valero, A., Carvalho, T., Zhang, M., Jimenez, I., & El-Geneidy, A. (2025). Getting Around to Age in Place: Greater Saskatoon Summary Report. Transportation Research at McGill, McGill University, Canada.

Territorial Acknowledgment

We would like to acknowledge that McGill University is located on unceded Indigenous lands. Tiohtià:ke/Montréal has long served as a site of meeting and exchange among Indigenous peoples, including the Kanien'kehá:ka of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy, Huron/Wendat, Abenaki, and Anishinaabeg, among others. TRAM recognizes and respects these nations as the traditional stewards of the lands and waters. We respect the continued relationship these diverse Indigenous peoples have with the territory upon which we now gather.

Research Acknowledgment

We are grateful for the ongoing insights from the following key people and project advisory members in informing this study: Vicki from Victoria and David from Montréal, Transport Canada, Canadian Transportation Agency, Statistics Canada, Employment and Social Development Canada, and Toronto Transit Commission (TTC).

We would like to thank current and previous TRAM members who contributed to the study: Hisham Negm, Rodrigo Victoriano-Habit, Lancelot Rodrigue, Aryana Soliz, Carolyn Birkenfeld, Manuel Santana Palacios, Paul Redelmeier, Alice Gerebtzoff, Laurel Johannson, Rosalie Joly-Simard, Ehab Diab, and Léa Ravensbergen. Finally, we would like to thank Tim Elrick (GIC) for training the team members in technical skills and Daniel Schwartz from McGill IT Customer Services for his assistance in developing the online survey.

This research is funded by the National Research Council of Canada (NRC) Aging in Place Challenge program (AiP-023-1). The content and views expressed in this report are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the Government of Canada.

Summary

Older adults represent a rapidly-growing age group in Canada, and many rely on private vehicles for their daily travel. Despite the risk of having to give up driving as they age, the impact of driving cessation on older adults' mobility and wellbeing is still poorly understood. The Getting Around to Age in Place project, conducted by the Transportation Research at McGill (TRAM) research lab and funded by the National Research Council Canada (NRC), centers on older adults' perceptions of their travel patterns and how daily mobility affects their lives. The Aging in Place survey (N=3,551) was conducted in six metropolitan regions across Canada in 2023. This report presents a summary of the survey findings from Greater Saskatoon (N= 79). For further details about the project, and comparative data for all six regions please see the [Aging in Place Final Report 2022-2025](#).

Key Findings

A majority of older adults in Greater Saskatoon believed that daily travel contributes positively to their **quality of life**, and stated that continuing to travel **independently** is very important to them. However, many older adults were concerned about whether they could remain in their current neighbourhood due to changing mobility needs as they age.

Driving remains the main mode of transport for many older adults. One-half of Saskatoon respondents did not believe the public transit system allows them to satisfy their **daily needs**. Around one in twenty respondents are **frequent transit users**, taking transit at least once a week.

Older adults in Saskatoon commonly considered **20 or 30 minutes** as the most reasonable travel times for a public transit trip.

The most common **destinations for older adults' public transit trips** were medical appointments, grocery and shopping, recreation activities, and seeing friends and family.

Among transit users, overall **satisfaction** with the service is quite low. Respondents were particularly **concerned** about the convenience, reliability and safety of public transit in Greater Saskatoon.

Over one-third of older adults reported having some type of **disability or health condition** which limits their mobility. More than half of respondents who identified as having a disability felt that the transit system does not meet their needs.

Over half of older adults in Saskatoon lacked **knowledge about how the public transit system works**, and knowledge of paratransit services was limited.

In open-ended questions, some Saskatoon residents praised their transit service. The main sources of **concern** centred around using public transportation in winter weather, convenience



INTRODUCTION

One in six people around the world will be 60 years or older by 2030 (World Health Organization, 2021). In Canada, older adults rely mostly on private vehicles as their main mean of transport (Newbold et al., 2005). However, not all older adults have access to a car, and, as they age, many have to regulate their driving or even stop driving altogether (Musselwhite & Shergold, 2013). Public transit can play a crucial role in facilitating the ongoing mobility of older adults. However, research on older adults' public transit use is limited, especially in the Canadian context (Ravensbergen et al., 2022).

The Getting Around to Age in Place project conducted by the Transportation Research at McGill (TRAM) research lab and funded by the National Research Council of Canada

(NRC) seeks to better understand older adults' perceptions of their travel patterns and how daily mobility affects their lives. This project examines how well public transit services across Canada are supporting the needs of older adults and their ability to age in place.

In order to capture variations in regional contexts and differing transit service levels, the NRC, alongside key stakeholders, selected six Census Metropolitan areas (CMAs) as focus areas for the study: Toronto, Montréal, Vancouver, Halifax, Victoria, and Saskatoon.

This report presents a summary of the key findings for the Greater Saskatoon region. For a more comprehensive outline of the project, the methods used, and comparisons across regions we invite you to read the [Aging in Place Final Report 2022-2025](#).

Greater Saskatoon

Greater Saskatoon is the largest metropolitan region in Saskatchewan, Canada, with a population of 317,480 residents. In 2021, 15% of the population were aged 65 or over (Statistics Canada, 2023), a figure which is only expected to grow in the future (City of Saskatoon, n.d.)

The majority of Saskatoon residents commute using private vehicles (90%), while 3% use public transit, 4% walk, and 1% cycle (Statistics Canada, 2023).

The Saskatoon transit system consists mainly of fixed route buses which reported 12.3 million trips in 2023. The Access Transit paratransit service had 2,304 registered customers in 2023, and recorded 136,229 trips (City of Saskatoon, 2024).

Older adults aged 65 and over receive discounted fares on transit in Saskatoon (Saskatoon Transit, 2025).

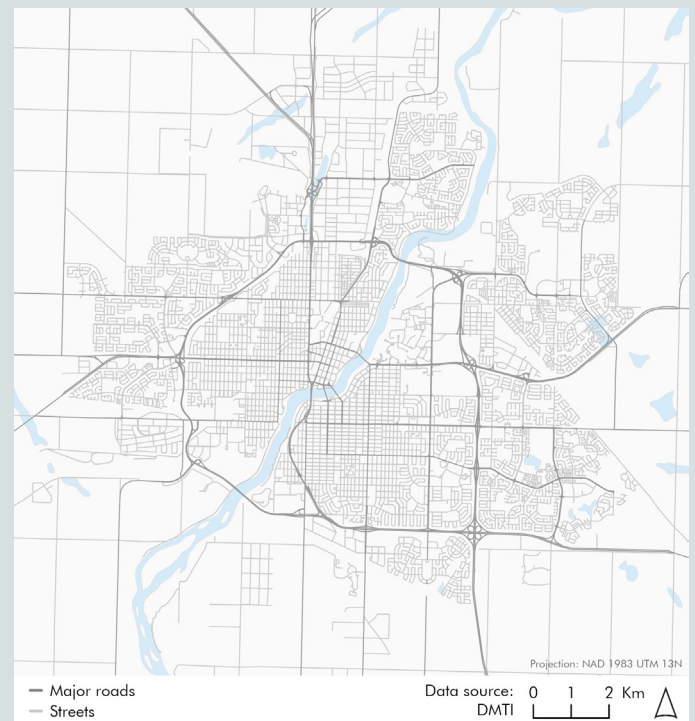


Figure 1 Study area: Greater Saskatoon CMA, with main public transit routes highlighted

SURVEY AND SAMPLE CHARACTERISTICS

Survey Design and Recruitment

A survey was conducted to collect first-hand accounts of older Canadians' perceptions and experiences of public transit in their region, as well as to better understand the impact of their daily travel on their wellbeing. The survey design process included the TRAM team, NRC project managers, the project advisory committee members, and the appointed Experts by Experience. It was estimated the survey would take respondents 20 to 25 minutes to complete, and was circulated in French and English.

Recruitment methods included a paid advertisement campaign on Facebook which targeted users aged 65 years and over. Leger, a Canadian firm specializing in public opinion and surveys, was also hired to recruit respondents.

The survey was launched in early February 2023 and remained open until mid-March 2023. This report covers the results of the first wave of the survey. Further details about the survey design, recruitment, the second wave, and data cleaning processes can be found in the [Aging in Place Final Report 2022-2025](#).

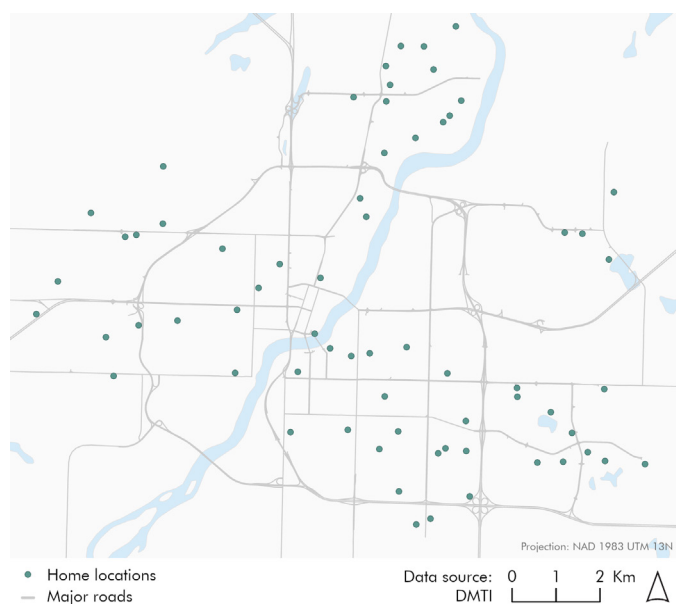


Figure 2 Home locations of survey respondents within the Greater Saskatoon CMA

Sample Characteristics

A total of 79 responses were collected from Greater Saskatoon in the first wave of the survey. Respondents' home locations are well distributed across residential areas throughout the Greater Saskatoon Census Metropolitan Area (Figure 2).

Sample characteristics were compared with data from the 2021 census (Statistics Canada, 2023) in order to gauge how representative the survey respondents are of the older population of the entire CMA (Table 1). Women are well represented in the sample of respondents compared to the CMA, and the sample is well distributed across income groups. Respondents tend to be younger, mostly aged 65 to 74, compared to the CMA. Just over 87% of respondents were retired or not in the workforce.

Table 1 Demographic characteristics compared with the older population in CMA

		Survey Respondents		Greater Saskatoon	
Total N		79	100.0%	46,995	14.8%*
Gender	Man	29	36.7%	20,765	44.2%
	Woman	50	63.3%	26,235	55.8%
	Other	0	0.0%	-	-
Age	65 to 74	59	74.7%	27,175	57.8%
	75 to 84	20	25.3%	12,935	27.5%
	85+	0	0.0%	6,890	14.7%
Household Income (CAD)	< 30k	14	23.7%	-	-
	30k - 60k	17	28.8%	-	-
	60k - 90k	12	20.3%	-	-
	90k - 150k	14	23.7%	-	-
	> 150k	2	3.4%	-	-
Work Status	Employed	10	12.7%	-	-
	Not in WkF	69	87.3%	-	-

* Represents the proportion of the older population (65+) of the total CMA population (2021 Census)

SURVEY RESULTS

Older Adults Travel Behaviour

Older adults in Saskatoon used private vehicles in large numbers. 94% of respondents held a valid driver's licence and 84% felt confident driving. About two-thirds (68%) of respondents had driven a car in the last two days. Still, some older residents used public transit, with 19% of respondents having made their last trip by public transit. Very few (6%) of respondents were frequent transit users, taking public transit at least once a week in the previous year. On the other hand, 66% of respondents had not taken public transit at all in the previous 12 months. Frequency of public transit use is seen to decline with age (Figure 3).

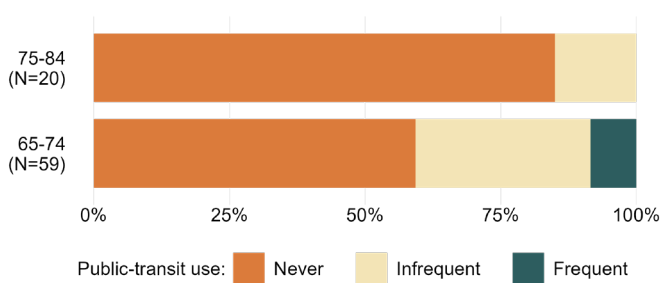


Figure 3 Frequency of public transit use in previous 12 months by age

Independent Travel and Wellbeing

The results highlighted the importance of daily travel to older adults' wellbeing and continued independence. In Saskatoon, almost all respondents (92%) agreed to the statement "as I get older, it is important for me to continue to travel independently", reinforcing the need to provide transport options that aid older adults to keep traveling independently, such as public transit, walking and cycling. 79% of older adults in Saskatoon agreed that "daily travel contributes positively to [their] quality of life." Those who used public transit more frequently were more likely to agree with this statement than infrequent users.

Ability to Age in Place

Older adults expressed a desire to be able to age in place. 76% of respondents agreed that "as I get older, it is important for me to continue to live in my current neighbourhood." Despite this strong desire to age in place, 32% agreed with the statement "I am concerned about whether I will be able to remain in my neighbourhood because of my changing transport needs and capabilities as I get older." Infrequent (41%) and non-transit users (31%) were more likely to be concerned (see Figure 4). Of those who had driven recently, 45% agreed that there would be "no adequate travel alternatives" around their home if they had to stop driving.

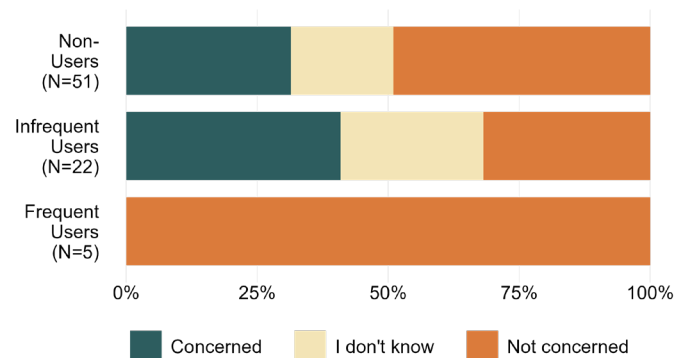


Figure 4 Concerned about ability to remain in current neighbourhood as they get older?

Intention to Move

Around 35% of older Saskatchewanians indicated that they are considering moving in the next five years. Affordability was identified as the main factor in this consideration, chosen by 46% of respondents who are considering moving. Living in a place with more assistance was an important factor for 36% of those who are thinking about moving. Mobility and access to destinations were also key considerations for many respondents. Desires (or needs) to live in a more walkable environment, near public transit, and near parks and nature (25% each) were all important considerations.

Public Transit Modes

The two main forms of public transportation in the Greater Saskatoon area are the bus and paratransit services. The bus was much more frequently used than paratransit. Among older adults who had used public transit in the previous 12 months, the vast majority (85%) used the bus. Alternatively, 15% of respondents used paratransit.

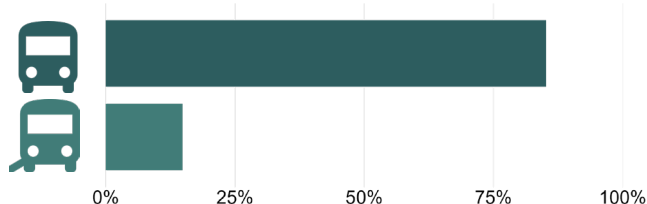


Figure 5 Transit modes used at least once in the past year in Saskatoon (transit users only)

Destinations Reached using Transit

The most common destinations for older adults using public transit were medical appointments (37%), shopping (33%), recreation (30%), and trips to and from the grocery store (26%). Respondents also used public transit to see family and friends (11%).

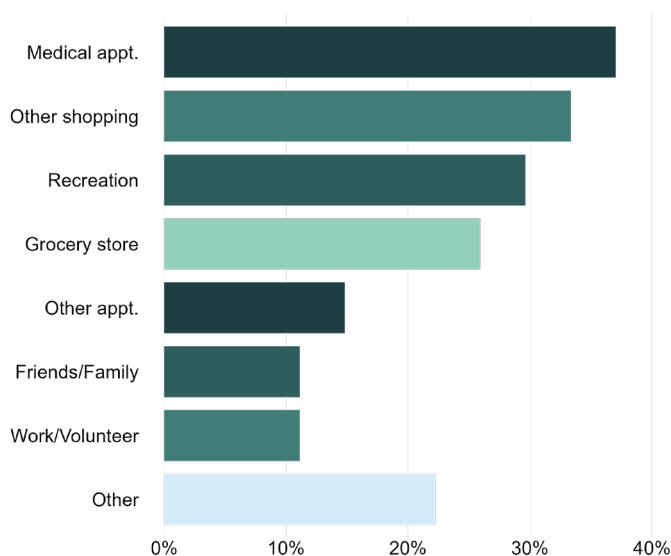


Figure 6 Destinations reached using transit in the past year in Saskatoon (% of transit users)

Travel Times

Responses revealed that older adults in Saskatoon primarily used public transit during off-peak times (Figure 7). This could directly impact older adults, as transit services are often less frequent at off-peak times, and fewer connections and opportunities are possible.

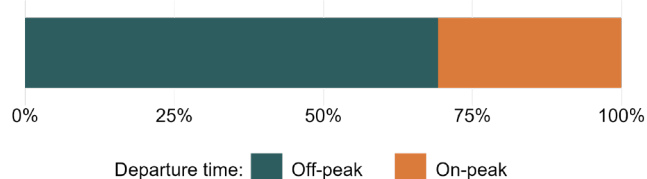


Figure 7. Time of most recent public transit trip

Reasonable Transit Travel Times

When planning public transit for older Canadians, it is important to consider their specific daily travel needs, behaviours and expectations. Respondents were asked what they consider to be a reasonable time to reach their desired destinations by public transit. 20 and 30 minutes stood out as the most frequently chosen reasonable travel times, both selected by one-third (31%) of respondents (Figure 8).

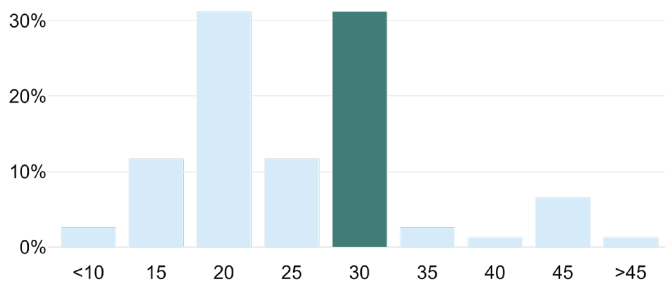


Figure 8 Reasonable public transit travel time for older adults in Saskatoon

To ensure more older travelers can reach their destinations within 20 to 30 minutes, public transit service frequency should be increased, especially during the day, outside of peak commuting hours. Increasing the number and variety of destinations available to older adults by public transit could also reduce their travel time as well as increase their travel satisfaction.

Satisfaction with Public Transit

Older adults in Saskatoon expressed varied satisfaction with the public transit system in Saskatoon. About half of older adults agreed that public transit in Greater Saskatoon meets their needs (49%), and less than half of respondents (42%) were willing to recommend public transit to a friend or family member. Of those using the public transit system (n=27), 52% agreed that public transit positively impacts their quality of life.

Respondents who recently used transit were asked about their satisfaction with the main mode of their last transit trip. The results concerning the main mode of transit, the bus, are presented in Figure 9.

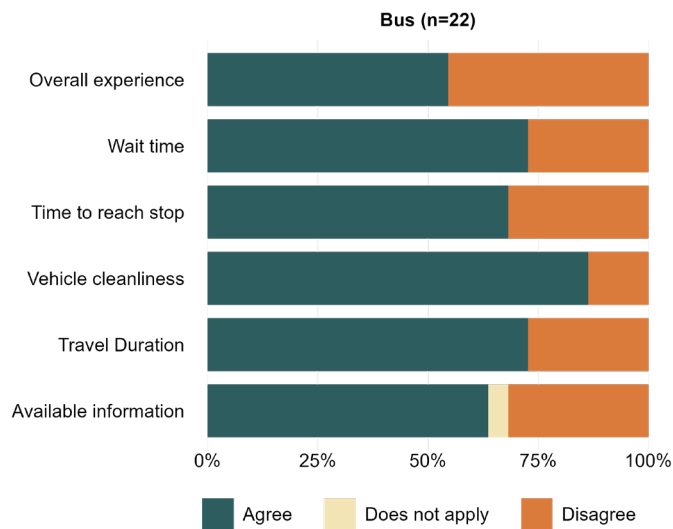


Figure 9 Satisfaction with last public transit trip by bus

Just over half (55%) of respondents who travelled using the bus as their main mode during their last trip reported being satisfied with their overall travel experience. Two-third (68%) of bus users were satisfied with the time it took them to reach their bus stop, while 73% of bus users were satisfied with the duration of their trips and bus wait times. Satisfaction with the information available about bus schedules and travel announcements was lower at 64%. Respondents were most satisfied with the cleanliness of the vehicles, with 86% agreeing that buses were clean.

Accessibility to Destinations by Public Transit in Saskatoon

Using respondents' suggestion of 30 minutes as a reasonable travel time by public transit to reach destinations, an accessibility analysis was conducted to compare access to destinations across Greater Saskatoon. The total number of jobs was used as a proxy for the number of destinations that can be reached from someone's home (Census tract). Further details can be found in Rodrigue et al. (2023).

Accessibility by public transit is found to be higher for those living in the downtown core of Saskatoon, where the number of activities tends to be the highest (Figure 10).

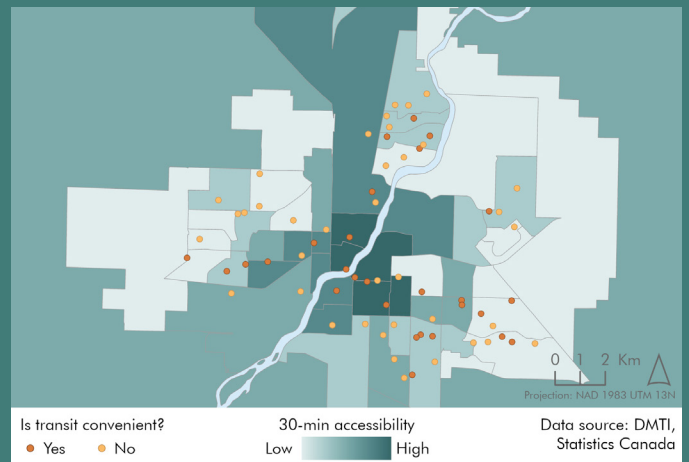


Figure 10 Accessibility of jobs by public transit (30-minute travel time, departing at 10am)

Accessibility and Perceived Convenience of Public Transit

The results suggests that the more accessible an older adult's neighbourhood is, the more convenient they find public transport. For residents living in the most accessible census tracts, 53% agreed to the statement "Public transit in my region is a convenient way of traveling." On the other hand, for those living in census tracts with medium and low accessibility, agreeance was 33% and 30% respectively.

Challenges for Public transit Use

A perceived lack of convenience (50%) and poor reliability (31%) were the largest causes of concern for older adults regarding the public transit system in Greater Saskatoon. Among existing public transit users (N= 27), safety was also a key concern, with over a third of respondents stating that they do not feel safe “from crime and unwanted attention” on public transit in Saskatoon. In comparison, only 18% of respondents believed public transit to be unaffordable in Saskatoon and 22% thought the service was uncomfortable.

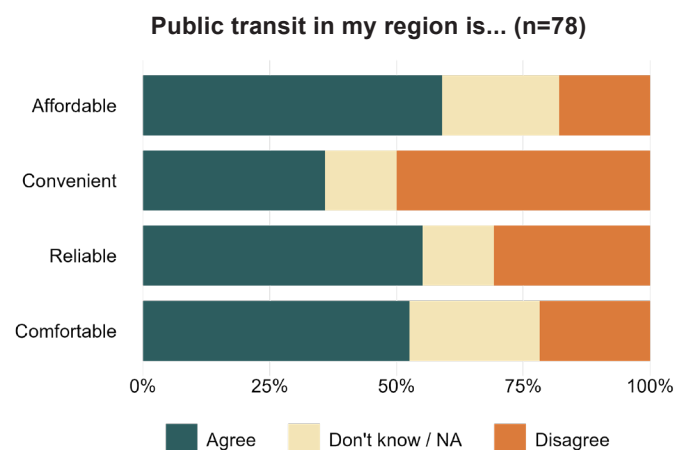


Figure 11 Older adults perceptions of the public transit system in Saskatoon

Among those who were not currently using transit (n=52), there was a prevailing opinion that transit is not capable of bringing them to their required destinations. Only 18% agreed that they are able to get to all the destinations they need using public transit.



Who Does not use Transit?

Not all non-transit users have negative views of the mode. Indeed, respondents who do not use transit vary greatly in their perceptions towards transit, and their intentions to use it in the future. A cluster analysis of survey responses revealed several distinct profiles of non-users, from those who have a generally positive view of transit, but just felt that it is not for now, to those who are staunchly transit-averse and have no intention of ever using the service. Respondents shared their main barriers to transit use, including concerns about the access to and from transit stops and stations and perceptions of transit being infrequent, unreliable and slow. Many stated that driving was simply a more convenient option for them.

Given the heterogeneity of non-users, a range of strategies must be implemented with different timescales to facilitate and encourage transit adoption. For more information please refer to Alousi-Jones et al. (2025b) and the [Aging in Place Final Report 2022-2025](#).

Knowledge of Public transit Offer

A lack of knowledge about the public transit services on offer to older adults was apparent. Over half (53%) of older adults in Saskatoon either disagreed with the statement “I know how my local public transit system works” or responded neutral. Of those who had not used transit in the previous year, only one-third (33%) agreed they knew how the public transit system works, representing a significant barrier for mode shift. Awareness of paratransit services and their eligibility criteria was also lacking for many residents. 23% of respondents reported not knowing whether they were eligible to use paratransit.

Despite all seniors aged 65 or over being eligible for discounted transit fares in Saskatoon, only 30% of transit-users in the survey sample reported receiving a reduced fare. Targeted information campaigns could therefore yield important benefits to older adults in Saskatoon.

Disability and Mobility Challenges

Some older adults face added mobility challenges which may impact their ability to perform desired or necessary everyday tasks. In our survey, 37% of respondents reported having a disability or health condition that limits their mobility. Among those, 55% reported their disability to be permanent while 31% stated their condition to be recurring. The most reported forms of disability are presented in Figure 12.

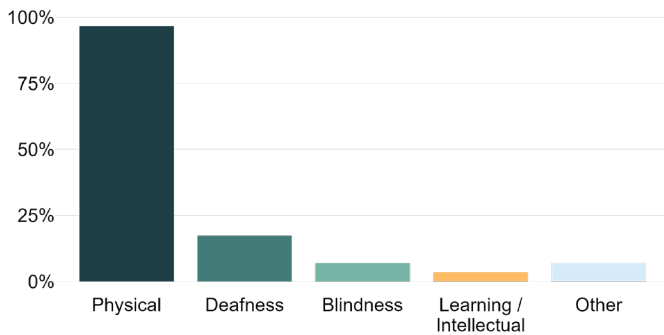


Figure 12 Most common forms of disability (as % of respondents reporting a disability, n=29)

Over 1 in 10 (17%) respondents reported requiring a mobility aid device such as a cane or a wheelchair, to assist them in their daily activities. Mobility challenges associated with public transit use were raised by many respondents:

“I am physically disabled. Getting to/from bus stops is challenging.”

“At my age - 75 - and some mobility issues, walking to a bus stop more than a block or so, is impossible.”

Transit Use and Disability

Older adults in Saskatoon who stated having a disability or mobility-limiting health condition were more likely to be transit users (41%) compared to other respondents (31%).

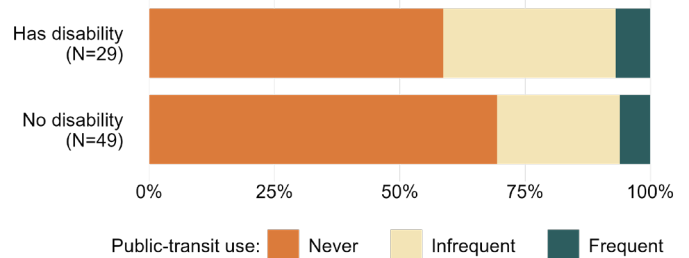


Figure 13 Transit-use frequency by disability status

Public transit’s ability to meet the needs of older adults with disabilities

People with disabilities were more slightly likely to feel that their public transit needs are not met compared to people without disabilities. As seen in Figure 14, 48% of Saskatoon respondents who stated having a disability stated that public transit service in their region meets their daily travel needs, compared to 51% for those who reported no disabilities. This finding indicates a need to better grasp the transit needs of older adults, both with and without disabilities alike.

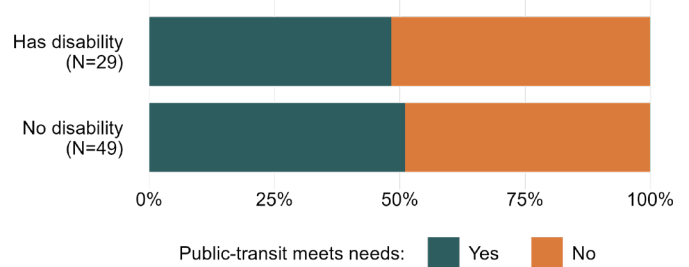


Figure 14 Perception that public transit meets older adults’ needs by disability status



Older Adults' Recommendations on how Public Transit can be Improved in Saskatoon



How do Older Adults in Saskatoon Think Transit can be Improved?

The survey results suggest that older adults are generally satisfied with the transit system in Greater Saskatoon. Nevertheless, it was important to ask older adults directly about their experiences and how they thought the service could be improved. Respondents were given the opportunity to provide additional comments and suggestions via open questions. A wide range of comments were provided, with some of the main themes summarized here:

For some, the system works well

Many respondents expressed how the transit system benefits their lives.

“Public transit in Saskatoon is a good choice for me. I am retired, I have chosen not to own a car. So I use it often.”

“It is a good means of commuting for those who don’t have a desire to maintain a vehicle and dislike the hassles involved when finding suitable parking spaces.”

A more winterized system

Many survey participants explained that harsh winter weather is a barrier to using public transit. Respondents expressed the need for warmer bus shelters, better snow removal, and safety concerns with icy roads and sidewalks.

“No shelters or benches available... makes it impossible in winter & rainy weather.”

“It is too cold to wait 30 minutes ... and to walk ... home 2 blocks and wait in your super warm clothes...”

“Clean snow from bus stops in the winter...”

“We live in a climate where it is below zero temperatures for a major portion of the year. Who thought it was a good idea to give three sided glass shelters or no shelters to wait in?”

Improve off-peak service

A very common complaint was the lack of bus service during off-peak times, such as weekends, mid-day hours, and holidays. Respondents explained that inadequate service during these off-peak hours deterred them from using the bus to see family and friends and complete daily tasks.

“Increased frequency of routes on weekends and holidays.”

“Sat[urday morning] service also slower. Sunday service starts at 9 am. Can’t get to church service before it starts.”

“Coming more than every hour on Sundays, and after 6 PM on weekdays.”

“Friends have difficulty visiting me on the weekends as certain routes cater to students during the week & no service on the weekend.”

A safer experience

Respondents addressed safety concerns at bus stops and transit centers, unruly behaviour and violence, as well as the speed of boarding processes, and concerns about falling if seating is unavailable. Many respondents said that they did not feel safe from crime while travelling on local buses.

“Safety is up to the bus driver to enforce (and traffic often prevents him/her doing that)...”

“Better management of the transit system and making it safer.”

Improving the service for older adults will benefit all users

While these comments arise from the mobility concerns of older adults and their specific travel needs, it is evident that any intervention which seeks to improve the transit experience of older adults, will ultimately benefit all transit users.

REFERENCES

- Alousi-Jones, M., Page, M., Soliz, A., Carvalho, T., Zhang, M., Jimenez, I., & El-Geneidy, A. (2025a). Getting Around to Age in Place: Final Report 2022-2025. Transportation Research at McGill, McGill University, Canada.
- Alousi-Jones, M., Carvalho, T., Zhang, M., Jimenez, I., & El-Geneidy, A. (2025b). Who is willing to take transit in the future? Older adults' perceived challenges and barriers to using public transit across Canada. *Transportation Research Part A: Policy and Practice*, 192, 104376.
- City of Saskatoon (2024) Saskatoon Transit 2023 Annual Report. https://transit.saskatoon.ca/sites/default/files/documents/TC-TR_AnnualReport2023-web_0.pdf
- City of Saskatoon (n.d.) City of Saskatoon and Saskatoon Census Metropolitan Area Population Projection 2021 to 2041. <https://www.saskatoon.ca/sites/default/files/documents/City%20of%20Saskatoon%20and%20Saskatoon%20CMA%20Population%20Projection%202021%20to%202041.pdf>
- Metro Saskatoon. (2022). *Metro 2050 Regional Growth Strategy*. <https://metroSaskatoon.org/services/regional-planning/Documents/metro-2050.pdf>
- Musselwhite, C. B. A., & Shergold, I. (2013). Examining the process of driving cessation in later life. *European Journal of Ageing*, 10(2), 89-100. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10433-012-0252-6>
- Newbold, K. B., Scott, D. M., Spinney, J. E. L., Kanaroglou, P., & Páez, A. (2005). Travel behavior within Canada's older population: a cohort analysis. *Journal of Transport Geography*, 13(4), 340-351. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jtrangeo.2004.07.007>
- Ravensbergen, L., Van Liefferinge, M., Isabella, J., Merrina, Z., & El-Geneidy, A. (2022). Accessibility by public transport for older adults: A systematic review. *Journal of Transport Geography*, 103, Article 103408. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jtrangeo.2022.103408>
- Rodrigue, L., Alousi-Jones, M., Negm, H., Victoriano-Habit, R., Zhang, M., Jimenez, I., & El-Geneidy, A. (2023). An accessibility-based methodology to prioritize public transit investments: Application to older adults in three metropolitan regions in Canada. *Applied geography*, 158, 103022.
- Saskatoon Transit (2025). Senior. <https://transit.saskatoon.ca/fares-passes/fares-passes/senior>.
- Statistics Canada. (2023). (table). Census Profile. 2021 Census of Population. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 98-316-X2021001. Ottawa. Released November 15, 2023. <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2021/dp-pd/prof/index.cfm?Lang=E> (accessed August 30, 2024).

A complete list of the publications from the Getting around to Age in Place project can be found on the [TRAM website](#). The full questionnaire is available for consultation [here](#).

**Getting Around to Age in Place
Summary Report: Greater Saskatoon**



National Research
Council Canada

Conseil national de
recherches Canada



McGill