

Transportation Research Part D
Examining equity in accessibility of bikeshare: a balanced floating catchment area approach
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| Abstract: | Public bicycle share programs (PBSPs) can play a role in advancing transportation equity if they make bicycling more accessible to disadvantaged populations. In Ontario, Hamilton Bike Share expanded their program in 2018 by adding twelve "equity" stations with the explicit objective of increasing access for under-serviced neighbourhoods. In this case study, we investigate differentials in accessibility to stations using a balanced floating catchment area approach and compare accessibility with and without the equity stations. We analyze population interpolated to small cells to better reflect walking to a station and conduct a sensitivity analysis at several walking time thresholds. We then reaggregate the estimated accessibility by income groups for further analysis. Our findings indicate that equity stations increased accessibility for the serviced population at every threshold examined, but the increase was relatively modest especially for population in the bottom 20% of median total household income. |
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| Response to Reviewers: | |

Cover Letter

22 June, 2021

To the Editor:

Please find attached our revised paper submitted to the Virtual Special Issue in Transportation Research Part D: Transport and Environment (SI: Transportation Justice). The paper is titled “Examining equity in accessibility to bike share: a balanced floating catchment area approach”. We use the city of Hamilton, Ontario in Canada as a case study. The city’s public bicycle share program, Hamilton Bike Share, launched in 2015 and started an equity initiative in 2017 which included the addition of 13 stations to the program.

We would like to thank the anonymous reviewers for their constructive feedback. We believe that the paper is stronger as a result and makes the following contributions to the literature which makes it an excellent inclusion to the special issue on transportation justice:

1. Our research contributes to the literature on the topic of equity in public bicycle share programs (PBSPs) which has received a lot of attention in North America recently. Recent papers on this topic include Caspi & Noland, 2019, Hosford & Winters, 2018, Mooney et al., 2019, Qian et al., 2019, among others. To the best of our knowledge, the city of Hamilton is the only city in Canada with a PBSP that has an explicit equity program. This makes it an interesting place to examine how specific docking stations added for the purpose of increasing equity have contributed to addressing vertical inequities (see Chen et al., 2019). This case study also builds upon the findings from a recent paper by Hosford & Winters (2018) that explored who is served by PBSPs in Canada.
2. We employ a balanced floating catchment area (BFCA) approach using disaggregate population-level data to measure accessibility at different thresholds: 3 minutes, 5 minutes, 10 minutes, and 15 minutes. This method has not been previously used in the cycling literature to measure accessibility. Unlike other location- and person-based measures of accessibility, floating catchment area (FCA) methods incorporate information on capacity and demand in calculating accessibility. These measures have been widely employed in healthcare accessibility research and are typically calculated across two steps. In the first, a ratio of supply to demand at service locations is calculated, such as the number of beds at a hospital divided by the number of people within the catchment area of the hospital, weighted by the distance involved in reaching the facility. Next, these service level ratios are allocated back to the population centres and summarized as a measure of congested accessibility. Thus, this model does a good job of considering potential crowding or competition for services, which is an important consideration for PBSPs. Specifically, we use a recent improvement to this approach that was achieved through a simple and intuitive balancing that addressed the effects of demand and service inflation from previous FCA approaches. We also conducted a comparative analysis with the two-step FCA method to show the benefits of the balanced FCA approach. In terms of equity, we compare accessibility with and without the equity stations to assess the effect of the added docking stations, before reaggregating the data for further analysis using median total household income information from the census.
3. We found that accessibility is maximized at 5 minutes and gradually decreases until 8 minutes where it plateaus. The analysis indicates that the equity stations increase accessibility, albeit only modestly, for all income quintiles. The second 20% median total household income group has the highest level of accessibility at 3 and 5 minutes, while the top 20% has the highest level of accessibility at 10 and 15 minutes. The bottom 20%, those who would arguably benefit the most from inexpensive and healthy transportation options like shared bicycles, have the lowest level of accessibility at 3 minutes and the second lowest level at all other thresholds. This indicates that individuals with the lowest socioeconomic status continue to have poorer access to Hamilton Bike Share despite the addition of equity stations.

Based on our analysis, we identify locations in the PBSP core service area where individuals have low median household income and low accessibility, which are ideal candidates for new stations to achieve greater vertical equity in Hamilton Bike Share.

We trust that you will find the paper is worthy of inclusion in the special issue on transportation justice. The following corrections have been made: i) the title has been corrected to fix a grammatical error; and ii) the submission is double-spaced.

Sincerely,

The Authors

Response to Reviewers

8/27/2021

We would like to express our gratitude to the editors and anonymous reviewers for their time and attention to our submission. All substantive revisions to the manuscript are underlined in blue and highlighted in yellow.

Reviewer #1:

I appreciate the authors' efforts to address my comments. There are some points that need further clarification.

Thank you for the opportunity to further clarify the paper.

1. The BFCA introduces an element of congestion into accessibility calculations. You are talking about congestion at docking stations, right? If so, please specify. Also, this is a static approach without considering the time dimension. It essentially assumes that all travelers arrive at the docking stations simultaneously, and thus one bicycle can be used only by one user. This is hardly the case in any real-world settings. How would you justify this?

Thank you for this comment. Floating catchment areas introduce an element of demand (or congestion). We clarified in the text that demand in our case is at the docking stations. You are right that the analysis is static in that it does not account for temporal variations in demand. Unfortunately, the number of bicycles available at each docking station at various times throughout the day is not available publicly, and we are not able to implement a dynamic analysis at the moment. We note this as a direction for future research (see *page 24*). With respect to the static analysis, it is true that not all users arrive at a docking station at the same time. However, as a standard, this is still a valid assumption from a systems design perspective. Contrast to standards in terms of area of park per population: not everyone goes to the park at the same time, but calculating area of park per person is still a useful indicator of supply and demand. Similar standards for health care provision exist: not everyone goes to an emergency room at the same time, but calculating ER beds per person is still a good indicator of supply and demand. In the case of accessibility to public bicycle share programs, discussing the capacity of the system in these terms may be surprising initially, but we'd argue that this is because no standards have been developed for this kind of public transportation service.

2. In response to my previous comment 3, the authors noted that the data are not aggregated. In the abstract, they say "we then reaggregate the estimated accessibility for further analysis using census data". I am confused. I am also confused about the geographic units of analysis. Population cell is used in Section 4.1. Then in Section 4.2 population data is interpolated to smaller polygons that are 50-by-50 in size. I guess these are the same thing. Besides, there is something named micro-zones. Please check carefully throughout the manuscript and unify the terms.

We are sorry that this was unclear. In section 4.1, we mean population units in general; they could be census polygons, dissemination areas, interpolated population, or any other cartographic representation of the population. We have changed the text to say "population unit" (see *pages 14 and 21*) to ensure that this is not confused with the population cells in section 4.2. These population cells are 50x50m polygons that we used to interpolate the population from census dissemination areas (DAs) to smaller geographical units. For vertical equity analysis, we used census income data at the level of DAs. In figures 9-12, accessibility is seen at the level of the 50x50m population cells, and income is identical for all cells in the same DA. In other words, accessibility is still spatially disaggregated but income is from the DAs. In Table 1, we did aggregate accessibility, but this aggregation is not by geography but rather by income level. A major advantage of the BFCA approach is that this kind of aggregation is possible while still preserving the population and level of service. We have edited the abstract and section 4.1 to clarify this. We also revised the text to make consistent use of the terms.

3. Regarding the distance threshold, I guess you used it to compute w_{ij} via a distance decay function. But it is not clear how the distance-decay function is defined. Further, it is counterintuitive to me that the increase in the distance threshold decreases the accessibility. With the increase in the distance threshold, more people can reach the docking stations. Isn't this indicating an increase in the accessibility? When the demand surpasses the capacity, the number of people that can be served is bounded by the capacity of the docking station. But it will not decrease. Adding an upper bound to P_j may resolve this issue. But this brings me to the problem of why considering congestion at the very beginning? For highway systems, we need to consider congestion since the higher the volume, the longer the queuing delay one needs to pass the highway in the congested regime. However, are customers going to wait in a bikeshare system? A clearer motivation for using this method would be helpful.

Very good point. We assumed that the distance decay function would be apparent from the reference to thresholds. We now note on *page 17* that the distance decay is as follows:

$$w_{ij} = \begin{cases} 1 & \text{when } t_{ij} \leq \gamma \\ 0 & \text{otherwise} \end{cases}$$

where γ is the threshold.

With respect to the "counter-intuitive" result that accessibility declines when the distance threshold increases, we can illustrate the effect with a simple example. Imagine a station with a single bicycle. A single person is located at 3 minutes from that station. Then, a single person is located at 4 minutes from that station. Finally, a third person is located at 5 minutes from the station. Suppose that the catchment of the station extends to a threshold of three minutes. The population within the catchment is 1, and the level of service is therefore 1 bicycle per person. Since the other two people in this simple system do not reach the station within three minutes they are not serviced. Hence, the person at 3 minutes enjoys a high level of accessibility, since it can reach a level of service of 1 bicycle per person. Next, suppose that the catchment of the station is 4 minutes. Now two people are in the service area of the station. The level of service of the station is $1/2$ bicycle per person. These two people now collectively have lower accessibility, since they can reach only a lower level of service. Finally, suppose that the catchment of the station includes all three people: the level of service now is $1/3$ bicycle per person, and collectively the accessibility is even lower. Now, perhaps the confusion is about what accessibility means in this framework. As this simple example shows, it means accessibility to level of service. When the catchment area is small, few people enjoy relatively high levels of accessibility; when the catchment area is large, more people enjoy accessibility, but only to lower levels of service. We discuss the motivation for using this approach in our response to your first point. Geurs and van Wee (2004), as cited in the paper, note that land-use components of accessibility measures take congestion effects into account.

4. Analysis shows that accessibility increase is modest especially for population in the bottom 20% of median total household income. How do you interpret this finding? Does that mean the equity stations fail their purposes?

Thank you for this question. In our view, the equity stations were a qualified success: they increased accessibility in general, and more people have higher accessibility than without the equity stations because they filled important gaps in service coverage. As well, the accessibility differential for people in DAs with low incomes and people in DAs with higher incomes became smaller, but accessibility was still much lower for lower income populations even after the introduction of the equity stations. Hence, we believe that the gap in vertical equity was only modestly addressed and additional equity stations are needed to further increase access for equity users. Please see the revised discussion.

5. Eq. (4) and (5), I could not see the differences between the terms on the right hand side. If they are not same thing, why use two notation?

Thank you for pointing this out. There were typos in these formulas, and they should be as follows. In the first step:

$$w_{ij}^i = \frac{w_{ij}}{\sum_{j=1}^J w_{ij}}$$

and in the second step:

$$w_{ij}^j = \frac{w_{ij}}{\sum_{i=1}^n w_{ij}}$$

The difference is that in the first step the weights are row-standardized and in the second step they are column-standardized.

Thank you again for the opportunity to clarify the above points.

Reviewer #2:

The authors have addressed my concerns

Thank you again for your suggestions to improve the paper.

Highlights

22 June, 2021

- Balanced floating catchment area method applied to measure accessibility to bikeshare
- Contribution of stations added to increase equity assessed at different thresholds
- Added stations increased accessibility and reduced inequities, albeit only modestly
- Lowest income group has lowest levels of accessibility, even with “equity” stations
- Location and size of docking stations matters for increasing equity in accessibility

Examining equity in accessibility to bike share: a balanced floating catchment area approach

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Abstract

Public bicycle share programs (PBSPs) can play a role in advancing transportation equity if they make bicycling more accessible to disadvantaged populations. In Ontario, ~~the City of Hamilton expanded their PBSP~~ Hamilton Bike Share expanded their program in 2018 by adding twelve “equity” stations with the explicit objective of increasing access for under-serviced neighbourhoods. In this case study, we investigate differentials in accessibility to stations using a balanced floating catchment area approach and compare accessibility with and without the equity stations. We analyze ~~micro-zones to population interpolated to small cells to~~ better reflect walking to a station and conduct a sensitivity analysis at several walking time thresholds. We then reaggregate the estimated accessibility by income groups for further analysis ~~using census data~~. Our findings indicate that equity stations increased accessibility for the serviced population at every threshold examined, but the increase was relatively modest especially for population in the bottom 20% of median total household income.

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9 **1. Introduction**

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11 The potential of public bicycle share programs (PBSPs) to increase bicycling
12 levels is but one of many reasons for implementing such programs in urban
13 areas (see Fishman et al., 2015; Hosford et al., 2019, see 2018). As a healthy,
14 inexpensive, and convenient form of public transportation, shared bicycles can
15 encourage individuals to take up bicycling for short local trips or first and last
16 mile trips to other public transportation instead of using personal vehicles. These
17 programs can also play a role in advancing transportation equity if they make
18 bicycling more accessible to disadvantaged populations. Although PBSPs are
19 available to the general public in over 800 cities worldwide (Fishman, 2016), and
20 ought to be accessible to any individual who wishes to use them, research on
21 PBSPs indicates that inequities persist with respect to who can use and access
22 them.
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25 Many PBSPs in North America now offer specific programs to address equity
26 that primarily focus on removing cost barriers and increasing access for groups
27 that are under-represented among existing users (McNeil et al., 2019). The
28 locations of docking stations is a common consideration for increasing access to
29 improve equity (Howland et al., 2017). Hamilton Bike Share (HBS), located in
30 Hamilton, Ontario, was the only Canadian PBSP included in a North American
31 scan of bike share equity programs (see McNeil et al., 2019). HBS was launched
32 in 2015 and currently has over 900 operational bicycles and 130 docking stations.
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34 An equity program, ~~Everyone Rides Initiative~~Everyone Rides Initiative, was
35 implemented in 2018 which expanded the program by introducing twelve “equity”
36 stations to more disadvantaged neighbourhoods in the core service area.
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39 This paper examines accessibility to Hamilton Bike Share using a balanced
40 floating catchment area (BFCA) approach. We also conduct a comparative
41 analysis to the conventional two-step floating catchment area (2SFCA) approach
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9 to highlight the benefits of this method which, to our knowledge, has not yet been
10 used in the cycling literature. We assess the contribution of the equity
11 stations to reducing inequities in accessibility for different groups according to
12 median total household income, and provide policy recommendations to
13 further improve equity.
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15 This paper is an example of open and reproducible research that uses only
16 open software for transportation and statistical analysis (Bivand, 2020; Lovelace,
17 2021). All data were obtained from publicly available sources and organized in the
18 form of a data package. Following best practices in spatial data science (Brunsdon
19 and Comber, 2020), ~~the code and data—an open data product (Arribas/Bel et al.,~~
20 ~~2021) along with the code~~ needed to reproduce, modify or extend the analysis
21 are available for download.¹
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31 **2. Literature Review**
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34 *2.1. Public Bicycle Share Programs*
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36 Public bicycle share programs have been implemented in over 800 cities
37 worldwide and a great deal has been learned about their typical users ~~to date~~
38 (Fishman, 2016). In many cities, males use bike share more than females (Brey et
39 al., 2017; Nickkar et al., 2019; Ogilvie and Goodman, 2012; Reilly et al., 2020b;
40 ~~Wang and Akar, 2019;~~ Winters et al., 2019) as do younger age cohorts (Brey et
41 al., 2017; Buck et al., 2013; Fuller et al., 2011). However, one study found that
42 bike share users in Washington, DC were more likely to be female (Buck et al.,
43 2013), which suggests that the gender gap among bicyclists who use PBSPs is
44 less disparate than the gap for personal bicycle use (Fishman, 2016). There is
45 some evidence that bike share users are less likely to own a car (Buck et al., 2013;
46 Reilly et al., 2020a). However, the relationship between income or education
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¹<https://github.com/paezha/Accessibility-Sobi-Hamilton>
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and bike share use is less clear-cut. Stations in disadvantaged communities in Chicago have been found to generate most of the average annual trips (Qian and Jaller, 2020) and individuals from minority or lower socioeconomic status neighborhoods in Minneapolis-St. Paul also used the city's PBSP more (Wang and Lindsey, 2019a). Similar findings were reported in London (Ogilvie and Goodman, 2012). Being university educated was a significant correlate of bike share use in Montreal, Canada (Fuller et al., 2011). Not coincidentally, financial savings have been found to motivate those on a low income to use bike share (Fishman, 2016).

2.2. *Equity of PBSPs*

The introduction of PBSPs has been accompanied by a flurry of research focusing on who benefits from them. Many studies have examined differences in demographics or socioeconomic status between those who use or have access to PBSPs and those who don't, while other research has explored spatial inequities in where stations are located (e.g., Hosford and Winters, 2018; Hull Grasso et al., 2020; Mooney et al., 2019; Qian and Jaller, 2021, 2020; Smith et al., 2015; ~~hullgrassoBikeShareEquity2020~~). In Chicago, Qian and Jaller (2020) estimated ridership in the city's PBSP and found that a minority of bike share docking stations were located in disadvantaged communities, while annual members from such areas had a lower share of trips compared to other areas in the city. Similar results were found in Philadelphia. Despite efforts to increase equity within the city's PBSP, census block groups with lower median income generated fewer trips (Caspi and Noland, 2019). Trips from stations in such areas were utilitarian (e.g., commuting to work), which points to the importance of ensuring equitable access (Caspi and Noland, 2019). In the case of Seattle, all ~~neighborhoods had~~ neighbourhoods were found to have some level of access to dockless bicycles but those with higher incomes and more residents of higher

education had more ~~bikes~~bicycles (Mooney et al., 2019). Babagoli et al. (2019) also found that ~~neighborhoods~~neighbourhoods in New York City with higher affluence had the greatest proportion of Citi Bike stations.

Chen et al. (2019) distinguish two types of equity related to bike share, horizontal and vertical, based on the work of Delbosc and Currie (Delbosc and Currie, 2011). Horizontal equity leads to balanced or equal distribution of accessibility and costs for all similar groups, while vertical equity would involve greater and targeted access for under-represented or disadvantaged populations (see Chen et al., 2019). Both are of interest to researchers and transportation planners since they are often linked in that advantage, or conversely disadvantage, has spatial patterns. Bike share equity programs ~~, as identified by (Howland et al., 2017; see~~ McNeil et al. (2019) ~~,~~ can be considered efforts to improve vertical equity since they favour groups that have benefited less from PBSPs ~~through~~ the placement of stations or equitable fee structures.

On the whole, existing studies highlight the need for PBSPs to be more accessible for ~~diverse~~equity populations in order to increase use beyond the “typical” users. This has been the focus of recent research (see, among others, Auchincloss et al., 2020; MacArthur Hull Grasso et al., 2020; ~~hullgrassoBikeShareEquity2020?~~ MacArthur et al., 2020). Offering more people the option of using sustainable and active transportation, particularly those who have lower socioeconomic status and might benefit the most, is a worthy policy goal for cities with PBSPs. However, exploring transportation equity by investigating where ~~bike share docking~~ stations are located, often using neighborhoods or census tracts as the geographical unit of analysis, can ignore or miss the benefits that may be derived from adjacent zones. Meaning that, stations may be lacking in certain neighborhoods but there may be stations accessible within a reasonable walking time. This is where geographical accessibility becomes an important consideration.

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9 2.3. Accessibility Approaches

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11 Accessibility has been applied in both a positive and normative way to inform
12 transportation planning (Páez et al., 2012), but its utility to this field has evolved
13 over the past century and has increasingly become linked with recent planning
14 interests in prioritizing modes that are suitable for local trips like walking and
15 cycling (Levine, 2020). Beyond the utility derived from using shared bicycles to
16 access destinations of value, docking stations themselves are amenities because
17 they offer a transportation service. Therefore, the ease of reaching these stations,
18 which are spread spatially in a given area, can affect use of the PBSP.

19
20 The location and size of docking stations are two factors that are relevant
21 to accessibility. Since the time or distance needed to reach a docking station
22 decreases the potential of accessing the program, the location matters. Kabra et
23 al. (2020) found that the majority of bike share usage in Paris, France comes
24 from areas within 300 m of stations, which amounts to 2-4 minutes walking by an
25 adult who does not have a disability. Similar to other public amenities
26 affected by crowding, the utility of docking stations is also limited by the
27 *maximum* number of bicycles that they can hold (e.g., their size). Accessibility
28 analyses for PBSPs constitute a positive and evaluation-based approach that
29 also has the potential to inform equity efforts. For instance, Wang and Lindsey
30 (2019b) investigated whether new or relocated bike share stations increased
31 accessibility and use, which offered important insights to improve the
32 performance of the program.

33
34 Several approaches have been commonly used for measuring place-based
35 accessibility, including cumulative opportunities, gravity, and utility-based mea-
36 sures ([Geurs and van Wee, 2004](#); Handy and Niemeier, 1997). The gravity-based
37 approach involves weighting destination opportunities, such as the quantity of
38 bike share stations, by the time required to reach them from an origin using
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an impedance function (Handy and Niemeier, 1997; Kwan, 1998). While such measures are suitable for capturing the potential for reaching destinations from a given location, they do not take demand or congestion effects into account which is an important consideration when calculating accessibility for amenities such as bike share stations.

In contrast, floating catchment area (FCA) methods have been widely employed in health care accessibility research. The benefit of this approach is that the method incorporates information on capacity, ~~demand, and congestion and demand~~ in calculating accessibility. ~~This~~ Geurs and van Wee (2004) note “competition for activities with restricted capacity” should be taken into account for land-use components of accessibility. The FCA approach is more appropriate and informative than calculating provider-to-population ratios (PPR) that simply divide the level of supply of a service (e.g., the number of bicycle racks at a station) by the population who have access to the service (Paez et al., 2019). In particular, the Two-Step Floating Catchment Area (2SFCA) method (Luo and Wang, 2003; Radke and Mu, 2000) produces flexible catchment areas instead of using rigid boundaries like PPR. In the first step, a ratio of supply to demand at service locations is calculated, such as the number of beds at a hospital divided by the number of people within the catchment area of the hospital, weighted by the distance involved in reaching the facility. Next, these service level ratios are allocated back to the population centers and summarized as a measure of congested accessibility. Thus, this model does a good job of considering potential crowding or competition for services. However, overlapping catchment areas from the conventional FCA approach lead to inflation of population totals and deflation of service levels across a study area which generates inaccurate or misleading accessibility estimates (Paez et al., 2019). While there have been many methodological innovations in FCA methods (e.g., Delamater, 2013; Luo

and Qi, 2009; Luo and Wang, 2003; Radke and Mu, 2000; Wan et al., 2012), a recent improvement to this approach was achieved through a simple and intuitive balancing of the impedance that addressed the effects of demand and service inflation found in earlier FCA approaches (see Paez et al., 2019). This provides more useful information because it does not assume that people are limited to service within pre-defined boundaries (Paez et al., 2019).

When measuring accessibility, researchers have also taken different approaches when it comes to the aggregation of data, either by using the individual or household as the smallest unit of analysis or larger spatial zones. Previous research on bike share equity has typically used a meso- or macro-level approach with aggregated data from entire neighborhoods or census tracts (Babagoli et al., 2019; Mooney et al., 2019; Qian and Jaller, 2020; Wang and Lindsey, 2019a), although there are recent exceptions (Chen et al., 2019; Chen and Li, 2021). This is also true for studies examining correlates of bike share demand (Wang and Lindsey, 2019b). Handy and Niemeier (1997) note that using disaggregated data in accessibility analyses provides a more accurate estimate for individuals. Chen et al. (2019, p. 530) are in favour of using disaggregated data, which they did in their recent analysis of Tampa's PBSP, because they note "the use of aggregated data might hinder our understanding of the equity impacts since individual disparities are absorbed after aggregation."

2.4 Previous Research

Our analysis builds upon a previous study (Hosford and Winters, 2018), which found that areas in Hamilton with less advantage are better served by the city's PBSP compared to other Canadian cities (i.e., Toronto, Vancouver, Montreal, and Ottawa-Gatineau) where areas that are less deprived have greater access. Hosford and Winters (2018, p. 47) acknowledge that "Hamilton stands out in that the lower income neighborhoods are located near the city center

and wealthier neighborhoods are in the surrounding suburban areas.” Therefore, the core service area for the PBSP in Hamilton by default covers more of the disadvantaged areas in the city. However, there is also a great deal of variation in income in the core service area because of the local university and increasing gentrification. Hosford and Winters (2018) took a macro-level approach in their analysis by using dissemination areas *across* the city as the unit of analysis. They did not focus specifically on the core service area and did not differentiate between conventional and equity stations.

Therefore, this paper also contributes to the cycling literature by expanding the analysis of Hosford and Winters (2018) to assess equity in accessibility to HBS and explore the contribution of the equity stations added to Hamilton’s PBSP.

3. Case Study

3.1. Original System

The case study of this paper is the city of Hamilton, Ontario, Canada. Before June 2020, the program was known as Social Bicycles or SoBi Hamilton, but is now called Hamilton Bike Share (HBS). The core service area spans 40 sq.km of the city, although it was planned to be 20 sq.km (Hamilton, 2015a), and roughly 138,000 people are within 30 minutes walking of a station [see Figure 1]. This represents roughly one fifth of the total population of the Hamilton Census Metropolitan Area according to the 2016 Canadian Census. The City of Hamilton undertook a large public engagement campaign to validate the locations of stations that had been selected and to crowdsource potential locations for additional locations (Hamilton, 2014). Most of the potential locations that were suggested were in the east end of the core service area that lack stations or in neighborhoods not serviced by the PBSP. The program was enthusiastically

welcomed in the city in 2015 - within three weeks of launching, 10,000 trips had been made (Hamilton, 2015b), however inadequate coverage given the size of the program's service area was identified as a problem early on, and transportation planners noted that the small size (i.e., supply of bicycle racks) and low quantity of stations would lead to challenges in balancing the system (Hamilton, 2015a).

3.2. Equity Initiative

Hamilton Bike Share Inc., the non-profit operator, launched an equity program, Everyone Rides Initiative (ERI), in 2018 with the objective of reducing barriers that may prevent individuals from accessing the program. Additional bicycles and twelve "equity" stations were added to the core service area in more disadvantaged and under-serviced neighbourhoods. The equity program also offers subsidized memberships to individuals who identify as low income, and complements this service with cycle skills education. A comparable program can be found in Philadelphia (see Caspi and Noland, 2019).

3.3. Current System

As of June 2020, HBS has 900 bikes, 130 stations [see Figure 2], and over 26,000 active memberships (Hamilton, 2015b). The core service area remains 40 sq.km. The program has twelve "equity" stations and 118 "conventional" stations (i.e., that were not explicitly added to address inequities in the program). The City of Hamilton has positioned stations between 300 and 600 m apart (Scott et al., 2021), but anticipates that they will service those living within a 250 m buffer (Hamilton, 2015a). The latter constitutes a normative statement: people ought to be able to access a station in less than 600 m if they live in the core service area, with most usage coming from 250 m around. However, it is not known how far people are actually willing to travel to reach a station. It would be reasonable to assume that people are willing to walk beyond this threshold to access other stations if the ones nearest them have no supply of bicycles.

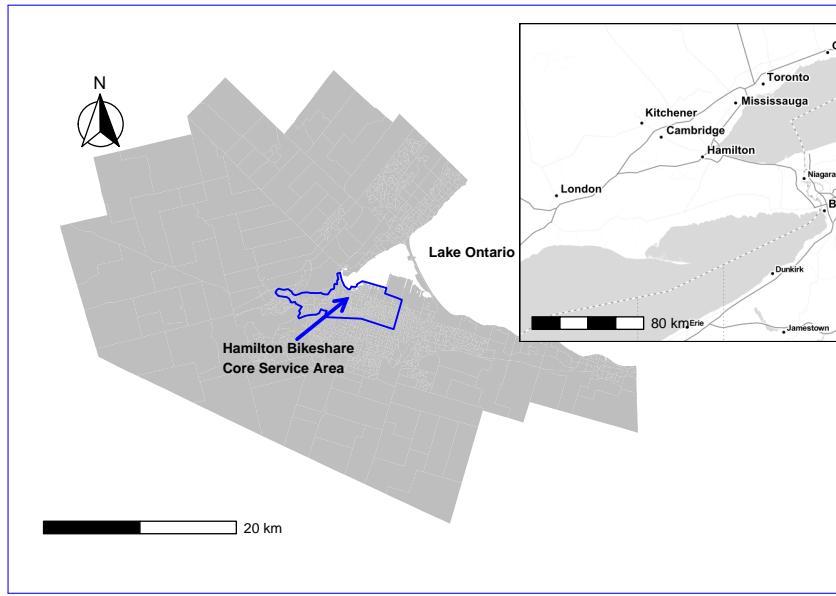


Figure 1: The core service area of Hamilton Bike Share is outlined in blue. Hamilton Census Metropolitan Area is shown in grey.

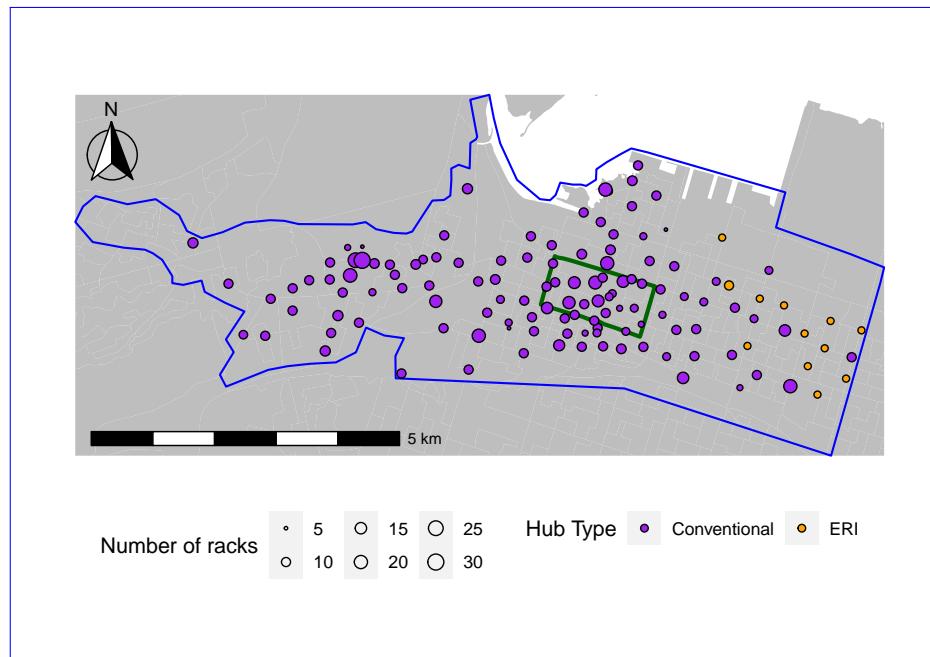


Figure 2: The spatial distribution of bike share docking stations in Hamilton, Ontario. Conventional stations are in purple and equity (ERI) stations are in orange. The service area of Hamilton Bike Share is outlined in blue and the city's downtown core is outlined in dark green. Hamilton Census Metropolitan Area is shown in grey.

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9 **4. Methods and Data**

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11 *4.1. Balanced Floating Catchment Area*

12
13 The BFCA method was developed to address issues with demand and supply
14 inflation that result from the overlapping catchment areas produced by earlier
15 FCA methods (Paez et al., 2019). Paez-Páez et al. (2019) adjusted the impedance
16 weights so that both supply and demand are proportionally allocated. The result
17 is a FCA method that balances the population and level of service by eliminating
18 the over-counting of population and level of service that leads to distortions in
19 demand and supply.

20
21 The first step in the FCA method is to allocate the population to be serviced
22 by each docking station:

23
24
$$P_j = \sum_{i=1}^n P_i w_{ij} \quad (1)$$

25
26 As seen in the equation above, the population allocated to station j is the
27 weighted sum of the population in the region; a spatial weight w_{ij} represents the
28 friction that the population at i faces when reaching station j , and is usually
29 given by a distance-decay function, so that each station is assumed to service
30 only a segment of the population within a limited geographical range.

31
32 Next, The level of service of station j in bicycle racks per person is the supply
33 at each station (i.e., the maximum number of bicycle racks) is divided by its
34 estimated-service divided by the population within the established catchment
35 area; this gives the level of service of station j in bicycle racks per person:

36
37
$$L_j = \frac{S_j}{P_j} = \frac{S_j}{\sum_{i=1}^n P_i w_{ij}} \quad (2)$$

38
39 Finally In the second step, the accessibility of population cell-unit i is cal-
40 culated as the weighted sum of the level of service of all stations that can be
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reached from there according to the spatial weights:

$$A_i = \sum_{j=1}^J L_j \frac{w_{ij}}{\sum_{i=1}^n P_i w_{ij}} = \sum_{j=1}^J \frac{S_j w_{ji}}{\sum_{i=1}^n P_i w_{ij}} \quad (3)$$

The balanced approach of [Paez et al](#)¹⁶ [Páez et al.](#)¹⁷ (2019) replaces the spatial weights with normalized versions as follows:¹⁸ [In the first step, the population is weighted with:](#)¹⁹

$$w_{ij}^i = \frac{w_{ij}}{\sum_{j=1}^J w_{ji}} \quad (4)$$

and [in the second step, the level of service is weighted using:](#)²⁰

$$w_{ij}^j = \frac{w_{ij}}{\sum_{j=1}^J w_{ji}} \quad (5)$$

These weights satisfy the following properties:

$$\sum_{j=1}^J w_{ij}^i = 1 \quad (6)$$

and:

$$\sum_{i=1}^n w_{ij}^j = 1 \quad (7)$$

With these weights, accessibility can be calculated without risk of demand or supply inflation:

$$A_i = \sum_{j=1}^J \frac{S_j w_{ij}^j}{\sum_{i=1}^n P_i w_{ij}^i} \quad (8)$$

By allocating the population and level of service proportionally, this method preserves the values of the population and level of service since:

$$\sum_{i=1}^n A_i = \sum_{j=1}^J L_j \quad (9)$$

In fact, since the proportional allocation procedure means that any proportion of the population allocated to a station is never allocated to other stations, and conversely any level of service allocated to a population is never re-allocated elsewhere, this property is replicated for any level of aggregation.

4.2. *Pycnophylactic Interpolation*

Since walking trips to a docking station likely happen at a level lower than even the smallest census geography, this requires a more disaggregated approach than the use of census geographies. For this reason, we implemented our analysis parting from ~~micro population zones~~ small population cells to better reflect the friction of walking to a docking station, which is an important component of a bike share trip (Chen et al., 2019).

To obtain population at sub-census geography levels, we used pycnophylactic interpolation (Tobler, 1979). We obtained population data from the 2016 Census of Canada for dissemination areas (DA), which is the smallest publicly available census geography in Canada. These zonal values of the population were interpolated to smaller polygons that are 50-by-50 m in size. Pycnophylactic interpolation involves smoothing out the population from each DA while preserving total volume ~~see Figure ??~~. When interpolating the population at this high level of resolution, it is important to ensure that population numbers ~~were~~ are not allocated to areas where people do not live in Hamilton (for example, to parks or large institutional buildings, etc.). To do so, we retrieved shapefiles for various geographic features from Open Hamilton. Next, we removed these features from the PBSP core service area and used pycnophylactic interpolation to disaggregate and reallocate population within the remaining area [see Figure 3].

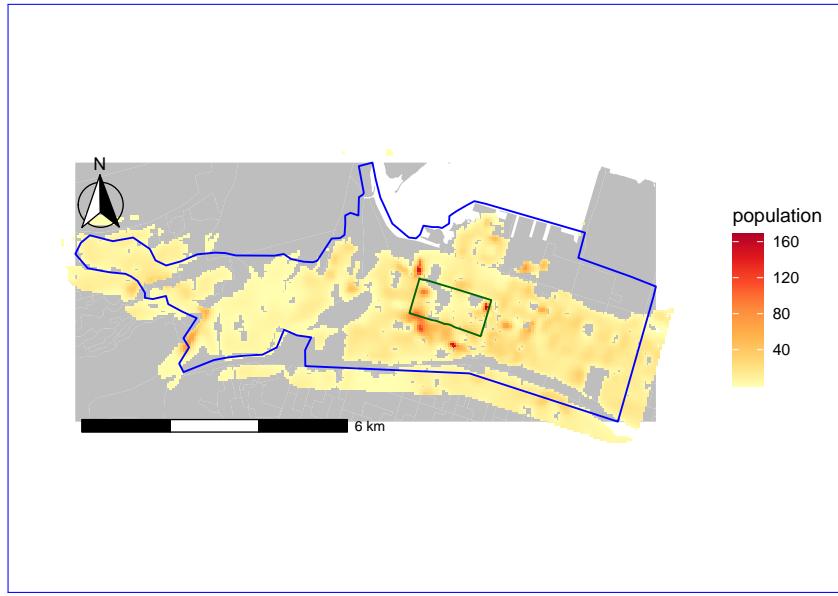


Figure 3: Interpolated population in Hamilton Bike Share’s core service area (outlined in blue) and within 30 minutes of walking to the core service area. Each population cell is 50-by-50 m in size. The downtown area is outlined in dark green.

4.3. Travel Time Matrix

To calculate walking times from the centroid of the ~~micro~~-population cells to docking stations, we extracted OpenStreetMap data for HBS’s service area from BBBike, an online cycle route planner that interfaces with OpenStreetMap. OpenStreetMap data provides the networks for calculating walking times from each population cell to nearby docking stations, using a maximum walking distance of 10 km and walking time of 30 minutes as thresholds. A travel time matrix was created with the origins as the coordinates of the population cells and the destinations as the coordinates of the docking stations within the maximum threshold. This process provides a more realistic measure of the friction of reaching stations by taking infrastructure into account network travel times, rather than using the Euclidean distance from population cell to station. Routing and travel time calculations were completed using the R package `r5r`, used for rapid realistic routing operations (Pereira et al., 2021).

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9 4.4. Data

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11 All data for this research were accessed from publicly available Census of
12 Canada sources, from OpenStreetMaps, and from Open Hamilton², a public
13 online repository of data curated by the City of Hamilton. Median total household
14 income statistics were drawn from the 2016 Canadian Census.

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18 5. Results

19
20 5.1. Accessibility by Distance Thresholds

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22 Consensus regarding the distance that individuals are willing to walk to
23 access a docking station is lacking, but the literature on walking behaviour
24 provided some guidelines to determine the thresholds for our sensitivity analysis.
25 Previous studies have found that living within 250 m (Fuller et al., 2011) and
26 300 m (Kabra et al., 2020) of a docking station is correlated with bike share use.

27
28 Some studies have defined “close proximity” to a docking station as 500 metres
29 or less (Fuller et al., 2013; Hosford et al., 2019, 2018), while other research has
30 found that walking trips are less than 600 m and rarely more than 1200 m
31 (Millward et al., 2013) or a median distance of 650 m (Larsen et al., 2010). HBS
32 will often depict a map at some docking stations to show the locations of the
33 other nearest stations within a five minute walk, which suggests that this is an
34 average distance that people are expected to walk. The National Association
35 of City Transportation Officials (NACTO) has a similar normative guide (City
36 Transportation Officials, 2015).

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38 In the present case, we found that accessibility calculated using the BFCA
39 method increased with a threshold between two and four minutes, but was then
40 maximized at five minutes. Accessibility decreased substantially after eight

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9 minutes, which is intuitive given that demand on a limited supply increases as
10 more people can reach each station.
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12 We experimented with various thresholds by conducting a sensitivity analysis
13 to calculate accessibility at different walking times from population cell to
14 docking stations: three minutes, five minutes, ten minutes, and fifteen minutes.
15 We categorized these thresholds as minimum, average, maximum, and extreme,
16 respectively. At each threshold, we compared accessibility between the current
17 system and the original system to examine the contribution of the twelve equity
18 stations. When considering the results reported below, it is important to
19 remember that accessibility is technically a form of smoothing (O'Kelly and
20 Horner, 2003, pp. 7–8): smaller thresholds produce less smoothing (which can
21 result in “spiky” accessibility landscapes), while larger thresholds produce more
22 smoothing and fewer spikes.
23

31 In the analysis we use the following distance decay function:
32

$$w_{ij} = \begin{cases} 1 & \text{when } t_{ij} \leq \gamma \\ 0 & \text{otherwise} \end{cases}$$

33
34
35 where γ is the relevant threshold. The weights are standardized as discussed
36 above.
37
38

40 41 42 43 44 45 46 47 48 49 50 51 52 53 54 55 56 57 58 59 60 61 62 63 64 65 5.1.1. Minimum Threshold

With a walking distance of three minutes, we found that the total level of service is 25.2 bicycle racks per person system-wide in the original system configuration (i.e., without equity stations). The addition of equity stations increases this slightly to 25.4 bicycles per person. This total level of service is allocated to the population to obtain the levels of accessibility, which turn out to be relatively uniform overall, with the exception of two small areas where

accessibility is slightly higher. This high level of system-wide accessibility occurs because the population that can reach a docking station when travel time is three minutes or less is very limited, and accessibility is strongly shaped by a few locations that concentrate population and stations. For this reason, accessibility is highly concentrated in small areas around those stations. The map is not shown, since it is less informative, but can be recreated using the source code and data.

5.1.2. Average Threshold

With a walking distance of five minutes, we found that there are 68.6 bicycle racks per person system-wide in the original system configuration (i.e., without equity stations). With the addition of equity stations, there are now 68.8 bicycle racks per person. At this threshold, there are more bicycle racks per person than at the minimum threshold. System-wide accessibility has in fact increased: the population that can reach the stations has grown, but not to the point that congestion effects begin to take place. Figure 4 presents a comparison of accessibility between the systems. Again, accessibility is fairly uniform, with the exception of one very small area. The equity stations noticeably increase accessibility in the east end of the core service area by filling gaps in PBSP coverage.

5.1.3. Maximum Threshold

With a walking distance of ten minutes, we found that there are 3.61 bicycle racks per person system-wide in the original system configuration (i.e., without equity stations). With the addition of equity stations, there are now 3.74 bicycles per person. Figure 5 presents a comparison of accessibility between the systems. Differences in accessibility across the service area are now apparent, with users near the university and its adjacent neighborhoods, as well as neighborhoods

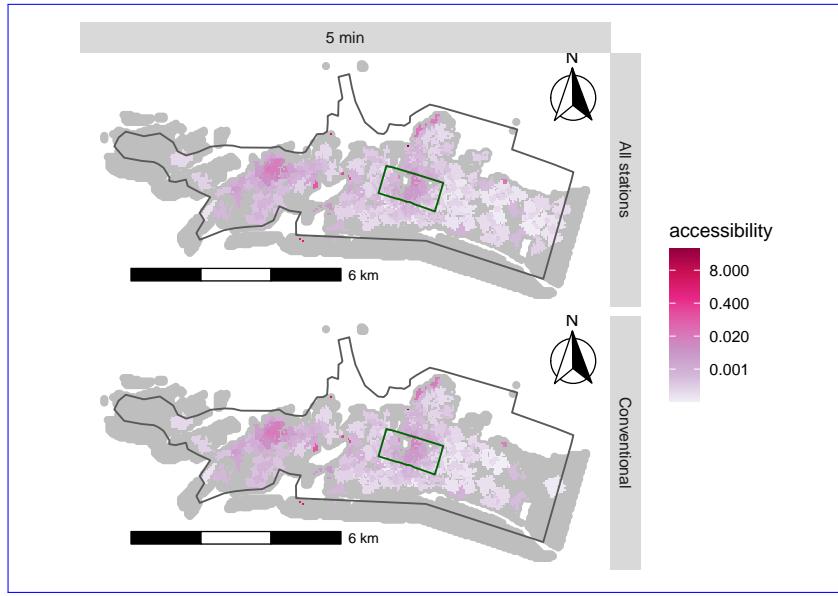


Figure 4: Accessibility at 5 minutes walk (average threshold) compared between current system with equity stations and the original system without equity stations.

north of the downtown area (the latter is outlined in green), having slightly higher accessibility. While the differences are modest, they are more apparent at this threshold than at shorter walking distances, especially in the more disadvantaged neighbourhoods in the east end of the core service area where equity stations were added.

5.1.4. Extreme Threshold

With a walking distance of fifteen minutes, we found that there are 2.44 bicycle racks per person system-wide in the original system configuration (i.e., without equity stations). With the addition of equity stations, there are now 2.55 bicycles per person. Figure 6 presents a comparison of accessibility between the systems. Users near the university and the neighborhoods north of the downtown area (the latter is outlined in green) have the highest accessibility, followed by those who live in the city's downtown area. Accessibility in the east end, where equity stations were implemented, of the core service area remains

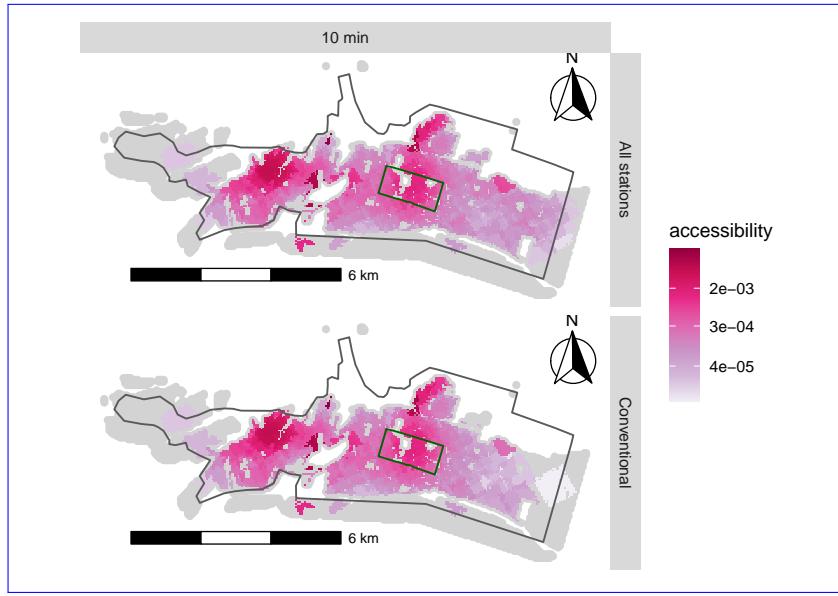


Figure 5: Accessibility at 10 minutes walk (maximum threshold) compared between current system with equity stations and the original system without equity stations.

lower than other areas.

5.2. Comparative Analysis

To highlight the benefit of using the BFCA approach, we conducted a comparative analysis with the 2SFCA method. The latter method does not allocate population and level of service proportionally, which means that there are often substantial amounts of multiple counting each. Figure 7 shows the level of inflation and deflation at five minutes that results when the balanced and the conventional FCA methods are compared. The inflation and deflation is defined as the ratio of the level of service and accessibility calculated using the conventional approach to the balanced approach. This effect has been documented in other studies (Chen et al., 2021; Paez et al., 2019). Figure 7 shows that in some locations the level of service is deflated by up to 80%. This is evident for the equity stations in the east end of the core service area. Noticeably, the level of service is least deflated in the downtown area, likely due to the

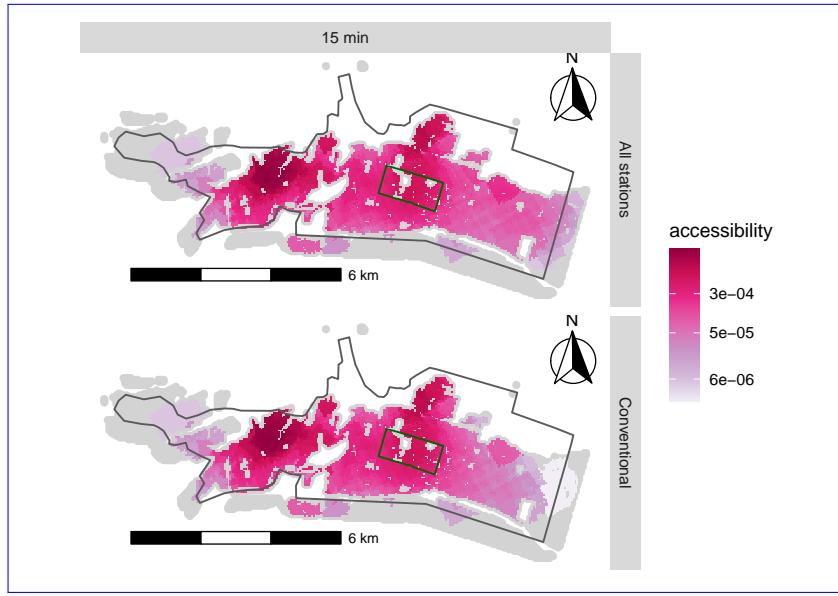


Figure 6: Accessibility at 15 minutes walk (extreme threshold) compared between current system with equity stations and the original system without equity stations.

density of docking stations. Figure 8 shows that accessibility is inflated by as much as 50% in many areas across the city.

5.3. Accessibility by Median Total Household Income

To examine whether accessibility to HBS was increased for groups with lower income, we estimated what level of accessibility accrues to how many people in different income strata. To this end, we took our ~~micro-population-zones~~ small population cells and aggregated the accessibility and population by the median total household income as imputed from the dissemination areas. A unique property of the BFCA method, which does not hold for the 2SFCA approach because of the inflation/deflation issues discussed above, is that accessibility and population data can be re-aggregated using income as an aggregator criterion, while preserving the total population and the level of service. This avoids demand and supply inflation, and also enables us to present findings in a way that is more intuitive to interpret. Figures 9, 10, 11, and 12 depict bivariate choropleth

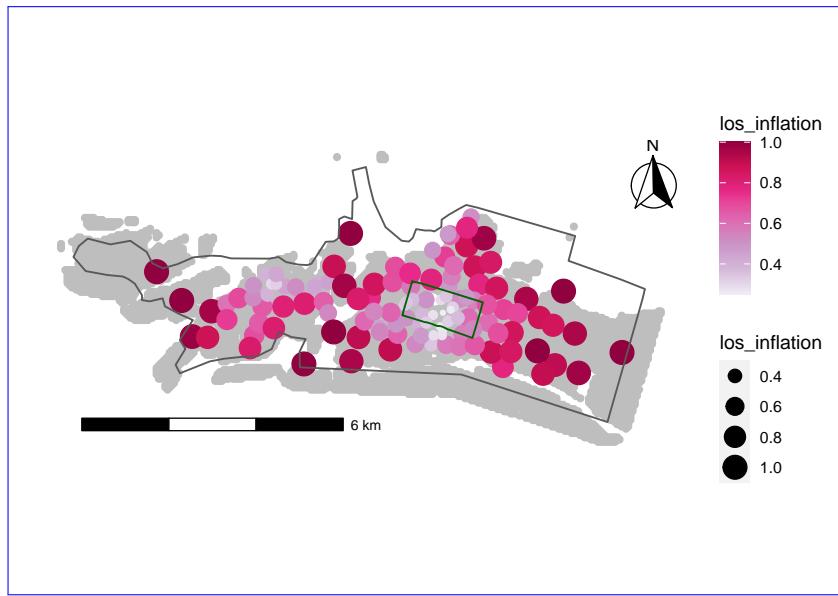


Figure 7: Deflation of level of service at 5 minutes walk (average threshold) in the current system with equity stations.

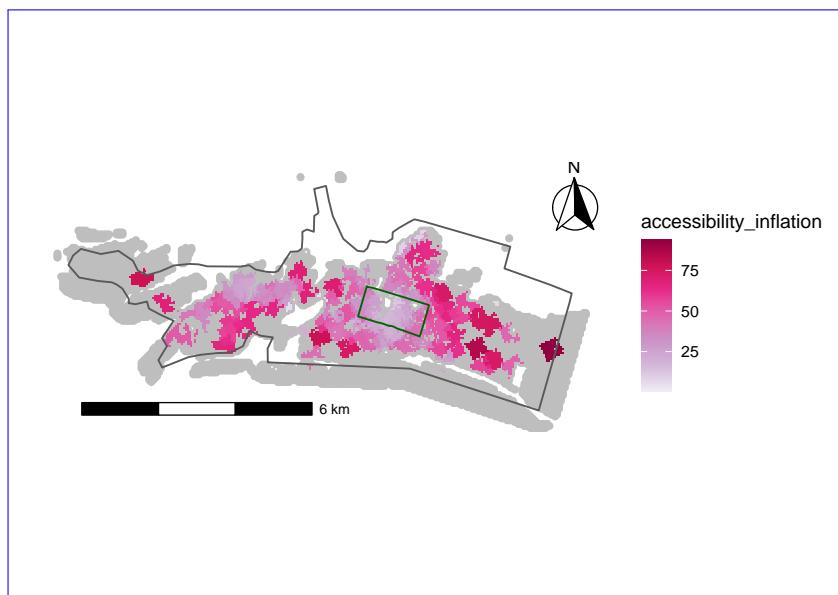


Figure 8: Inflation of accessibility at 5 minutes walk (average threshold) in the current system with equity stations.

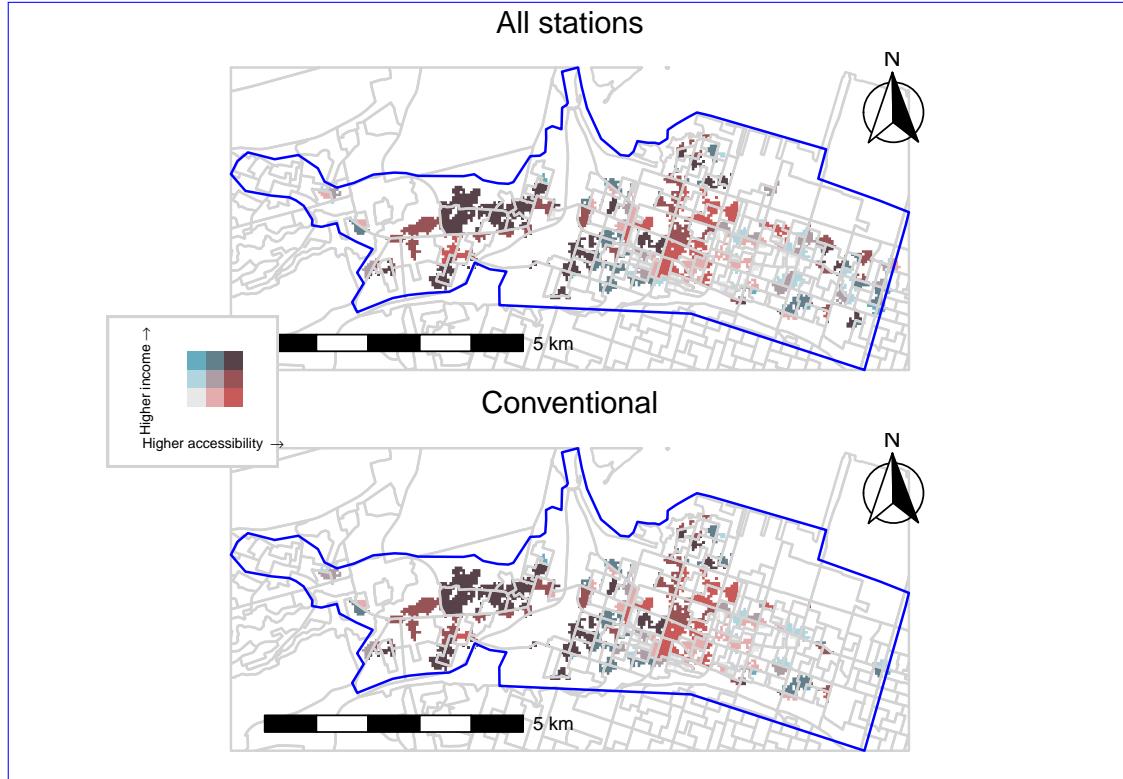
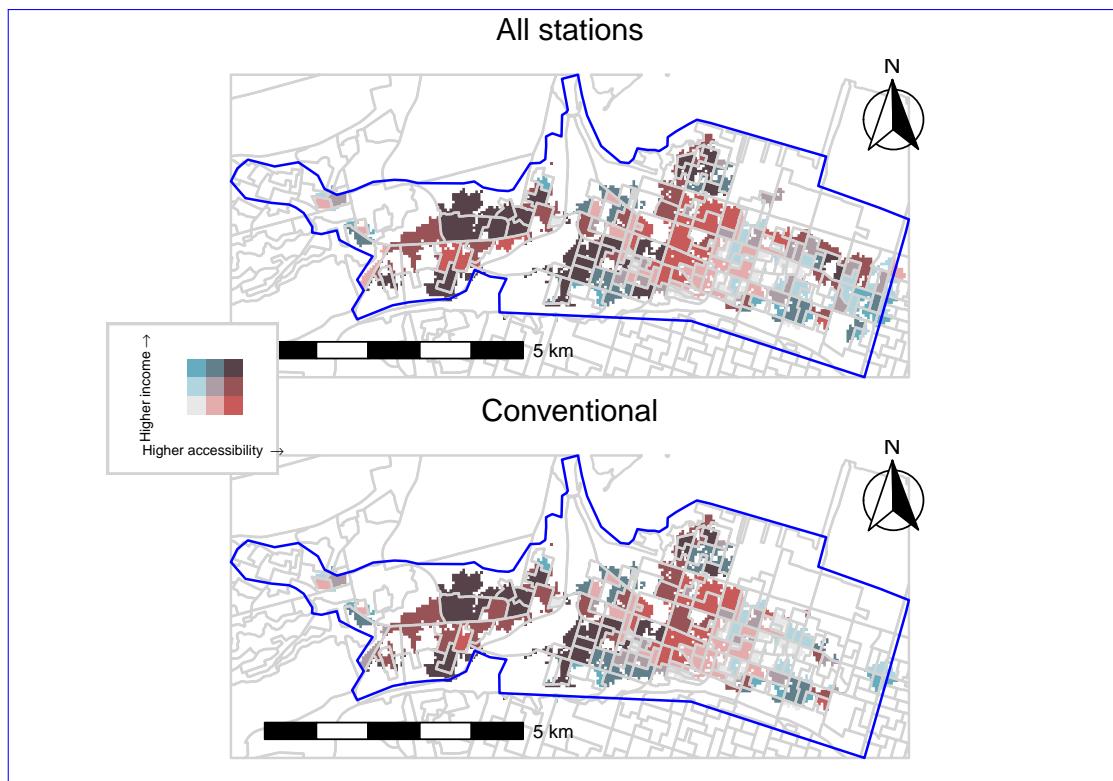


Figure 9: Bivariate map of accessibility and income at the minimum threshold of three minutes with equity stations (top panel) and without equity stations (bottom panel).

maps that combine the spatial distribution of accessibility and median total household income, using tertiles for the coloring scheme.

Table 1 presents accessibility levels by income strata. As expected, the extreme threshold of fifteen minutes is associated with the largest number of people who are within the assumed service area of docking stations. We found that stations added to HBS expanded the spatial coverage of HBS, leading to more balance across the core service area. This is particularly evident at the minimum and average thresholds of three and five minutes, respectively, where the equity stations fill a number of gaps in program coverage.

In line with Hosford and Winters' (2018) findings, we found that accessibility



46 Figure 10: Bivariate map of accessibility and income at the average threshold of five minutes
47 with equity stations (top panel) and without equity stations (bottom panel).

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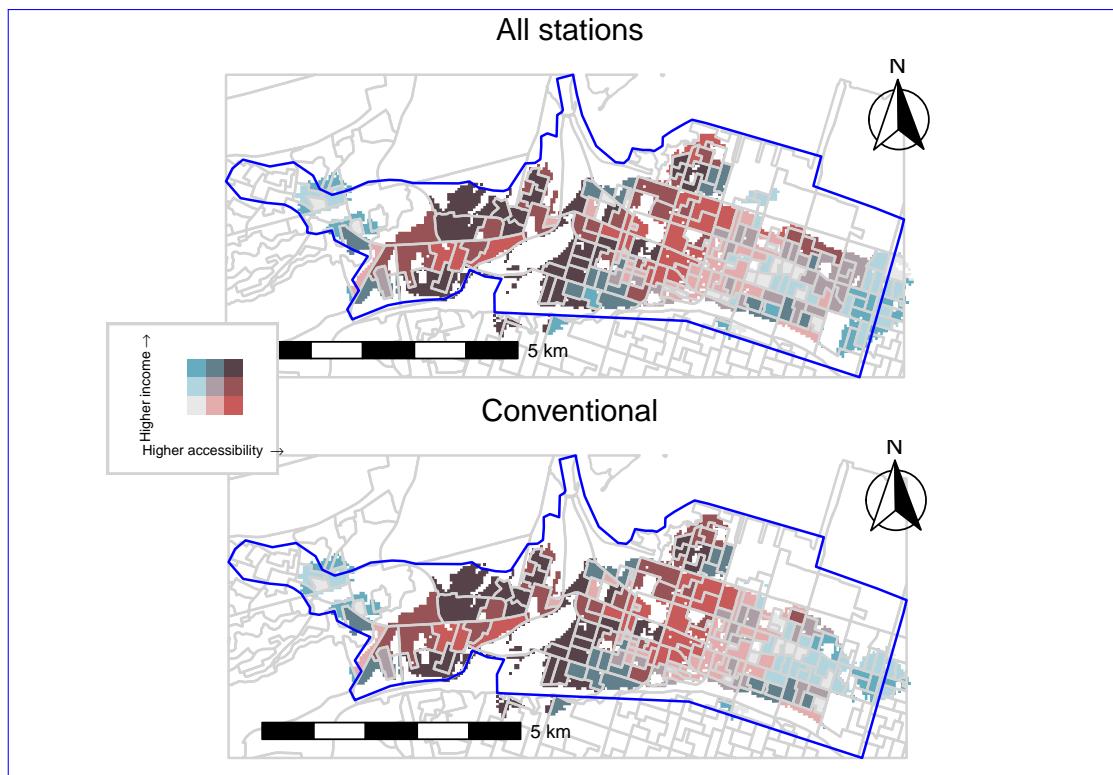


Figure 11: Bivariate map of accessibility and income at the maximum threshold of ten minutes with equity stations (top panel) and without equity stations (bottom panel).

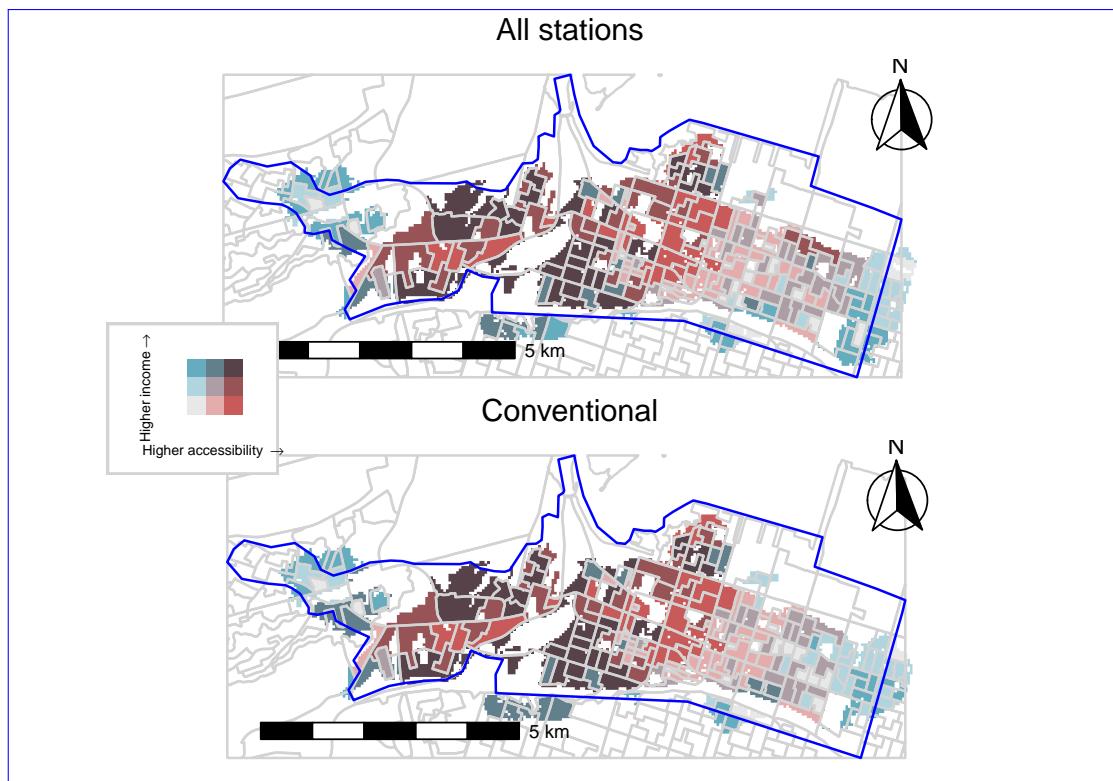


Figure 12: Bivariate map of accessibility and income at the extreme threshold of fifteen with equity stations (top panel) and without equity stations (bottom panel).

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9 to HBS was high for individuals in the bottom and second quintiles of median
10 total household income who live in the centre of the core service area. This
11 may well be an artifact of the spatial socioeconomic and demographic profile of
12 Hamilton, where the most dense parts of the city (where a PBSP is most easily
13 launched) are also those with relatively lower incomes (Hosford and Winters,
14 2018). On the other hand, we found the levels of accessibility to Hamilton's
15 PBSP are generally lower for populations in the bottom 20% of median total
16 household income, compared to populations in the top 20%.

17 Our analysis revealed that the addition of equity stations increased acces-
18 sibility to HBS by growing the population serviced irrespective of the walking
19 threshold. The largest gains were made for dissemination areas in the second
20 20% median total household income, where an additional 3,073 and 5,395 people
21 could reach a docking station within three and five minutes walk, respectively,
22 after the addition of equity stations. However, we found that there were only
23 small increases in the population in the bottom 20% of median total household
24 income who are serviced by the equity stations, and the accessibility gains are
25 also quite modest and smaller than for populations in the second and third
26 quintiles of median total household income. This suggests that inequities in
27 accessibility to HBS persist according to income, albeit this depends on the
28 walking time thresholds. With and without equity stations, people in the top
29 20% of income have the highest level of access at a threshold of ten and fifteen
30 minutes. Although dissemination areas in the second 20% have the highest level
31 of access by a significant amount at lower distance thresholds, the bottom 20%,
32 who may benefit more from increased access to HBS, have the lowest accessibility
33 at three minutes threshold and the second lowest access at all other thresholds.

Table 1: Accessibility and population serviced by income quintile and between systems (with and without equity stations). Total population is the population by income quintile in the DAs that have any PBSP service at all.

| Income Quintile | Total Population | Without Equity Stations | | With Equity Stations | | Difference | |
|-------------------------------|------------------|-------------------------|---------------|----------------------|---------------|------------|---------------|
| | | Population | Accessibility | Population | Accessibility | Population | Accessibility |
| Threshold - 3 minutes | | | | | | | |
| Bottom 20% | 43441 | 22359 | 2.377 | 22798 | 2.424 | 439 | 0.047 |
| Second 20% | 33312 | 9347 | 12.203 | 12420 | 12.281 | 3073 | 0.078 |
| Third 20% | 30940 | 7745 | 3.093 | 9455 | 3.156 | 1710 | 0.063 |
| Fourth 20% | 20185 | 1673 | 4.119 | 1673 | 4.119 | 0 | 0.000 |
| Top 20% | 27541 | 2151 | 3.757 | 2416 | 3.784 | 265 | 0.027 |
| Threshold - 5 minutes | | | | | | | |
| Bottom 20% | 43441 | 35477 | 1.302 | 35803 | 1.357 | 326 | 0.055 |
| Second 20% | 33312 | 17513 | 56.048 | 22908 | 56.137 | 5395 | 0.089 |
| Third 20% | 30940 | 15117 | 4.259 | 18309 | 4.291 | 3192 | 0.032 |
| Fourth 20% | 20185 | 2867 | 1.094 | 3116 | 1.095 | 249 | 0.001 |
| Top 20% | 27541 | 4074 | 6.256 | 4540 | 6.264 | 466 | 0.008 |
| Threshold - 10 minutes | | | | | | | |
| Bottom 20% | 43441 | 41824 | 0.604 | 41981 | 0.622 | 157 | 0.018 |
| Second 20% | 33312 | 27546 | 0.862 | 30503 | 0.929 | 2957 | 0.067 |
| Third 20% | 30940 | 22394 | 0.776 | 25128 | 0.802 | 2734 | 0.026 |
| Fourth 20% | 20185 | 4544 | 0.225 | 4989 | 0.227 | 445 | 0.002 |
| Top 20% | 27541 | 7989 | 1.346 | 9078 | 1.348 | 1089 | 0.002 |
| Threshold - 15 minutes | | | | | | | |
| Bottom 20% | 43441 | 42208 | 0.536 | 42327 | 0.557 | 119 | 0.021 |
| Second 20% | 33312 | 30507 | 0.555 | 31069 | 0.614 | 562 | 0.059 |
| Third 20% | 30940 | 26108 | 0.554 | 26660 | 0.581 | 552 | 0.027 |
| Fourth 20% | 20185 | 6312 | 0.093 | 7435 | 0.096 | 1123 | 0.003 |
| Top 20% | 27541 | 10209 | 0.808 | 11089 | 0.811 | 880 | 0.003 |

Note:

^a With equity stations = Hamilton Bike Share current system (118 conventional stations, 12 equity stations)

^b Without equity stations = Hamilton Bike Share original system (118 conventional stations, no equity stations)

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9 **6. Discussion**
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Using disaggregated population data, we examined equity in accessibility to Hamilton Bike Share ([HBS](#)), with a ~~particular~~ focus on assessing the contribution of the program's equity stations. The BFCA approach, combined with pycnophylactic interpolation, enabled us to measure accessibility on a micro scale which better reflects the scale at which walking takes place and avoids the "absorption of disparities," as articulated by Chen et al. (2019) and elsewhere in the transportation literature (National Academies of Sciences, 2004; Rowangould et al., 2016). Our method also considers [potential](#) demand and supply [as well as congestion effects](#), in the calculation of accessibility, which is important for services like PBSPs but not accounted for in other common accessibility models. Unlike the 2SFCA method, there was no inflation or deflation in our accessibility estimates because population and level of service were preserved (see Figure 7 and Figure 8). This differentiates our analysis from similar papers exploring equity in PBSPs that use larger geographical units of analysis or that focus [only](#) on station location instead of level of service. In this way, our paper has made an important contribution by applying an intuitive and useful approach [not previously used in the cycling literature](#) to measure accessibility to a PBSP. This open and reproducible research could be expanded for additional analysis using other individual-level data in Hamilton (e.g., age, gender, household size, education, etc.) or applied to PBSPs in other North American cities.

The sensitivity analysis revealed that accessibility to docking stations is maximized at five minutes and decreases significantly by eight minutes [see Table 1]. This reflects the normative guide advertised on some docking stations in Hamilton showing other stations within a five minute walk, as well as the directive of NACTO (City Transportation Officials, 2015). We ~~find~~[found](#) that over 118,000 people can access a bike share station within a 15 minute walk,

which represents roughly 85% of the total population in the core service area [see Table 1]. At a minimum threshold of three minutes, too few people can reach stations which leads to relatively high levels of service since there is little crowding for the stations. However, accessibility is at its lowest after eight minutes whereby congestion effects due to increased potential demand kick in. Chen et al. (2019) also found that accessibility decreases as larger geographical units are used in the estimation, since more people can access the service.

The City of Hamilton has recognized from the launch of HBS that substantially more stations and bicycles are needed to service the area (Hamilton, 2015a). With a service area of 40 sq.km, it is estimated that Hamilton should have between 380 and 440 stations instead of 130, and 1,500 bicycles instead of 900 (Hamilton, 2015a). ~~The City acknowledged that reduced~~ capacity within the system led to gaps in coverage in some areas of the city “with some areas not having the recommended station density of 300m between stations or 10 stations per square km” (Hamilton, 2015a). Figures 9, 10, 11, and 12 demonstrate how gaps in ~~service accessibility~~ were filled by the additional equity stations implemented by Hamilton Bike Share. The improvement in accessibility is most noticeable at the average and maximum thresholds in the east end of the core service area, which corresponds to the neighbourhoods where stations were added. However, the contribution of equity stations to reducing inequities in accessibility was modest.

The equity stations were added to HBS as a targeted initiative to increase access for ~~disadvantaged communities~~equity users in specific under-serviced neighbourhoods. However, we found that inequities persisted as evidenced by differences in accessibility according to income quintile (Table 1). While the addition of equity stations seems to modestly increase accessibility for all income groups at all thresholds, they did not increase accessibility substantially

for any single income group. Most importantly, individuals in the bottom 20% of median total household income have the second lowest level of access to ~~Hamilton Bike Share~~ HBS at most thresholds (average, maximum, and extreme). At the minimum threshold, the bottom 20% have the lowest level of access. This suggests that ~~the equity stations may not have sufficiently addressed additional~~ equity stations are needed to more sufficiently address vertical equity. While previous research found that neighborhoods with more disadvantage are better serviced by HBS, the authors used the Pampalon Deprivation Index to determine the level of disadvantage for dissemination areas *across* the city not just within the core service area (Hosford and Winters, 2018). Instead, we used median total household income for each dissemination area *within* the core service area. We conclude that Hamilton's PBSP, while by default located in areas with more deprivation compared to other cities as noted by Hosford and Winters (2018), continues to have disparities in accessibility between income groups. With equity stations, many areas with low median total household income in the east end of the service area ~~continue to~~ have zero or low accessibility at the average threshold of five minutes. At the maximum and extreme thresholds, the top 20% have the highest level of access to ~~Hamilton Bike Share~~ HBS. These findings align broadly with other studies from Tampa (Chen et al., 2019), Philadelphia (Caspi and Noland, 2019) and Seattle (Mooney et al., 2019), which have found disparities in station location, annual trips, or access to bicycles, respectively, between levels of income and education. With the addition of equity stations, there were large gains in accessibility for the second 20% at the average threshold, amounting to over 5,000 more people, but much smaller gains for the bottom 20% with only 326 more people who are able to access a HBS station.

This paper highlights the importance of both the location and size of docking stations for increasing equity in accessibility to PBSPs. Congestion effects

for services like bike share that offer a potential maximum supply of bicycles (i.e., number of racks) at each docking station must be taken into account when measuring accessibility. Several studies have examined who can access PBSPs based on the location of stations (among others, see Babagoli et al., 2019; Qian et al., 2020; Qian and Jaller, 2020; Wang and Lindsey, 2019b; **qianEnhancingEquitableService2020?**), but the size of docking stations in disadvantaged communities is not considered in the literature. Station size (i.e., potential maximum supply of bicycles) An exception is a study on bike share ridership in New York City that found “the number of docks at a bike share station is statistically significant and positively associated with trip attractions for both men and women” (Wang and Akar, 2019, p. 5). Station size was also not identified by PBSP owners and operators as a factor that needed to be addressed in equity efforts (Howland et al., 2017). PBSPs may not necessarily reduce inequities in access if stations are easy to reach for disadvantaged groups equity users but offer only a small number of bicycles. Likewise, more people may not opt to use the program if the supply of bicycles available at nearby stations is insufficient to meet demand. Babgoli et al. (2019) found a slight but not statistically significant increase in the proportion of neighborhoods with the highest levels of poverty that had stations after the Citi Bike expansion in 2015. Although the Citi Bike expansion was not specifically driven by a desire to reduce inequity in access, 16% of neighborhoods with the highest levels of poverty had stations compared to 12% before. This leaves open the question as to whether the stations held enough bicycles to meet demand, and whether congestion effects in neighbourhoods with more poverty are reducing the potential of bike share trips.

The following policy and planning implications can inform efforts for increasing equity in **Hamilton Bike ShareHBS**, and potentially other PBSPs in

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9 North America. Our analysis has identified specific areas that have both low
10 accessibility and low median total household income. Figures 9, 10, 11, and 12
11 highlight potential locations for new equity stations to ~~better accommodate low~~
12 ~~income~~ increase access for low-income groups. Additional stations are needed
13 to further reduce inequities in accessibility. This information will be useful to
14 transportation planners in Hamilton and HBS operators. Our findings also sug-
15 gest that PBSPs should consider increasing the size of stations in ~~disadvantaged~~
16 ~~communities~~ targeted communities. Notably, figure 2 highlights how the equity
17 stations in Hamilton have a lower number of racks compared to docking stations
18 in the city's downtown core. Docking stations added to ~~target~~ increase vertical
19 equity should have an adequate supply of public bicycles, particularly more
20 in areas that have a strong interest in adopting bike share, to increase levels
21 of service and potentially attract new users. Finally, distance to stations is
22 associated with bike share use (Fuller et al., 2011; Wang and Lindsey, 2019b),
23 especially when the trip starts at the residence (Fishman et al., 2013). Distance
24 can also be a barrier to using PBSPs (Fishman et al., 2014). To address this
25 issue, transportation planners and PBSP operators should consult with groups
26 and communities who are under-represented among bike share users to determine
27 how far they are willing to walk to reach a docking station and to get their input
28 on the location of new docking stations.

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7. Study Limitations

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48 This paper did not examine or compare ridership data between conventional
49 and equity stations. Therefore, further research is needed to determine whether
50 the addition of equity stations encouraged more bicycling for ~~disadvantaged~~
51 ~~groups~~ equity users living near them. Other studies have specifically looked at
52 differences in trip type, frequency, or length among users from disadvantaged
53 groups.
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9 neighborhoods (Caspi and Noland, 2019; Qian and Jaller, 2020; Wang and
10 Lindsey, 2019a), but our analysis is limited by the lack of publicly available route
11 and individual user data to conduct similar analyses for HBS.
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13 An additional limitation is the lack of publicly available information about
14 the average number of bicycles at each station on a daily basis. HBS works to
15 balance the number of bicycles across the core service area, but it is reasonable
16 to expect that the number of bicycles will not match exactly the number of racks
17 at every station. Ideally, instead of number of bicycle racks as our measure of
18 supply, we would have liked to use the average number of bicycles at stations,
19 perhaps at different times during the day across many seasons. Should this
20 data become available, it would be worthwhile to revisit the question study to
21 examine how well the operation of the system (including balancing of bicycles
22 across stations) works to maintain the nominal levels of accessibility examined
23 in this paper.

34 8. Conclusion

35 The addition of specific stations to improve equity within the PBSP in
36 Hamilton had the net effect of increasing accessibility and reducing vertical
37 inequities to some extent. In particular, accessibility improved the most for
38 those in the second 20% median total household income at all thresholds, but
39 the gains were only modest for all income groups. Dissemination areas in the
40 bottom 20% had the lowest accessibility at three minutes, and second lowest
41 levels of accessibility at five, ten, and fifteen minutes. Congestion effects were
42 observed at higher thresholds, with accessibility decreasing significantly once the
43 catchment area is increased to ten minutes walking.

44 Wang and Lindsey (2019b) have noted that there is a lack of research that
45 examines how bike share users' behaviour changes as a result of program changes
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9 to station locations or improvements in accessibility. As such, a logical next step
10 to this research is to examine whether the equity stations increased ridership
11 or resulted in new memberships ~~in areas that were previously under-serviced for~~
12 ~~equity users~~. An examination of the types of trips undertaken by residents in
13 these areas would also be informative, such as the study undertaken by Caspi
14 and Norland (2019) after ~~bike share docking~~ stations were implemented in low-
15 income Philadelphia neighborhoods. The bulk of ~~existing facilities that have~~
16 ~~bicycle infrastructure that has~~ been built in Hamilton to date ~~are is~~ located in
17 the core service area ~~particularly~~ near the conventional stations. It would be
18 worthwhile to explore the route choice of bike share trips departing or ending
19 at the equity stations and to identify factors that specifically influence trips
20 from these stations, which would extend existing studies conducted by Scott and
21 colleagues (Lu et al., 2018; Scott et al., 2021; Scott and Ciuro, 2019). ~~Perceived~~
22 ~~accessibility using bike share according to low-income neighbourhoods could also~~
23 ~~be studied in the future. Lättman et al. (2016) have developed the Perceived~~
24 ~~Accessibility Scale that would be useful for this purpose.~~ This paper, combined
25 with additional studies such as those conceptualized above, would serve as a
26 valuable case study for Hamilton and other cities with PBSPs that wish to
27 evaluate and address inequities in accessibility ~~and to active~~ transportation
28 options in urban areas.
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Author Statement

29 March, 2021

Elise Desjardins: conceptualization, methodology, investigation, formal analysis, visualization, validation, writing - original draft.

Christopher D. Higgins: methodology, software, visualization, writing - original draft.

Antonio Paez: conceptualization, methodology, investigation, formal analysis, visualization, data curation, validation, writing - original draft.