

Assignment 1 – Storyboard

Public Transportation and Commute Times

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Visualization & Storytelling

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Introduction & Rationale

For this project, I have chosen the theme of public transportation and commute times, focusing on how extended travel affects the daily lives of students and workers. In many Canadian cities, long commutes are not just a matter of inconvenience — they significantly shape how much time people have for study, work, leisure, and family life. For many individuals, hours spent commuting each week become a hidden tax on their well-being, productivity, and opportunities.

The current situation shows that commute times have steadily increased in recent years, especially in regions surrounding major metropolitan centers. Several factors contribute to this trend, including rising housing costs that push people further from city cores, growing suburban populations, and transportation networks that struggle to keep pace with demand. These structural pressures mean that many people must accept long hours on buses, trains, or highways simply to access work or education.

According to Statistics Canada, Oshawa currently holds the record for the longest average commuting times in the country, just before Toronto. This detail highlights how the issue is not confined only to large metropolitan centers but also affects surrounding regions where many workers and students reside. By combining national data with the stories of individual commuters, this project will show how broader urban and economic dynamics manifest in the daily experiences of citizens. Using graphs and visualizations, I aim to vividly illustrate the realities of long transportation times through the lens of those who live them every day.

Methods & Techniques used

The visualization storytelling method I chose is an infographic series, a format that presents information through a sequence of clear and engaging visuals. This method is effective because it allows complex data to be broken down into simple, digestible pieces, while also providing space for creative expression. In my series, I will include standard data visualizations such as pie charts, bar charts, and other simple graphs to highlight patterns in commuting times and transportation modes. Alongside these visuals, I will add my own stick man drawings to vividly illustrate individuals struggling with long daily commutes. Short explanatory text under each visual will help tie the statistics to the personal side of the story, making the information both informative and relatable.

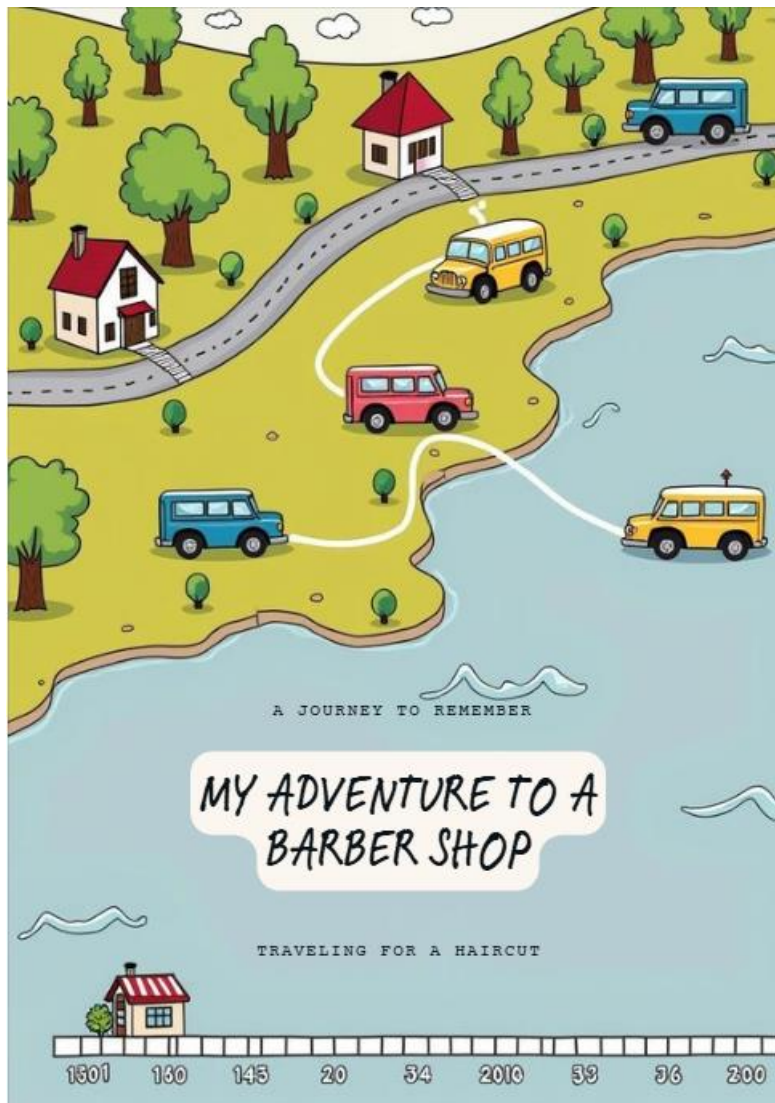
Iteration 1: Brainstorming

The reason I chose commute time as a human-centered problem is because of my own experiences since arriving in Canada about eight years ago. Without a car, I have often relied on buses and trains, and this has meant spending long hours just traveling from place to place. For example, a trip from Waterloo to Toronto takes about two hours each way, adding up to four hours in a single day, and the GO Bus often requires transfers that make the journey even more tiring. More recently, after moving to Oshawa, I noticed the challenge even more clearly. The city is more remote and has fewer buses each day, so spending more than half an hour on the bus feels very normal. Some of my classmates face even longer commutes, with students traveling two hours by bus or three hours by car to reach Ontario Tech University. These experiences made me realize how long

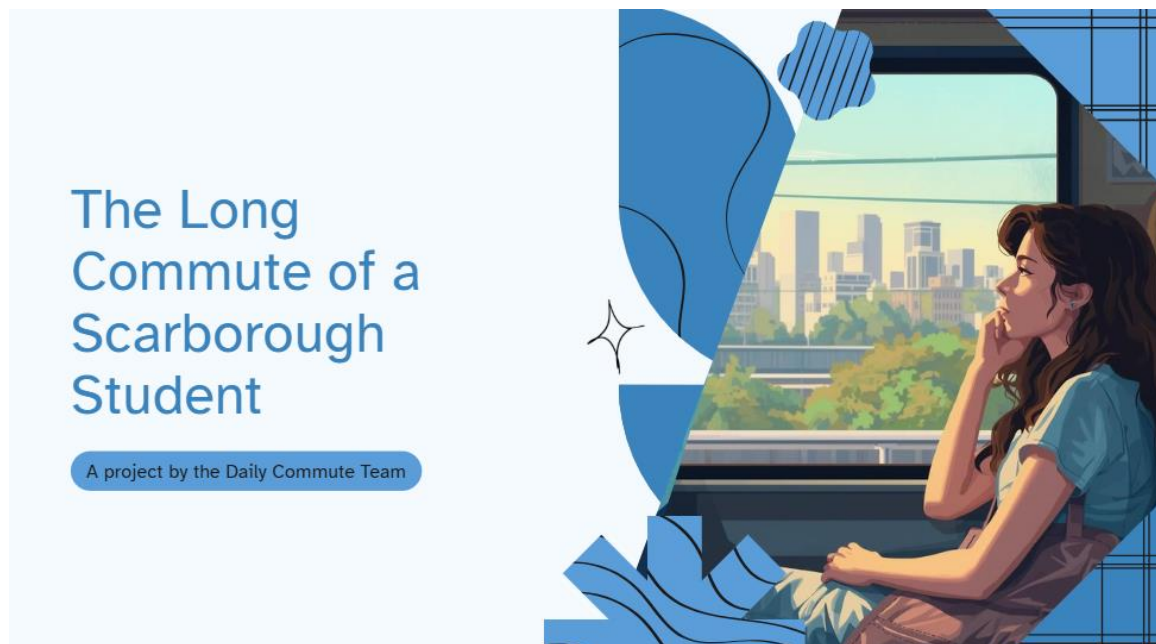
commute times are not just an inconvenience but a major issue for students and workers, which is why I wanted to make it the focus of my project.

Iteration 2

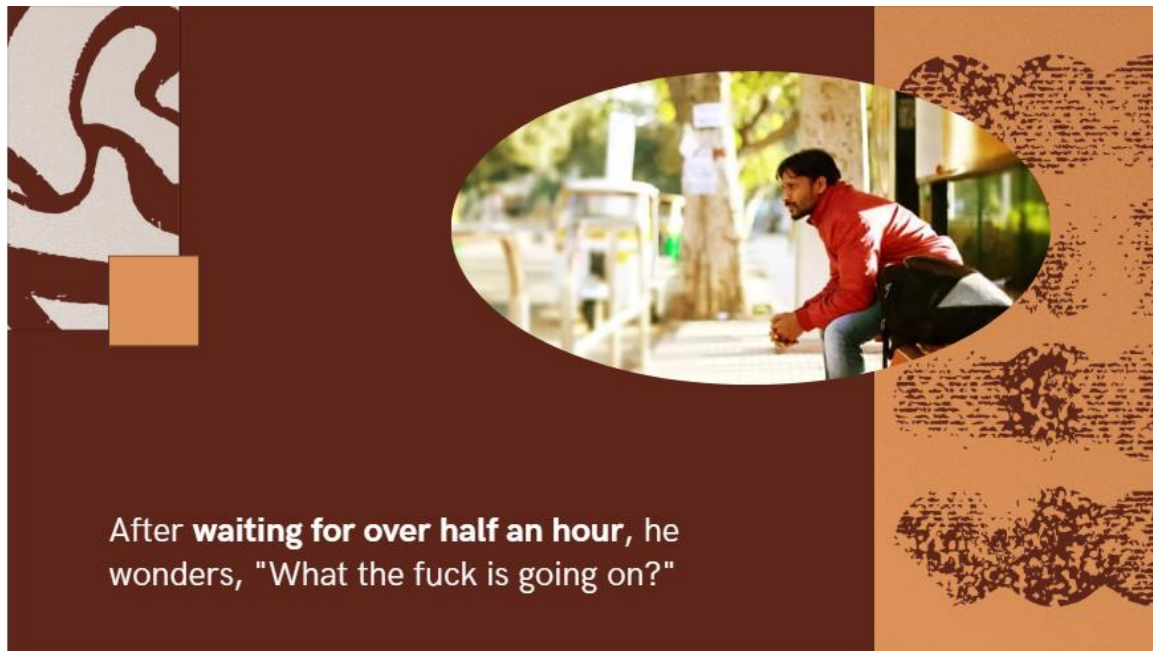
Using Canva, I designed a sequence of visuals and incorporated AI-generated photos to vividly illustrate the challenges of long commutes (Just for conducting a test).



The first graph tells this story: I wanted to go to a Chinese barber shop for a haircut, but it was a bit far. I left home at 3:00 and caught a bus at 3:15. After 20 minutes, I got off, walked 10 minutes to another bus stop, and waited 10 more minutes for the next bus. Twenty minutes later, I got off again and walked another 15 minutes before finally reaching the shop.



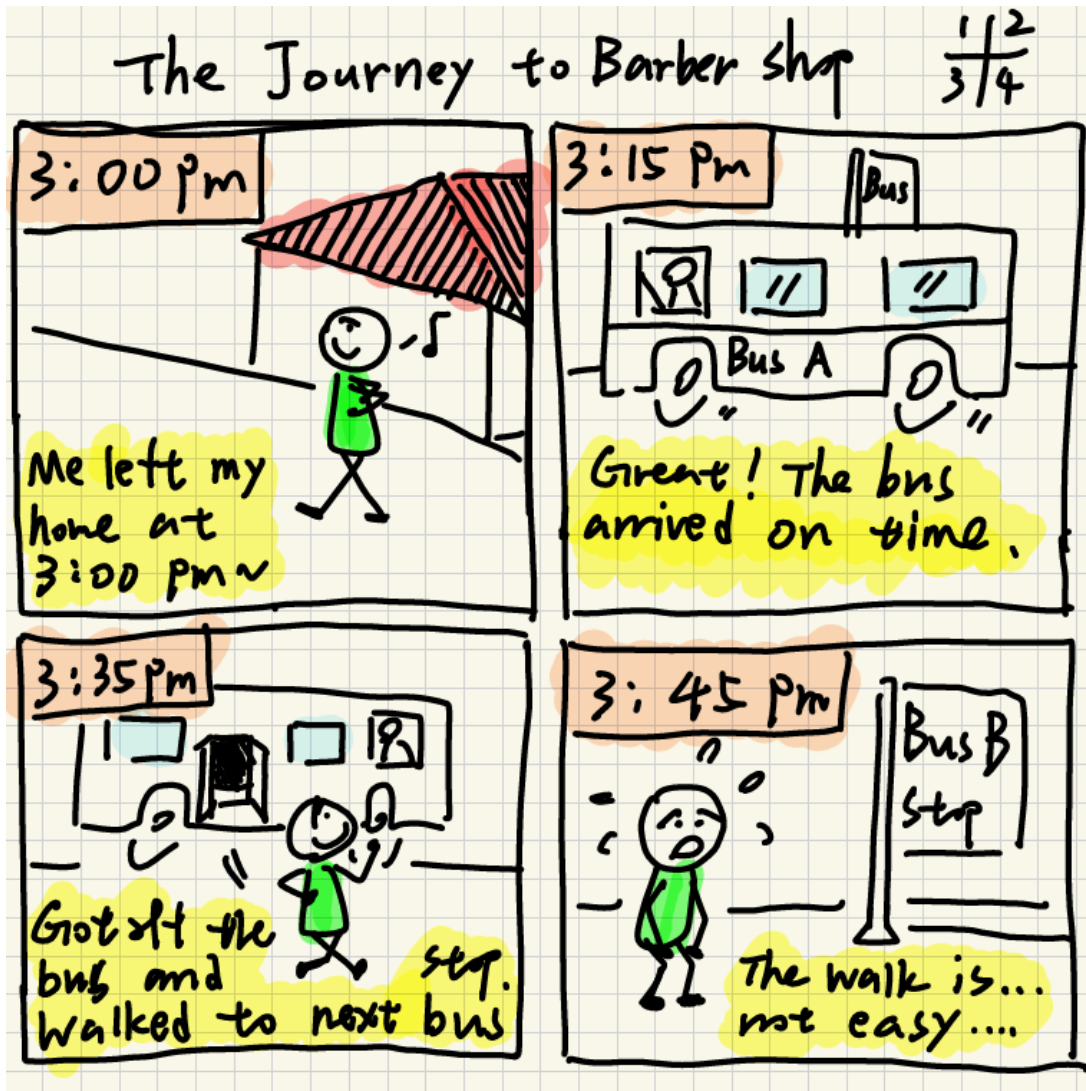
Here is the second story: One of my friends lives in Scarborough and spends two hours on the bus to get to school, then another two hours to go back. Sometimes she only has one class that lasts 40 minutes, but still has to travel four hours for it.



This is another story: A man waits over 30 minutes for a bus, misses it by accident, and now must wait 2 more hours. Frustrated and upset, he looks to the sky with anger and confusion.

Iteration 3: The storyboard

In this iteration, I will continue using Canva and provide the AI with more detailed descriptions to generate more accurate and visually appealing graphics. In addition, I plan to use my iPad to draw some of the graphs myself, allowing me to add a more personal and creative touch to the final presentation.



Panel 1 (3:00 PM)

I left my home at 3:00 PM, ready to go to the Chinese barber shop. It was a nice day, and I felt relaxed as I started my journey, not realizing how long it would actually take.

Panel 2 (3:15 PM)

At 3:15 PM, I caught the first bus. I felt lucky because the bus arrived on time. Sitting by the window, I thought the trip would be smooth and quick.

Panel 3 (3:35 PM)

After about 20 minutes, I got off the first bus and walked to the next bus stop. The transfer took some effort, but I stayed positive, hoping the next bus would come soon.

Panel 4 (3:45 PM)

By 3:45 PM, I was still waiting at the second bus stop, feeling tired from walking. The weather and the wait made the journey harder, and I started to realize how inconvenient long commutes can be.



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Panel 1 (3:55 PM)

I waited at the bus stop for ten minutes, feeling impatient and tired. The bus seemed to take forever, and I started wondering why public transportation is always so slow when you really need it.

Panel 2 (4:00 PM)

Finally, the bus arrived! I was relieved to get on, but it was already crowded and noisy. I found a seat and just hoped this part of the trip would go smoothly.

Panel 3 (4:20 PM)

After about twenty minutes, the bus arrived, and I almost fell asleep. The long ride made me realize how draining commuting can be, even for something as simple as a haircut.

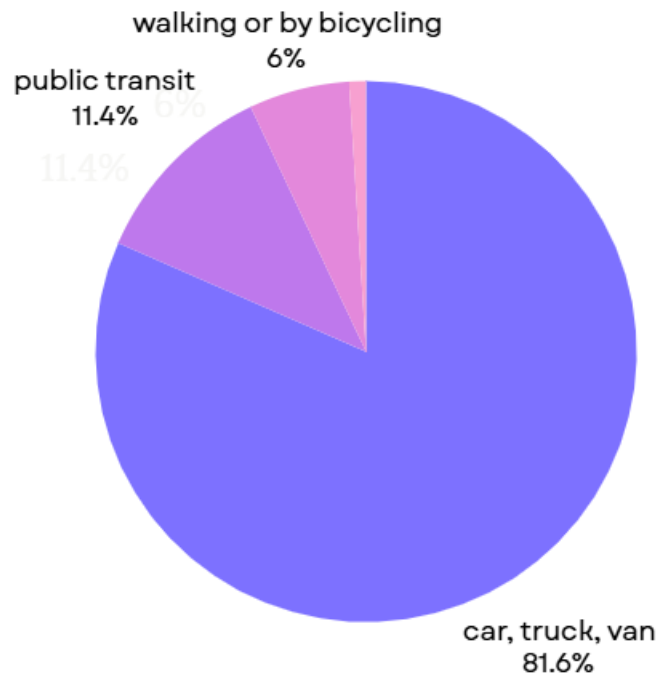
Panel 4 (4:25 PM)

When I got off the bus, I discovered there was still a fifteen-minute walk to reach the barber shop. My legs already felt heavy, but there was no choice—I had to keep going.

Panel 5 (4:35 PM)

At last, I arrived at the barber shop around 4:35 PM. The whole trip felt like a mini workout—almost like doing cardio! Still, I was glad to finally be there and ready to enjoy my haircut.

The Proportion of Canadian's Commuting Methods in 2024

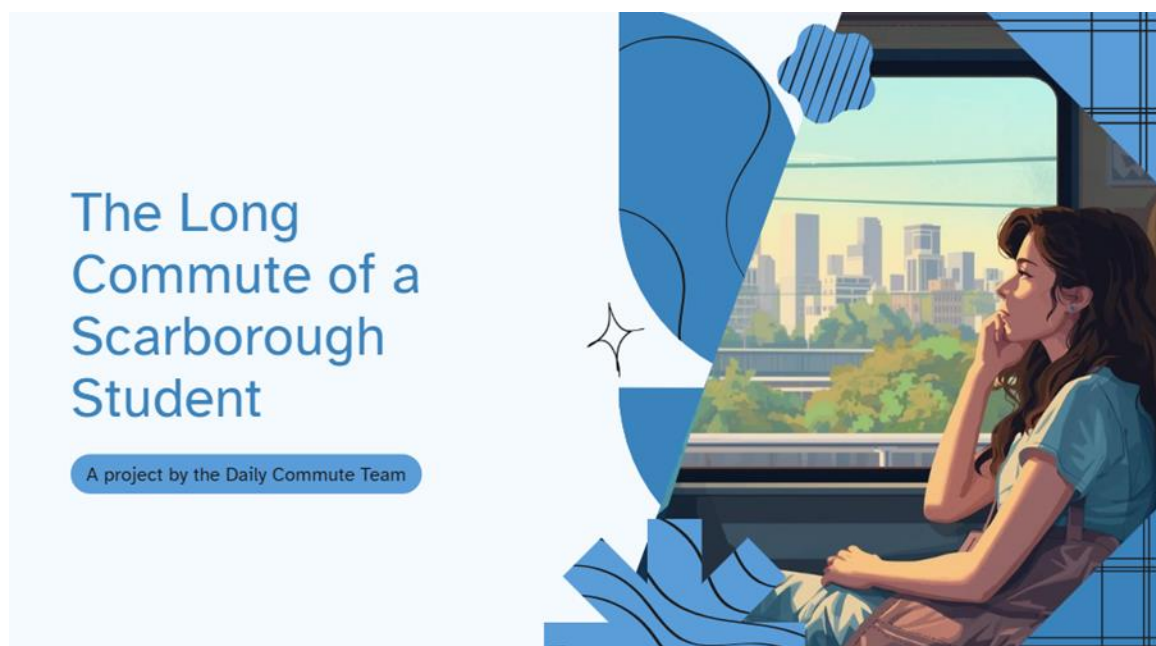


According to Statistics Canada (May 2024), most Canadians still rely on cars as their main commuting method. About 81.5% of commuters travel by car, truck, or van, while 11.4% use public transit, and 6% choose active transportation such as walking or biking. Only a small percentage use other means like motorcycles or taxis. This shows that driving remains the dominant way Canadians commute, even though public transit and active transportation are important for sustainable mobility.

It is obvious that only a small part of people who travel by using public transit.

However, if we take into account the total population of Canada as a whole, then even a 11.4% proportion represents a significant number of people. This group of people is very likely to endure long commutes every day when going to work or school.

One of my friends is a perfect example of this. The house she rented is in Scarborough. Every day, she has to take a two-hour bus ride to attend classes at Ontario Tech University, and then it takes another two hours to get back home.



I still used the picture from iteration 2 because I thought this picture could vividly depict the boredom of my classmate when taking the bus.

From the above pie chart, we can see that the commuting methods are not limited to public transportation; in fact, driving accounts for the majority. The reason why we tend to associate long commute times with public transportation is because in our stereotypes, taking public transportation is generally slower than driving. For instance, people have to wait for public transportation, and these public transit systems frequently stop at multiple

stations along the way. Driving can sometimes lead to long commutes as well. For instance, there might be traffic jams, difficulties in finding parking spaces, or some unexpected situations on the road, etc. Another of my friends can precisely explain this point. He also lives in Scarborough. The difference is that he comes to class by car every time. However, every time during class, he was always late by half an hour or even longer. When I asked him why he was late, he would always say that he was looking for a parking space for a long time.



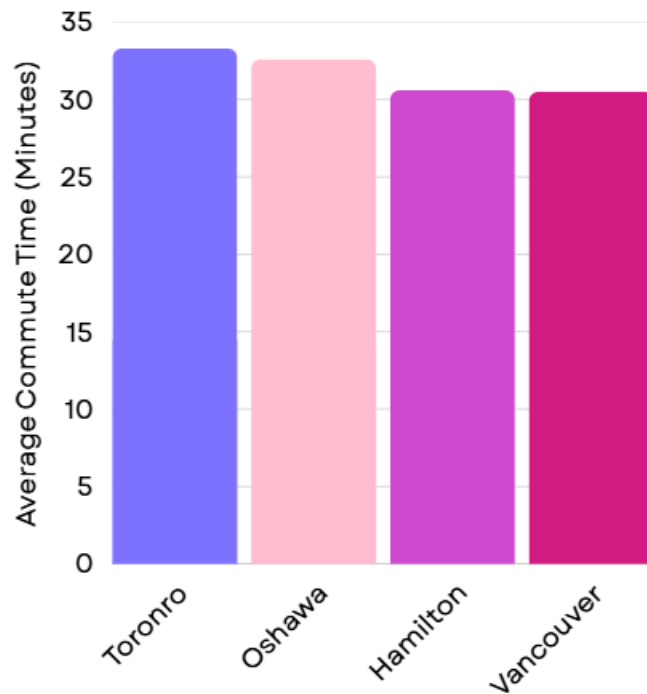
Commuting Challenges: The Daily Struggle



ALWAYS LATE BECAUSE OF PARKING DIFFICULTIES!

This picture shows how congested the traffic is on the road and how crowded the parking lots are.

Average Commute Times in Various Canadian Metropolitan Areas in 2024



According to Statistics Canada (May 2024), the average commute times vary across major Canadian metropolitan areas. Among them, Toronto has the longest average commute times at 33.3 minutes, followed closely by Oshawa at 32.6 minutes. Hamilton and Vancouver both have slightly shorter commute times, averaging around 30 minutes. These numbers show that people living in and around the Greater Toronto Area tend to experience longer travel times compared to other regions. Although specific data for Scarborough and Mississauga are not provided, they are part of the Toronto metropolitan region and likely face similar commuting challenges. Overall, the chart highlights how urban congestion and distance continue to impact daily travel in Canada's largest cities.

Audience

The main audience for this project is people who experience long commute times in their daily lives, whether they travel by car, public transit, or other means. This includes workers and students who spend hours each day on the road or on buses, often feeling tired, stressed, or frustrated. Through my examples and graphs, I hope these audiences can relate to the stories and find a sense of connection. After reading my storyboard, I want them to feel understood—to have that moment of echo, realizing that many others share the same challenges and emotions about long and exhausting commutes.

Conclusion

Even though most of my examples show a common reason for long commute times—living far away from one's workplace or school—this factor is often difficult to change. Many people choose to stay in their current homes because they feel comfortable and attached to their surroundings. Moving to a new area means starting over: learning about the neighborhood, finding nearby restaurants and shops, getting used to the public transit system, and building new relationships. Most importantly, relocating often leads to losing close connections with old friends and familiar communities. Therefore, once people decide to stay where they are, they accept the trade-off between comfort and convenience. My project shows that behind every long commute is a personal decision to maintain stability and belonging, even if it means spending more time on the road each day.