

Making transit more convenient for older adults

The Issue

By 2030, the WHO expects that one in six people worldwide will be 60 years old or older. With this demographic shift, planners and policymakers must anticipate a related shift in travel demands and habits. To better understand older Canadians' specific travel needs and behaviours, a survey was launched in February 2023 in six Census Metropolitan Areas (CMAs) across the country, collecting over 4,000 responses from people aged 65+, and gave insight into how public transit could be adapted to better meets these needs. This brief explores how convenient older adults find the public transit in their region.

Findings

Trip duration

- The majority of car trips reported (58%) were 15 minutes or shorter while most reported transit trips (53%) took 35 minutes or more.
- Car trip durations are most concentrated around shorter times and as trip duration increases, the amount of car trips decrease.
- Similarly, the average transit trip took 36 minutes while the average car trip only took 20 minutes. This suggests to non-transit modes are being used to make more frequent, spontaneous trips that rely on convenience.

Trip departure time

- Regardless of mode, older adults typically took trips at off-peak times when public transit is less frequent.
- Slightly more car trips than transit trips (74% vs. 71%) were taken at off-peak times.

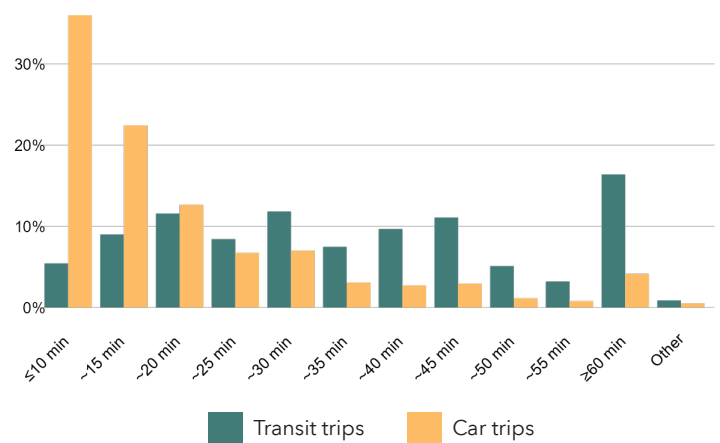


Figure 1: Duration of most recent trip by mode

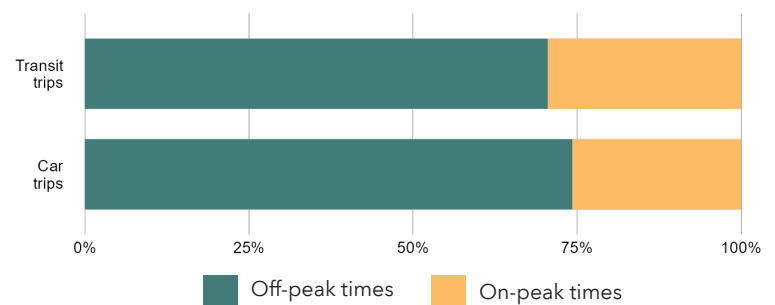


Figure 2: Time of departure of most recent trip by mode

Policy Recommendations

- » **Prioritize frequency on routes with access to day-to-day necessities like groceries and leisure services.** Spontaneous trips to preferred destinations are more viable when wait times are shorter.
- » **Plan transit routes in areas with higher concentrations of older adults around accessing amenities in their community.** Older adults seem to want to be able to quickly access basic necessities near their homes rather than have the widespread network connections preferred by commuters.
- » **Improve on-time performance at off-peak times.** Older adults are overwhelmingly taking trips at off-peak times when transit is less reliable. Unexpected delays are more of an inconvenience during the off-peak.