Understanding the Perceived Benefits to Low-Income Neighbourhoods of Transit Expansion Between 2015-2025 in Toronto

by Xinyu (Cathy) Lu

supervised by Dr. Mahtot Gebresselassie

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York University, Toronto, Ontario, Canada

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Abstract

This study examines whether recent public transit investments have benefited lower-income residents and neighbourhoods in Toronto. Focusing on the Line 1 Toronto–York Spadina Subway Extension, Line 5 Eglinton Crosstown, and Line 6 Finch West LRT, the research combines survey responses from 45 transit users with neighbourhood income data and spatial analysis using ArcGIS. The findings show that recent investments improved mobility for some lower-income transit users through shorter travel times, fewer transfers, reduced walking distances, improved reliability, and more direct journeys. Respondents also reported better access to employment, education, healthcare, shops and services, and social activities. However, these benefits were unevenly distributed; income and geography emerged as the strongest influences on perceived transit benefits. Findings revealed a shift away from systemic inequities in public transit toward lower-income populations as rapid transit continue to expand into suburban neighbourhoods. This study further recommends equal spatial and social distribution of public transit and investment in additional routes, expanded coverage, and increased service frequency and hours of operation to support an equitable transit network in Toronto.

Keywords: Public transit, Mobility, Accessibility, Equity, Low-income

Forewords

This major research paper represents my two years of studies in the MES Program. It was completed in fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of Environmental Studies (MES) in Planning program at York University. When I first started the program, I was interested in transportation planning and its relationship with land use and housing prices. Then, I was introduced to research on mobility justice and transportation segregation, and I found myself interested in the political causes of everyday inequities and the experiences of low-income communities. I want to understand why we are seeing a social separation of mobility, whose needs are being prioritized, and explore how lower-income neighbourhoods benefit from new transit infrastructures. Specifically, how have recent investments in new public transit infrastructure benefited low-income neighbourhoods in Toronto? I want to explore the impacts that new subway extensions and LRT lines have contributed to mobility and accessibility, and their locations in relation to where people live. This goal helped in identifying three areas of concentration in my Plan of Study, including: “transportation”, “Land-use planning”, and “Social exclusion”. This has led me to delve deeper into this research topic and reflects some of the learning objectives I have outlined in my Plan of Study to achieve:

Objective 1.1: To develop a strong understanding of the concept of mobility in relation to the transportation system.

Objective 1.3: To examine the relationship between proximity to transit networks and levels of mobility and access in low-income neighbourhoods.

Objective 2.2: To develop a solid understanding of how neoliberalism has changed land-use policies and planning.

Objective 2.3: To obtain the knowledge and skills necessary to meet the program requirements of the Ontario Professional Planners Institute for candidate membership.

Objective 3.3: To examine how planning practices and policies influence patterns of social exclusion and social benefits.

In my major paper, I explore the following questions:
My research question asks: Are low-income communities in Toronto benefiting from recent investments in public transit infrastructure?

Supporting sub-questions include: How are the benefits defined and measured across neighbourhoods with different income levels? Do areas with lower income levels receive proportionate transit investment relative to their need for improved accessibility? And how do land-use changes and policies influence decisions about transit placement?

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AI Use Declaration Statement

No generative AI tools were used to create content, ideas, or data for this research paper. Artificial intelligence assistance was limited exclusively to basic grammar polishing and spell-checking. All intellectual content remains entirely my own.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Introduction to Research

Since the late nineteenth century, public transit in Toronto has been a subject of ongoing debate (Kyer, 2015). Factors such as technological change, evolving governance, service expansion, congestion, and public participation have all contributed to this discussion (Kyer, 2015). Thus, transit planning in the city is not only technical. It has always been a political topic, shaped by struggles over land use, public investment, and social benefits. Each generation faces its own transit challenge, and the root questions have never been fully resolved (Geva et al., 2025). Early critics feared that streetcars moved too fast and disrupted daily life. Today, researchers have found that the transit system has been shaped by historically automobile-centred transportation and land use policies, resulting in unequal service distribution and highlighting the need to improve service quality for all users (Pravitno & Moos, 2022; Horak, 2025; Allen, 2018; Miller & Farvolden, 2022). Studies also indicate that lower-income populations in Toronto are more likely to rely on transit due to low car ownership among populations from marginalized groups and precarious workers (Miller & Farvolden, 2022). But at the same time, lower-income neighbourhoods that rely most on transit were found to have restricted access to opportunities due to limited transit options (Lachapelle & Boisjoly, 2023; Allen & Farber, 2019).

The years from 2015 to 2025 are an important period to assess transit equity in Toronto. This decade has seen large transit expansion (Toronto Transit Commission, n.d.; Metrolinx, n.d.-b). This study investigates who benefits from new transit projects. Do recent investments serve the people who depend on public transit the most, or do they still serve the already benefited areas?

In this study, I aim is to understand how new transit infrastructure redistributes mobility benefits across Toronto and whether these benefits reach low-income communities. My focus is on major transit projects between 2015 and 2025, specifically, the York-Spadina Line 1 extension, the UP Express, and the Line 6 Finch West LRT. In this paper, I will evaluate their impacts on neighbourhood income, land use, and social exclusion. I explore the effects of the location of new transit projects on people's residential choices. A survey of Toronto residents from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds revealed patterns in transit, perceived benefits,

common issues, and people's experiences with these new projects. The objective of this research is to assess whether recent transit investments have enhanced mobility and accessibility for those who depend on it most and how these investments fit within Toronto's wider transportation network.

1.2 Study Overview

1.2.1 City of Toronto

This research takes place in Toronto, Ontario. Toronto's population is projected to reach approximately 3 million by 2031, and over 8.6 million for the broader Greater Toronto Area (GTA) (Mettke, 2015). The governance of Toronto's public transit agency falls under the municipal government. Historically, Toronto's urban form and governance have changed through major institutional shifts. When the Municipality of Metropolitan Toronto was established in 1953, the idea was for the rich core of the City of Toronto to share in the costs of infrastructure and other development in the booming but tax-poor suburbs (Bourdeau et al., 2009). Public transit has shaped Toronto's growth in terms of who can access opportunities and whose mobility and accessibility are prioritized (Kyer, 2015). In 1998, the provincial government merged six municipalities into a single municipality that became the City of Toronto. Local governance and fiscal responsibilities shifted, and these transformations occurred alongside broader economic restructuring that repositioned Toronto as a globally competitive city.

1.2.2 Early Planning Priorities in Toronto

Since the early 2000s, planning priorities in Toronto have focused on accommodating rapid population growth and coordinating land use with housing supply. The Places to Grow Act (2005) established the legislative framework for managing growth across the Greater Golden Horseshoe, followed by the Growth Plan (2006; consolidated in 2019) (Province of Ontario, 2026). These policies encouraged municipalities to direct new development towards existing built-up areas through urban intensification and the creation of higher-density mixed-use communities. In 2019, the province continued to promote higher-density, mixed-use development along transit corridors and introduced the concept of 'major transit station areas'. The Major Transit Station Areas (MTSAs) and Protected Major Transit Station Areas (PMTSAs) were adopted to increase the height and density of buildings near transit stations and to ensure

that these areas fulfill their intended purpose of planning for and managing growth and creating complete communities (Shipowick & Butler 2021). In 2024, both the Places to Grow Act and its accompanying Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe were replaced by the new Provincial Planning Statement (2024), which continues to encourage municipalities to accommodate population and employment growth through urban intensification and higher-density development around existing transportation infrastructure (Province of Ontario, 2026).

These planning priorities also reinforced the importance of expanding rapid public transit to accommodate future growth. Rapid transit infrastructure became an essential mechanism for supporting higher-density communities and reducing automobile dependence. Although the implementation of many projects was delayed by shifting political priorities and funding decisions, the Toronto–York Spadina Subway Extension, the Eglinton Crosstown LRT, and the Finch West LRT ultimately represent the realization of planning objectives set out in successive transit plans.

1.2.3 Public Transit in the Greater Toronto Area

In Toronto, two major public transit players are shaping the transit system's trajectory. On the local level, the City of Toronto is responsible for providing local public transit through the municipal transit authority, the Toronto Transit Commission (TTC). The TTC provides public transit services to approximately 1.7 million daily commuters in Toronto and from surrounding municipalities (City of Toronto, 2025). Public transit services are provided through the TTC's network of subways, light-rail transit, streetcars, buses, and Wheel-Trans. Often working with Metrolinx, an agency of the Government of Ontario, the TTC plans and implements transit expansion projects in Toronto and regional connections with nearby municipalities (City of Toronto, 2025). The TTC is funded through a combination of passenger fares, municipal property taxes, and provincial and federal government subsidies.

At the regional level, Metrolinx, established by the province in 2006, oversees the regional dimension of transit provision in the GTA. It provides planning, funding, coordination, and operation (through the regional commuter service GO Transit) on a regional scale. GO Transit is the operating division of Metrolinx, but it was founded in 1967 by the government of Ontario, preceding the establishment of Metrolinx (Mettke, 2015).

1.2.4 Major Transit Projects Implemented in Toronto in the Past Decade

The decade between 2015 and 2025 represents a significant expansion in Toronto and the broader GTA. Most notably, the Toronto–York Spadina Subway Extension (TYSSE), opened in 2017, added six new stations from Sheppard West Station through York University and north into Vaughan (Toronto Transit Commission, 2017). Also, the recent introduction of Line 6 Finch West, opened in December 2025, provides new east–west light rail service in Toronto's northwest corridor, along Finch Avenue from Finch West Station (Keele Street) to Humber College Station (near Hwy 427). Operated by Metrolinx, the Union Pearson Express (UP Express) provides a direct rail connection between downtown Toronto and Toronto Pearson International Airport (Metrolinx, n.d.-a). The line was launched in 2015 with three stops in Toronto: Union Station, Bloor Station, and Weston Station. A new Toronto stop at Mount Dennis was added, with direct connections to the GO Transit Line, UP Express, and TTC's bus network.

Most recently, sections of Line 5 (the Eglinton Crosstown LRT) between Mount Dennis and Kennedy began operating in February 2026. Given the short time that has passed since its opening compared to the survey timeline, many people may not have had the opportunity to experience Line 5 fully. Therefore, the results of the findings that pertain to Line 5 should be considered with that in mind.

1.2.5 Governance Context: Neoliberal Transportation Policymaking

In recent decades, the transportation sector has increasingly operated within a neoliberal policy framework that prioritizes market efficiency, privatization, and fiscal restraint over social welfare and collective access (Brenner et al., 2004; Siemiatycki, 2005; Mettke, 2015). This is due to private-sector involvement in public–private partnerships, driven by the need to engage multiple stakeholders to deliver infrastructure at lower cost and risk (Debande, 2002). Instead of viewing transit primarily as a public service, transit becomes a tool for economic development, urban competitiveness, and investment attraction.

Within this governance context, planning policies have increasingly promoted higher-density, mixed-use development around major transit corridors through transit-oriented development (TOD). Concentrating housing, employment, and commercial activities near rapid

transit can improve accessibility, encourage transit use, and reduce automobile dependence. However, these planning strategies also strengthen the relationship between transit infrastructure and surrounding land values, property investment, and redevelopment. As a result, transportation infrastructure may function not only as a mobility service but also as a catalyst for urban growth and economic competitiveness, potentially prioritizing investment and redevelopment over broader social equity objectives (Boudreau et al., 2009; Mettke, 2015).

Toronto's political and institutional restructuring has further reinforced these development patterns. The 1998 amalgamation of six municipalities into the single City of Toronto was politically justified as a move toward greater administrative efficiency and fiscal cost savings (Mettke, 2015). The political belief was that a new, bigger city would be more cost-efficient. The amalgamation brought in a high-density core and a grid of streets that provide a mix of uses, and the inner suburbs (Mettke, 2015). The policy directions reflect broader shifts in the political economy of urban governance toward market-oriented planning approaches and economic competitiveness (Boudreau et al., 2009). In this context, many scholars examined the neoliberal ideology that emphasizes market-based solutions (Kipfer & Keil, 2002; Siemiatycki, 2005; Boudreau et al., 2009). The theoretical foundations and debates surrounding neoliberalism and transit planning are discussed in greater detail in Chapter 2.

This paper is presented in six chapters. Following the introductory Chapter One, Chapter Two provides a literature review of Toronto's public transit, its historical correlation with income levels, and measures of mobility, accessibility, and access to opportunities. Chapter Three details the research approach and methods used to conduct this research. Chapter Four presents the findings from the quantitative survey through descriptive statistics, visual representation, and mapping of transit usage patterns and perceived benefits from respondents. Chapter Five discusses the study's findings and limitations and provides recommendations for future transit planning and policy. Chapter Six summarizes the purpose and major findings of this research.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This section reviews the existing literature on public transit development in Toronto and highlights key themes relevant to this research: previous public transit research in Toronto; the positive and negative perspectives on public transit; the definitions of mobility and accessibility; the relationship between transit and income level; and the politics of public transit.

2.1 Evolution of Toronto's Public Transit Network

Transportation in Toronto involves a complex network of users, service providers, and governing institutions, each with differing needs, priorities, and motivations. Earlier transportation planning decisions have played an important role in shaping long-term travel patterns in the region. The construction of expressways during the 1950s provided Torontonians with a private mode of transport, contributing to a decline in transit ridership from 13% to 5% of all trips between 1950 and 2000 (Hodge et al., 2021). At the same time, Toronto's first subway line opened in 1954, and land-use policies were adjusted to promote high-density redevelopment around stations such as Yonge-Eglinton and to support transit-oriented development (TOD) in city centres (Hodge et al., 2021, p. 117). The streetcar line back then was overstressed and demanded for the new metro lines (Derrible, 2012). Despite these early investments, the pace of transportation infrastructure development slowed significantly in later decades after the introduction of the Bloor Line (Line 2) and the Scarborough Rapid Transit (Line 3). The Toronto metro network has been characterized as regionally accessible because its long subway lines extend to the city's edges (Derrible, 2012). With the current subway system in place since the 1980s, the pace of infrastructure development in Toronto has slowed significantly (Geva et al., 2025). Figure 1 below shows the history of the Toronto subway system, with the opening year for each segment (adapted from Derrible, 2012).

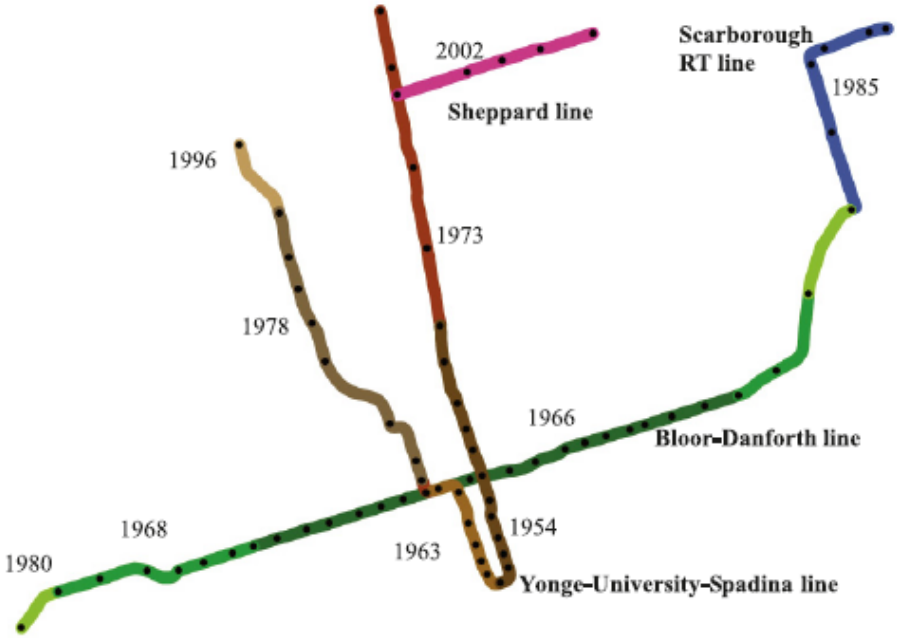


Figure 1. History of Toronto's subway network segmented by their opening date (adapted from Derrible (2012)).

The mismatch between transit infrastructure and different socio-economic neighbourhoods has become more prevalent and has failed to keep up with population growth (Mettke, 2015). Since the 1970s, there has been a trend for high-income neighbourhoods to be located near Line 1 of the subway. Meanwhile, the suburbanization of lower-income populations has moved them further away from transport opportunities (Hulchanski, 2010).

Other research on public transit in Toronto has also examined the operational and spatial characteristics of Toronto's transit network. Derrible (2012) finds that new subway openings do not necessarily produce immediate ridership surges but instead generate gradual increases as the system adjusts through a "catching up" process. And Xi et al. (2016) examined the commonly used 800-meter (½-mile) walking buffer for defining subway service areas and found it does not fully capture actual travel behaviour, as a substantial proportion of riders access the stations via connecting bus and streetcar services rather than walking alone.

2.2 Mobility and Accessibility

One of the critical functions of public transit systems is to provide accessibility and connectivity that serve both individual and collective mobility demands (Mettke, 2015). In the literature, mobility and accessibility are often used as indicators for evaluating the effectiveness

of transit systems and their ability to connect people with destinations, services, and opportunities (Manaugh & El-Geneidy, 2012; Mettke, 2015; Boarnet et al., 2017; Allen & Farber, 2019; Liang et al., 2025). Together, mobility and accessibility provide an important lens for understanding the broader social and spatial impacts of public transit systems.

2.2.1 Transit Mobility

Mobility refers to the ability of people to move from one place to another (Brail & Donald, 2024; Hanson, 2017). The quality of mobility influences individuals' ability to access opportunities for work, education, daily necessities, and leisure activities (Brail & Donald, 2024). Mobility is widely regarded as a basic urban necessity, and public transit plays a significant role in forming mobility options for residents across different age groups and socioeconomic backgrounds (Mettke, 2015).

However, mobility is not evenly distributed between urban and suburban populations. Transportation infrastructure that improves mobility often prioritizes safety, efficiency, and comfort for privileged groups. As a result, disparities in transportation access persist, with low-income neighbourhoods, racialized populations, and seniors facing higher risks of social exclusion due to inadequate transportation options (Karner et al., 2020). These same populations have historically also borne disproportionate burdens of displacement associated with major transportation and housing infrastructure projects (Karner et al., 2020). Recent research has also examined how emerging mobility technologies, such as ride-hailing services, complement and sometimes replace public transit use (Brail & Donald, 2024). Additionally, broader social disruptions such as the COVID-19 pandemic significantly affected urban mobility patterns, with dramatic declines in transit ridership observed across Canadian cities beginning in March 2020 (Brail & Donald, 2024).

2.2.2 Transit Accessibility

Hansen's (1959) foundational definition of accessibility, which describes it as "the ease or propensity of interaction between people and locations," establishes an important framework for understanding how transportation systems shape and are shaped by patterns of land use and population distribution. Similarly, accessibility has been defined as the ease of reaching destinations, often measured through travel time and influenced by factors such as cost, physical

capability, safety, and service quality (Hanson, 2017). Levine et al. (2019) argue that accessibility should extend beyond one's ability to move to build connections and opportunities to reach destinations. Building on Hansen's (1959) work, recent studies have focused on the importance of first- and last-mile connections in determining overall accessibility (Boarnet et al., 2017; Bürstelin, 2021). These studies emphasize that a person's first interaction with the transit system occurs at the station or stop, often some distance from their home or destination. The first step connections determine how easily (how accessible) people can reach the greater transit network, and they play a major role in shaping overall accessibility and mobility.

2.2.3 Mobility and Accessibility as Research Variables

Many researchers have used accessibility as a quantifiable variable to assess transit infrastructures. Geurs and Van Wee (2004) used a cumulative opportunities approach for assessing transit-enabled accessibility and its potential effects on land-use development near transit stations. Allen and Farber (2020) further built on this approach to compute active and passive accessibility levels at stations. Manaugh and El-Geneidy (2012) used accessibility as a measure to quantify the benefits of public transit at the regional and individual levels; They used accessibility to count the number of opportunities that can be reached within a predefined travel distance or time. Similarly, Allen (2018) used accessibility as a measure to examine the equity of transit access to jobs across large Canadian metropolitan regions.

While accessibility has been more frequently emphasized in academic research, mobility has historically played a central role in transportation planning. Since the mid-twentieth century, transportation systems and the land-use patterns associated with them have largely been planned within a mobility-oriented framework, in which improving movement across space has been a guiding principle (Levine et al., 2019). Recognizing the limitations of focusing on a single dimension, some scholars have combined both concepts as analytical measures. For example, Foth et al. (2013) integrated mobility and accessibility to better understand how the temporal and spatial distribution of opportunities influences commuter decisions regarding mode choice, residential location, and employment.

2.3 Neighbourhood Impacts of New Transit Infrastructure on Low-Income Communities

Public transit can generate both positive and negative neighbourhood-level impacts, but the negative impacts often receive greater public and political attention. As a result, public transit research has frequently examined issues related to income polarization, gentrification, displacement, and the uneven distribution of transit infrastructure (Fernando et al., 2021; Hulchanski, 2010; Kahn, 2007; Mettke, 2015; Foth et al., 2013). Improved accessibility resulting from new transit infrastructure may increase land values, accelerate redevelopment, and contribute to the displacement of lower-income residents (Kahn, 2007; Foth et al., 2013). These negative consequences often impact lower income neighbourhoods because lower-income individuals are more likely to rely on public transit due to lower rates of automobile ownership (Allen & Farber, 2020; Lachapelle & Boisjoly, 2023).

At the same time, scholars have explored the positive impacts of new transit infrastructures, including improvements in commuter well-being (Navattete-Hernandez & Christopher Zegas, 2023), health and environmental benefits (Maizlish et al., 2017), and greater accessibility and social inclusion, particularly for those without a car (Allen & Farber, 2020) Studies also found that new subway and light rail transit (LRT) investments reduce travel times, improve network connectivity, decrease the number of transfers required, and expand residents' access to employment, education, healthcare, and other daily opportunities (Geurs & Van Wee, 2004; Litman, 2025). And ridership increases along routes when rapid transit replaces slower or less direct bus services (Stewart et al., 2017). But often, transit infrastructure was directed toward areas with development potential rather than communities with the greatest need (Fernando et al., 2021).

Chapter 3: Methods and Methodology

This research uses quantitative methods, applying techniques learned in *ENVS 5122: Skills for Planning Research and Practice* and through work experiences. I use a survey instrument to collect data and apply descriptive statistics and GIS mapping to analyze the data. The purpose of this research is to examine whether low-income neighbourhoods in Toronto benefit from the location of new transit infrastructure launched between 2015 and 2025.

Specifically, this study investigates whether recent transit investments have improved accessibility and mobility for low-income communities.

3.1 Research Approach and Worldview

This research combines evaluative and emancipatory approaches. The evaluative approach assesses planning practices by identifying existing problems and measuring outcomes, in this case, the benefits of recent transit infrastructure investments (du Toit, 2015; Vaughn & Jacquez, 2020). Perceived changes collected through survey responses allowed me to evaluate whether recent transit investments have achieved their intended transportation objectives and generated meaningful benefits for transit users. The emancipatory approach focuses on social inequalities and aims to raise awareness of structural injustices that shape planning outcomes (du Toit, 2015; Vaughn & Jacquez, 2020). By examining whether the new transit infrastructure benefits low-income transit users, my research employs an emancipatory approach. This is particularly important because accessibility and mobility outcomes can vary substantially depending on neighbourhood characteristics, including access to transit. Equity planning, as defined by Krumholz & Forrester (1990), is about promoting a wider variety of choices for people with fewer options. Within this broader topic, transportation equity is the general concept of how the positive and negative aspects are distributed among different populations (Campbell, 2019). Low-income communities in Toronto have historically had less access to transit (Allen, 2018; Miller & Farvolden, 2022; Geva et al., 2025). Therefore, my study examines whether new transit investment in Toronto expands these communities' travel choices.

Additionally, my research is guided by a pragmatist methodological worldview that emphasizes the use of practical methods to address real-world problems (du Toit, 2015; Elgeddawy & Abouraia, 2024). Research paradigms represent the broader philosophical perspectives that shape how studies are designed and interpreted, even when these assumptions remain implicit (Creswell & Creswell, 2023). The study primarily employs quantitative methods, using a structured survey, to evaluate perceived mobility and accessibility outcomes. This allowed me to identify measurable patterns while capturing residents' experiences of transit accessibility across Toronto neighbourhoods.

3.2 Research Question

This research investigates whether the location and development of new public transit infrastructure in Toronto are equitably benefiting low-income communities. I ask: Are low-income communities in Toronto benefiting from the recent public transit expansion? While global scholarship has extensively explored transit equity, relatively limited research has directly examined how the spatial placement of transit infrastructure in Toronto shapes the distribution of benefits and burdens across neighbourhoods with different income levels (Allen & Farber, 2020; Lucas, 2022; Geva et al., 2025). The gap limits our understanding of whether recent transit investments contribute to more equitable mobility outcomes or reinforce existing spatial inequalities.

This research contributes to the growing literature on transportation equity by investigating how the benefits of recent public transit investments are experienced across Toronto neighbourhoods with different income levels. While existing studies have often used accessibility modeling or spatial analysis, this study incorporates transit users' perspectives through a quantitative survey. By examining mobility, accessibility, and neighbourhood income together, the research provides empirical evidence on whether recent transit investments are reducing or reinforcing existing spatial inequalities.

3.3 Study Area

The research surveys public transit users across Toronto to examine how recent transit investments affect accessibility and mobility across neighbourhoods.

3.3.1 Toronto Neighbourhood Profile

This study incorporates data from the City of Toronto's Neighbourhood Profiles (City of Toronto, 2022). These neighbourhood units are commonly used by the City of Toronto for socio-economic analysis and statistical reporting. The neighbourhoods are largely derived from groupings of Statistics Canada census tracts, which provide consistent demographic and socio-economic indicators at a local scale. I used data from the neighbourhood profile and Toronto Open Data to create maps in ArcGIS.

In 2022, the City of Toronto updated its neighbourhood boundaries to better reflect population growth and changes in urban development patterns. As part of this update, 16 rapidly growing neighbourhoods were divided into 34 new neighbourhood units, bringing the total number of social planning neighbourhoods up from 140 to 158 (City of Toronto, 2022). This research uses the updated Toronto Social Planning Neighbourhoods v3.0 boundaries to create more balanced geographic units, identify areas with lower average incomes, and examine whether recent transit investments are located in neighbourhoods with greater mobility needs. The survey participants in this study are grouped using Forward Sortation Areas (FSAs), which are the first three characters of a Canadian postal code. FSAs provide a standardized geographic grouping that reduces potential confusion related to neighbourhood naming, while maintaining participant anonymity. For the purposes of analysis, the FSAs were converted to corresponding Toronto neighbourhoods.

3.4 Survey Design

A structured questionnaire was developed to capture three key dimensions of the impacts of recent transit infrastructure investments (The survey is provided in Appendix B for reference). The survey includes questions on (1) demographics: the first three letters of respondents' postal code, income and employment status, and residency length; (2) transit use characteristics, including, frequency, travel time, number of transfers, and walking distance to the station; and (3) perceived benefits of new transit infrastructure, including changes in travel behaviour, mobility and access to opportunities such as employment, services, and social activities. The questionnaire consisted of both closed-ended Likert-scale questions and multiple-choice items. This format allows quantitative analysis of respondents' perceptions and enables comparisons across different neighbourhoods and income levels among transit users. The questionnaire was available both online and in paper formats, allowing for greater access to participants at stations and community centres.

To examine potential differences in how transit investments affect residents over time, respondents were asked about the length of residence in their current neighbourhood and whether they are long-term residents (5–10 years) or recent movers (1–4 years). This distinction allows for analysis to differentiate between residents who may have experienced changes in transit

conditions over time and those whose residential location may have been influenced by new transit expansion.

Several key variables were measured through the survey. Mobility was assessed through self-reported changes in the ease, efficiency, and frequency of travel using public transit. Accessibility was measured by respondents' perceived changes in their ability to reach important destinations, including employment, services, and social activities.

3.4.1 Recruitment Strategy

Participant recruitment was conducted using a combination of online distribution and field-based recruitment to obtain a diverse sample of public transit users across Toronto. Online recruitment was the initial method of participant recruitment. Survey posters containing a QR code linking to the questionnaire were distributed via online platforms and community boards. However, participation largely depended on potential respondents engaging with the poster themselves. The initial survey was distributed on March 10th, 2026. Due to slow response, I expanded my recruitment to include both online and field-based methods to better represent transit users across neighbourhoods of all income levels.

Field-based recruitment began on March 16th, 2026, and continued until April 20th, 2026. During this period, a total of 52 responses were collected; of these, 45 responses met the geographic criteria with postal codes within Toronto. The survey was conducted at selected transit stops, subway/LRT stations, community centres, and local shopping centres across the city, focusing on individuals who regularly use public transit. These locations were chosen to obtain a rough estimate of participants from across Toronto. Potential participants were approached with a brief verbal prompt asking if they regularly used public transport. Those who expressed interest were given a brief explanation of the study's purpose and invited to participate in the survey. To reduce barriers to participation, respondents were given several options for completing the survey. They could scan the QR code on their mobile device to complete it at their convenience, receive a printed survey poster containing the QR code, or complete a paper version of the questionnaire.

3.5 Participant Recruitment Locations and Time

Survey distribution, including field data collection, was conducted between March 10th and April 20th, 2026, over approximately one month. Recruitment took place at various subway stations, bus stops, community centres, community hubs, and shopping malls located throughout Toronto. These locations were selected because they are situated within or near areas served by major transit infrastructure completed between 2015 and 2025, enabling the study to engage transit users most likely to have experienced recent network improvements. Fieldwork was conducted from midday to evening on different days of the week to capture a broader cross-section of transit users with varying travel patterns. The following chronology summarizes the dates, approximate times, and locations at which field recruitment and survey distribution were conducted. These times are also summarized in the table in Appendix A.

Day 1: March 16, 2026, Monday, 1-3 p.m.

The first day of field recruitment. Survey posters were put up around York University Campus, particularly within York Lanes and other student common spaces. Recruitment was conducted at York University Station and Pioneer Village Station, where transit users were approached and invited to participate in the survey. During this session, one participant indicated that they did not use electronic devices. With their consent, survey responses were collected via verbal communication, highlighting the importance of offering alternative participation methods beyond digital surveys.

Day 2: March 17, 2026, Tuesday, 6-8 p.m.

Recruitment moved into North York neighbourhoods. Physical copies of the survey were prepared and distributed to accommodate participants who may not regularly use smartphones or electronic devices. Field recruitment was conducted at Driftwood Community Centre, Yorkgate Mall, Jane Finch Mall, and along the Finch West LRT corridor before returning to Finch West Station. These locations were selected due to their role as community gathering spaces and their proximity to neighbourhoods with relatively lower median household incomes compared to the city (City of Toronto, 2022).

Day 3: March 18, Wesnesday, 1-2 p.m.; 5-6 p.m.

Recruitment focused on East York and Scarborough. Afternoon outreach was conducted at East York Town Centre, Thorncliffe Park Community Hub, Flemingdon Community Centre, and nearby bus stops. Evening recruitment was conducted at Malvern Town Centre in Scarborough. These locations were selected following a preliminary review of survey responses collected during the first two days. Initial mapping of participant locations indicated limited representation from several lower-income neighbourhoods, leading to a more targeted recruitment strategy focused on communities identified as lower income through the City of Toronto Neighbourhood Profile.

Day 4: March 20, Friday, 7-8 p.m.

Outreach continued at Scarborough. Recruitment occurred at bus stops and community gathering areas near Sheppard Avenue East and Midland Road, Finch Avenue East and McCowan Road, Finch Avenue East and Sandhurst Circle, and outside Woodside Square. These locations were selected due to their high transit activity.

Day 5: March 23, Monday, 4-7 p.m.

Recruitment shifted to Toronto's northwest communities. Starting at the Jane and Finch Community Centre, outreach was conducted along Jane Street, at Finch West Station and nearby Line 6 Finch West LRT stations and continuing westward toward Mount Olive and Kipling Avenue bus corridors.

Day 6: March 25, 2026, Wednesday, 1-4 p.m.

Recruitment continued throughout Toronto's northwest corridor. Travel began on the Finch West LRT before proceeding to Mount Olive, Rexdale Community Hub, Emery Station, and along Weston Road toward Carmine Stefano Community Centre. Additional outreach was conducted at the Weston King Neighbourhood Centre and the Community Place Hub near the Weston GO and UP Express Station. Survey posters were also provided to community organizations to facilitate broader distribution among residents of the area. This recruitment strategy sought to increase participation from neighbourhoods experiencing recent transit service improvements.

Day 7: April 2, 2026, Thursday, 8-10 p.m.

In-person recruitment was conducted in Downtown Toronto at Dundas Subway Station. Some responses were previously collected online from downtown residents. This final outreach session was intended to improve representation from the downtown core and capture perspectives from transit users travelling through one of Toronto's busiest transit hubs.

Chapter 4: Results

4.1 Introduction to findings

A total of 45 survey responses were collected through online distribution and field-based outreach. Recruiting participants at subway stations and community hubs helped to improve the number of respondents. Descriptive statistics and GIS mapping were used to analyze the data in Excel and ArcGIS. The analysis is guided by the main research question: Are new public transit investments in Toronto benefiting low-income neighbourhoods? Rather than examining transit investment solely through the construction of physical infrastructure, this study focuses on how residents perceive changes in their everyday mobility and accessibility using transit. The findings are therefore intended to evaluate whether recent transit investments contribute to more equitable urban mobility outcomes or whether existing socio-spatial inequalities continue to evolve from new transit expansion. To answer the research question, the analysis is organized around a series of sub-questions.

The study aims to measure the benefits associated with transit investment, including improved mobility, reduced walking distance, fewer transfers, and enhanced access to employment, education, and essential services resulting from the introduction of new transit infrastructure in the area. Using the data collected from the survey, I investigated whether the new infrastructure benefits high-income earners or low-income earners. This inquiry allows the study to assess whether transit investment reinforces or reduces existing inequalities in Toronto. Public transport is crucial in enabling many urban Canadians to travel to daily activities and participate in the workforce. For lower-income groups in particular, public transport is often the only means of independent travel (Allen, 2018).

4.2 Survey Respondent Profile

4.2.1 Geographic Distribution of Respondents

First, to examine the geographic distribution of the survey sample, respondents were asked to provide the first three characters of their residential postal code. The reported postal codes were then matched to the corresponding City of Toronto Social Planning Neighbourhood boundaries to illustrate the spatial distribution of respondents across the city on ArcGIS. Because the postal code boundaries do not align perfectly with Toronto's neighbourhood boundaries, all neighbourhoods intersecting a reported postal code were included in the analysis.

A total of 45 valid survey responses were collected from residents representing 27 distinct postal codes in Toronto. The survey sample includes respondents from neighbourhoods in Downtown Toronto, Scarborough, North York, East York, and the city's west end, providing broad geographic coverage of Toronto. Approximately 31% of respondents resided in downtown neighbourhoods, while the remaining respondents were distributed throughout suburban areas. As shown in *Figure 2*, the shaded areas indicate where respondents are from, with the highest concentration of respondents in the Church-Wellesley and North St. James Town neighbourhoods in Downtown Toronto. To improve the geographic diversity of the sample, field recruitment was conducted primarily in North York and Scarborough, where efforts were made to capture experiences from a broader range of neighbourhoods and income groups.

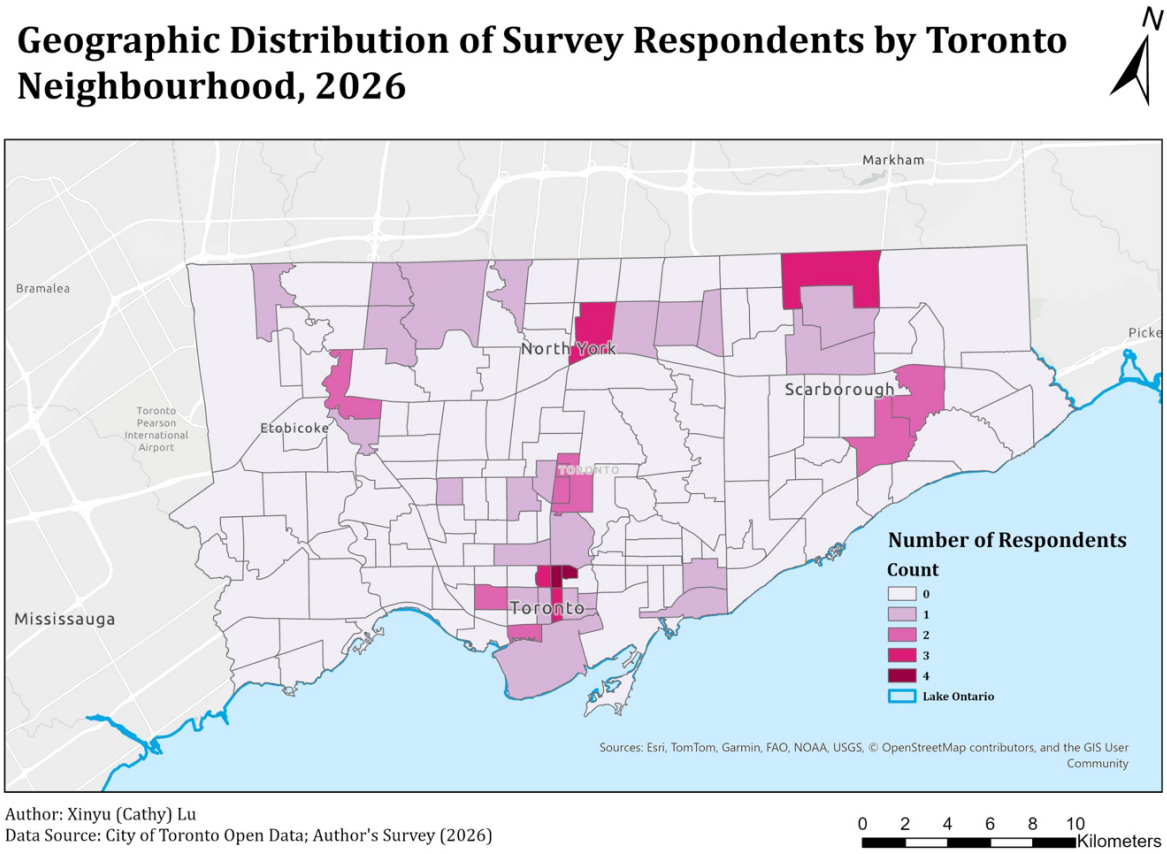


Figure 2. Geographic Distribution of Survey Respondents by Toronto Neighbourhood, 2026.

4.2.2 Demographic Characteristics

The demographic profile of respondents reflects the diverse employment and income backgrounds of transit users in Toronto. Of the 45 survey responses collected, 20 respondents were employed full-time, 15 were students, five were unemployed, three were self-employed, three were retired, and two were employed part-time. Participants were given the option to select multiple categories that applied to them; therefore, the total number of counts for employment statuses exceeds 45 (n = 45). *Figure 3* illustrates the distribution of participants' employment status.

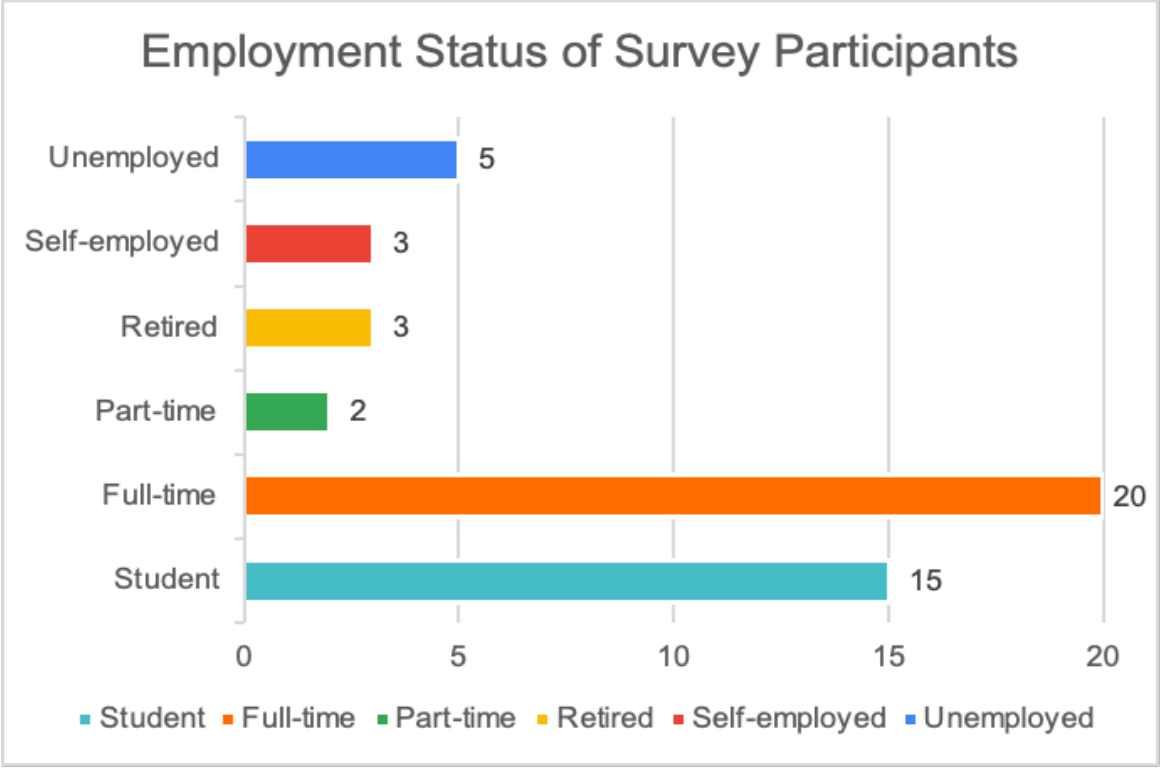


Figure 3. Employment profile of survey participants
(participants can select all that apply, and the total number of counts for employment statuses exceeds 45).

Respondents were also asked about their total individual income. Reported incomes ranged from $30,000 to over $120,000 per year, representing a broad range of socioeconomic circumstances within the survey sample. Six respondents chose not to disclose their income. Overall, the distribution of reported income corresponded with respondents' employment status. The proportion of students and unemployed respondents was equal to the proportion of respondents in the $0-30,000 income range shown in Figures 3 and 4.

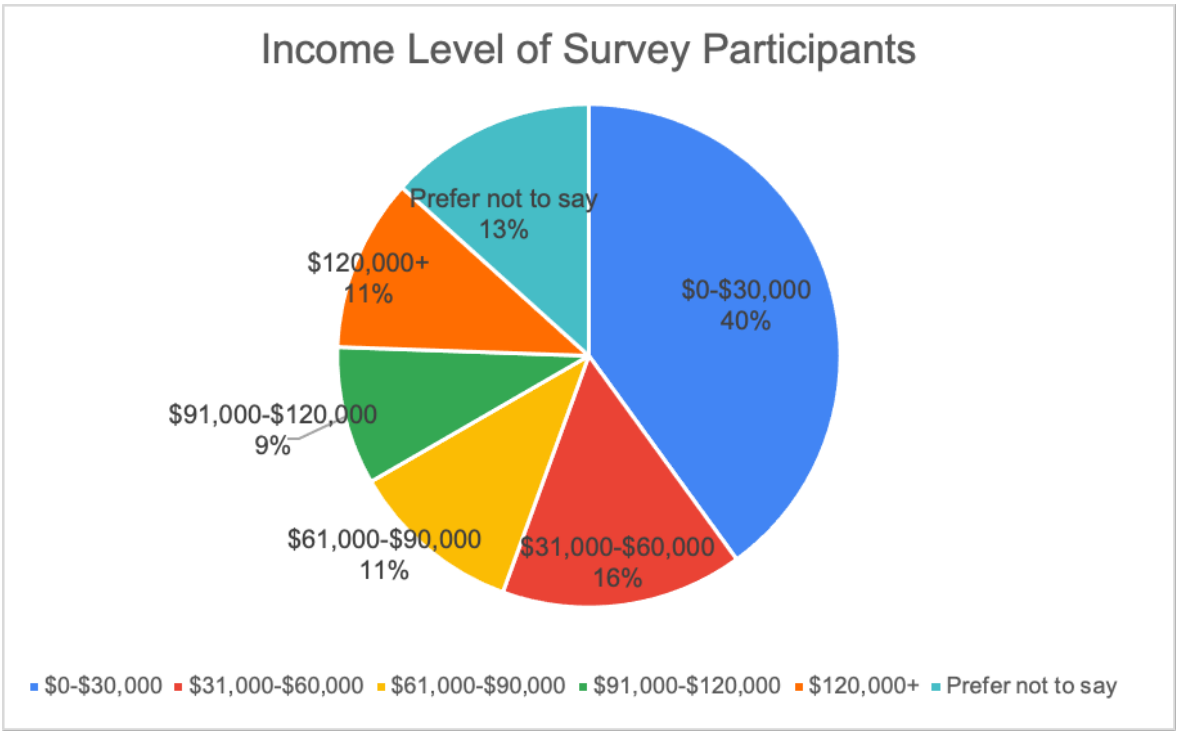


Figure 4. Income level distribution among survey participants.

Residential tenure was collected to distinguish between respondents who had experienced transit conditions both before and after the implementation of recent transit infrastructure and those who had moved into their neighbourhoods following the introduction of the new services. Respondents identified themselves as recent movers (1–4 years) or long-term residents (5–10 years). Of the 45 respondents, 27 (60%) had lived in their current neighbourhood for four years or less, while the remaining 18 (40%) had lived there for five years or more. Among the long-term residents, approximately half reported having lived in their current neighbourhood for over ten years.

4.2.3 Transit Use Characteristics

Table 1 summarizes respondents' characteristics of public transit use by individual income level. A series of tables from Table 1(a) to 1(f) presents a breakdown of respondents' patterns of transit use, including frequency of use, walking distance to transit stop/station, transit modes, time on transit, transfer requirements, and neighbourhood transit access rating by income group.

Table 1. Summary of Respondents' Public Transit Use Characteristics by Different Income Categories

(a) Frequency of transit use for survey respondents

	No. of times per week				
Individual Income	**Rarely**	**Occasionally**	**Several days a week**	**Everyday**	**Total**
0-30,000	1	3	8	6	18
31,000-60,000			4	3	7
61,000-90,000			4	1	5
91,000-120,000		2	2		4
120,000+		1	4		5
Prefer not to say			3	3	6
Total Count	1	6	25	13	**45**

Table 1(a) presents the respondents' annual individual income with the frequency of public transit use. Rows show income categories, while columns show how frequently respondents use public transit during a typical week, from *Rarely* to *Every day*. Each cell shows the number of respondents from each income category reporting a specific level of transit use. The final column lists the total respondents per income category.

As shown in Table 1(a), respondents in the lowest income category ($0–30,000) reported the highest public transit use. Of the 18 respondents in this income group, 14 used public transit every day or several days a week, while one used transit rarely and three used public transit occasionally. Similar patterns appeared in the $31,000–60,000 and $61,000–90,000 income categories, where most respondents also used public transit several days a week or every day. Although regular transit use occurred across all income groups, higher-income respondents ($91,000-120,000) had a smaller proportion of frequent transit users: only 50% of respondents used public transit several days a week, compared to 100% in lower categories. No respondents in the highest income groups ($91,000-120,000+) who uses public transit every day. Frequent transit use was most common among students and full-time employees, who together made up about 87% of those using public transit every day or several days a week. These respondents reported using public transport for routine travel, such as commuting, grocery shopping, attending medical appointments, and other daily activities.

Table 1(b) displays respondents' annual individual income with their estimated walking time to the nearest public transit stop or station, assessing first- and last-mile accessibility. Rows

show respondents' income categories, while the columns show walking time categories: than 5 minutes, 5–10 minutes, and 10–15 minutes. Each cell reports the number of respondents in each income group for each walking distance, with the final column showing the total number of respondents per income group.

(b) Proximity to nearest transit station/stop

	Walking time (in minutes)			
Individual Income	**<5**	**5-10**	**10-15**	**Total**
0-30,000	12	4	2	18
31,000-60,000	5	2		7
61,000-90,000	2	2	1	5
91,000-120,000	3		1	4
120,000+	4	1		5
Prefer not to say	6			6
Total Count	32	9	4	**45**

As shown in Table 1(b), most respondents reported being within a five-minute walk of a public transit stop or station. Of the 45 respondents, 32 (71%) live less than five minutes from transit, nine respondents (20%) walk five to ten minutes, and four respondents (9%) walk ten to fifteen minutes. The proportion of respondents with shorter first- and last-mile journeys increases with income. In the lowest income category ($0–30,000), 12 of 18 respondents (67%) live within five minutes of transit. This proportion rises to 71% for $31,000–$60,000, 75% for $91,000–$120,000, and 80% for $120,000 or more. To note, longest walking distance is seen in the lowest income group and groups between $61,000-120,000.

Table 1(c) summarizes the public transit modes used by respondents across different income categories. Rows show income groups, and columns list the public transit modes used, including bus, subway, LRT, GO Transit, streetcar, and Wheel-Trans. Totals are not provided because respondents are provided to select multiple modes, so the total number of responses exceeds the number of survey participants (n=45), though the number of respondents per category remains unchanged. There are 100 total responses, averaging at two modes per respondent.

(c)Type of transit used by respondents
Note: respondents can select as many as apply, the total count will exceed total number of responses. The total count in this table comes to 100, meaning

	Type of public transit					
Individual Income	**Bus**	**Subway**	**LRT**	**GO Train/bus**	**Streetcar**	**Wheel trans**
0-30,000	12	14	4	3	7	1
31,000-60,000	6	7	1		3	
61,000-90,000	2	4		2	2	
91,000-120,000	2	4		1	2	
120,000+	2	5		1	1	
Prefer not to say	5	4	3	2		

As shown in Table 1(c), the subway was the most frequently used transit mode across nearly all income categories, followed by the bus. Respondents in the lowest income category ($0–30,000) reported the highest use of both bus and subway services. Among the 18 respondents in this category, 14 reported using the subway, and 12 reported using buses. This group also had the most streetcar users (seven respondents), with four respondents using the LRT, three using GO Transit, and one using Wheel-Trans. Respondents earning between $31,000 and $60,000 primarily used the subway (seven respondents) and bus (six respondents). And respondents earning between $61,000 and $90,000, subway was the most commonly reported mode (four respondents), followed by buses (two respondents), GO Transit (two respondents), and streetcars (two respondents). Respondents in the $91,000–$120,000 and over $120,000 income categories also most commonly reported using the subway, with a comparatively lower proportion of respondents indicating regular use of GO Transit, the LRT, or streetcars.

GO Transit use was reported across several income groups, but by relatively few respondents overall used regional commutes. One respondent reported using Wheel-Trans. The low overall usage of the LRT reflects that some recently opened services had only begun operating shortly before the survey period. This may indicate that many transit users have not yet experienced the new services or that the LRT lines do not reach most respondents' destinations. Overall, the findings indicate that respondents frequently combined multiple transit modes in

their regular travel, with subway and bus services forming the basis regardless of income category.

Table 1(d) presents the typical time respondents spend on public transit during a routine trip by individual income category. The rows group respondents by annual individual income, while the columns show the typical duration of a one-way transit journey, ranging from less than 30 minutes to over one hour. The final row summarizes the total number of respondents in each travel time category.

(d) Typical public transit travel time

	Time on transit (in minutes)				
Individual Income	**<30**	**30-45**	**45-60**	**Over an hour**	**Total**
0-30,000	4	7	5	2	18
31,000-60,000		5	1	1	7
61,000-90,000		1		4	5
91,000-120,000	2			2	4
120,000+	2	3			5
Prefer not to say	2	2	2		6
Total Count	10	18	8	9	**45**

The most commonly reported journey duration was 30–45 minutes, with 18 of the 45 respondents (40%) indicated their typical transit trip falls within this range. An additional 10 respondents (22%) traveled for less than 30 minutes. Eight respondents (18%) typically spent 45–60 minutes on transit. The remaining nine respondents (20%) had routine transit journeys exceeding one hour.

Among respondents in the $0–30,000 income category, travel times were distributed across all four categories. Four respondents (22%) traveled for less than 30 minutes. Seven (39%) reported journeys of 30–45 minutes. Five (28%) traveled between 45–60 minutes. Two (11%) had routine trips exceeding one hour. This group showed the widest distribution of travel times among all income categories. Respondents earning $31,000–$60,000 most commonly reported travel times of 30–45 minutes, accounting for five of the seven respondents (71%) in this income group. Among respondents in the $91,000–$120,000 income category, half traveled

for less than 30 minutes, and half traveled for over an hour. Respondents earning more than $120,000 all reported shorter travel durations. Three respondents (60%) reported journeys of 30–45 minutes, and two (40%) traveled for less than 30 minutes. Respondents who preferred not to disclose their income reported a range of travel times, including two traveling for less than 30 minutes, two for 30–45 minutes, and two between 45 and 60 minutes.

Travel time generally declined as income increased, except for respondents earning $61,000–$90,000. This group reported longer travel times than others; four of five (80%) had transit journeys over an hour. Responses to Question 6 of the survey (Appendix B) show that two of these four regularly travelled outside Toronto. This explains the high proportion of long transit times. Their longer journeys seem to reflect commuting distance rather than neighbourhood transit conditions. Excluding these respondents, the survey suggests a general trend toward shorter travel times among higher-income respondents.

Table 1(e) presents the number of transfers respondents typically make during a routine public transit trip according to individual income category. The rows represent respondents grouped by annual individual income, while the columns indicate the typical number of transfers required to reach their most common destination. The final row summarizes the total number of respondents within each transfer category.

(e) Number of transfers made on a common trip

	Nunmber of transfers				
Individual Income	**No Transfer**	**1**	**2**	**3**	**Total**
0-30,000	1	9	8		18
31,000-60,000	1	3	3		7
61,000-90,000		1	3	1	5
91,000-120,000		2	2		4
120,000+	3	1		1	5
Prefer not to say	2		2	2	6
Total Count	7	16	18	4	**45**

Overall, the findings show that most respondents (84%) required at least one transfer during their transit, while only 16% did not require transfers. Journeys with one or two transfers were observed across all income categories, whereas direct trips and journeys were reported

more frequently by respondents in the higher-income categories. Comparison with respondents' reported travel times (Table 1d) also shows that the same income categories making multiple transfers more frequently ($61,000-120,000) reported longer journey durations than those travelling without transfers.

Journeys involving two transfers were the most frequently reported, accounting for 18 of the 45 respondents (40%), followed by one transfer, reported by 16 respondents (36%). Seven respondents (16%) reported travelling without a transfer, while four respondents (9%) indicated that they routinely made three transfers during a typical journey.

Among respondents in the $0–30,000 income category, one respondent (6%) reported traveling without a transfer, nine (50%) typically made one transfer, and eight (44%) made two transfers. Respondents earning $31,000–$60,000 showed a similar distribution, with one respondent (14%) reported no transfer, three respondents (43%) each reported making one or two transfers. Within the $61,000–$90,000 income category, the majority of respondents reported making multiple transfers. Three (60%) respondents indicated making two transfers, one (20%) reported making one transfer, and one (20%) respondent reported routinely making three transfers. Respondents in the $91,000–$120,000 income category reported either one or two transfers, with two respondents in each category. Among respondents earning more than $120,000, three (60%) respondents reported traveling without making a transfer, one (20%) reported making one transfer, and one (20%) respondent indicated making three transfers. Respondents who chose not to disclose their income reported the highest proportion of multiple transfers, particularly three transfers. The majority of respondents (67%) in this category made two or three transfers. No respondents in this category reported making a single transfer.

Table 1(f) presents respondents' self-rated assessments of public transit access in their neighbourhood by individual income category. The rows represent respondents grouped by annual individual income, while the columns indicate respondents' ratings of transit access on a five-point scale, where 1 represents the lowest level of transit access, and 5 represents the highest. The final row summarizes the total number of respondents selecting each rating.

(f) Respondents' rating of transit access in their neighbourhood

	On a scale from 1-5, 5 being the highest					
Individual Income	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**Total**
0-30,000	1	1	3	9	4	18
31,000-60,000			3	2	2	7
61,000-90,000			1	1	3	5
91,000-120,000			1	1	2	4
120,000+			1	3	1	5
Prefer not to say			1	2	3	6
Total Count	1	1	10	18	15	**45**

Respondents reported relatively positive perceptions of transit access within their neighbourhoods. The average rating across all respondents was 4 out of 5. A rating of 4 was the most frequently selected, reported by 18 of the 45 respondents (40%), followed by a rating of 5, reported by 15 respondents (33%). Ten respondents (22%) assigned a rating of 3, while only one respondent each selected ratings of 1 and 2.

Among respondents in the $0–30,000 income category, favourable ratings were most common. Nine respondents (50%) assigned a rating of 4, four (22%) selected 5, and three (17%) selected 3. One respondent each selected ratings of 1 and 2, the only dissatisfied responses across all income categories. Respondents earning $31,000–$60,000 also reported generally positive assessments, with three respondents selecting 3 and two respondents each selecting ratings of 4 and 5. No respondents in the $31,000– $120,000+ income category reported ratings of 1 or 2. In the $61,000–$90,000 category, three of five respondents rated transit access as 5, while one respondent each selected ratings of 3 and 4. Respondents earning $91,000–$120,000 reported a similar pattern, with two respondents assigned a rating of 5 and one respondent each selected ratings of 3 and 4.

Overall, respondents across all income categories reported positive perceptions of neighbourhood transit access. Ratings of 4 and 5 made up the majority of responses in each income group. Ratings below 3 were reported only by respondents in the $0–30,000 income category. Table 1 also shows that respondents across all income categories have broadly similar public transit use. Variation was evident among those in the $61,000–$90,000 and $91,000–$120,000 ranges, especially in travel time and transfer requirements.

4.3 Reported Changes Following Recent Transit Investments

The previous section described who the respondents are and how they use public transit. This section summarizes respondents' self-reported changes in mobility and accessibility after recent transit investments. Long-term residents compared their travel experiences before and after new transit infrastructure was introduced in their neighbourhoods. Recent movers indicated whether new transit infrastructure influenced their choice of residence and if they experienced changes in mobility and access to daily opportunities. These findings support the interpretation and comparison of conditions before and after the new lines, as discussed in Chapter 5.

4.3.1 Reported Changes for Long-Term Residents (n=18)

Long-term residents were able to provide a direct comparison of their travel experiences before and after the introduction of recent transit infrastructure in their neighbourhoods. They identified mobility-related benefits experienced since the new projects were implemented. Respondents could select multiple benefits, so the total number of reported benefits exceeds the number of participants. As shown in Table 2(a), reported benefits include shorter travel times, fewer transfers, shorter walking distances, improved reliability, and operational improvements from transit-priority signals and reduced traffic delays. Responses are organized by individual income level to illustrate how benefit types and frequencies vary across income groups.

Table 2. Reported Benefits of Recent Transit Investments by Individual Income Level and Length of Tenure

(a) Long-term respondents' reported benefits (n=18)

Reported Benefits	***Individual Total Income ($)***					
	0-30,000	31,000-60,000	61,000-90,000	91,000-120,000	120,000+	Prefer not to say
Shorter travel time	3		3		3	2
Fewer transfers	2					4
Shorter walking distance	1					2
Improved reliability			1			
Priority signal, less traffic	1				1	1
No noticeable benefits	1		1			
Number of Respondents (n)	**7**		**3**		**3**	**4**

Note: Respondents could identify more than one benefit; therefore, totals exceed the number of respondents.

Shorter travel time was the most frequently reported benefit, reported by 11 out of 18 long-term respondents. It was identified by three respondents in the $0–30,000 category, three in the $61,000–90,000 category, three in the $120,000 and above category, and two respondents who preferred not to disclose their income. Fewer transfers were the second most frequently reported benefit, with six responses (33%), two from respondents in the lowest income category and four from respondents who preferred not to disclose their income.

Other reported benefits were less common but still exist. Shorter walking distance was identified by three respondents, including one in the $0–30,000 category and two who preferred not to disclose their income. Improved reliability was reported by one respondent in the $61,000–90,000 income category. Three respondents reported benefits associated with transit-priority signals or reduced traffic delays, including one respondent in the $0–30,000 category, one in the $120,000 and above category, and one who preferred not to disclose their income.

Only two long-term residents reported no noticeable benefit following the introduction of recent transit investments. These responses came from one respondent in the $0–30,000 category and one respondent in the $61,000–90,000 category. Overall, the reported benefits were distributed across all income categories, including the lowest-income group. Since respondents could select multiple options and income groups vary in size, these counts reflect the distribution of reported benefits rather than direct comparisons between groups.

Long-term residents were also asked if they changed their usual mode of travel after new transit options were introduced. Table 2(b) summarizes the reported changes by income level.

(b) Long-term residents' travel mode shift following recent transit investments

	Changes in travel mode				
Individual Income	**No Change**	**I use transit less now**	**I use transit more now**	**I walk/bike more**	**Total**
0-30,000	4	1	1	1	7
31,000-60,000					
61,000-90,000	2		2		4
91,000-120,000					
120,000+	3				3
Prefer not to say	1		3		4
Total Count	10	1	6	1	**18**

As shown in Table 2(b), 10 of the 18 long-term residents (56%) reported no change in their usual travel mode after recent transit investments. Six respondents (33%) used public transit more often, one respondent (6%) used it less, and one respondent (6%) walked or cycled more frequently.

Responses varied by income category. Of the seven respondents in the $0–30,000 income category, four reported no change, while one each reported increased transit use, decreased transit use, and increased walking or cycling. In the $61,000–90,000 group, two reported no change and two reported using transit more frequently. All three respondents in the $120,000 and above category reported no change. Among the four respondents who preferred not to disclose their income, three reported increased transit use and one reported no change.

These findings should be considered alongside the transit-use patterns presented in Table 1(a). Most respondents were already frequent transit users, using public transit either daily or several days per week. Therefore, reporting no change in usual travel behaviour does not necessarily indicate that respondents received no benefit from recent transit investments. As shown in Table 2(a), long-term residents could continue using transit at a similar frequency while still experiencing shorter travel times, fewer transfers, shorter walking distances, or improved reliability.

4.3.2 Recent Movers and Transit-Related Residential Choice (n=27)

New movers were asked if recent transit infrastructure influenced their decision to move to their current neighbourhood. This question provides additional context by examining whether the perceived benefits of new transit connections were significant enough to affect respondents' residential location decisions. Respondents who reported that transit influenced their decision were also asked about the extent of this influence and the types of transit improvements they considered.

Table 3 is organized into four columns: the survey question, response categories, response frequency, and the corresponding percentage. The rows are divided into three groups. The first group shows whether recent transit infrastructure influenced the residential location decisions of all recent movers (n = 27). The second group reports the extent of this influence

among respondents who answered “yes” (n = 3). The third group shows all recent movers who identified major transit projects that influenced their decision to move. Since respondents could select multiple transit improvements in the final question, frequencies in that section exceed the number of respondents, and percentages are not provided.

Table 3. Influence of Recent Transit Investments on Residential Choice Among Recent Movers

Survey Question	Response	Frequency (n)	Percent (%)
Did recent transit infrastructure influence your decision to move? (n=27)	Yes	3	11%
	No	7	26%
	Unsure	17	63%
If yes, to what extent? (n = 3)	Major factor	1	33%
	Minor factor	2	67%
Which recent transit project influenced your decision? (n = 8, including respondents indicating neutral)	LRT Lines	2*	—
	Subway Stations	5*	—
	Bus lanes	4*	—
	Station accessibility upgrades	2*	—

Note: The final question respondents can select multiple.

Table 3 shows that three of 27 respondents (11%) reported recent transit infrastructure influenced their decision to relocate, while seven respondents (26%) indicated that transit did not influence their decision. The remaining 17 respondents (63%) were unsure. Among the three respondents who identified transit as an influence, one respondent considered it a major factor, while two respondents identified it as a minor factor in their residential location decision.

Respondents who indicated transit infrastructure influenced their decision, along with some who were unsure, identified specific transit improvements that contributed to their choice. Subway stations were most frequently selected (five responses), followed by bus lanes (four), LRT lines (two), and station accessibility upgrades (two). Because respondents could select multiple improvements, the total number of responses exceeds the number of respondents.

4.3.3 Reported Changes in Mobility

All respondents (n = 45) were asked to assess how their daily mobility had changed following the implementation of recent transit infrastructure. Respondents indicated whether their mobility had become much worse, somewhat worse, remained unchanged, somewhat improved, or much improved. Table 4 presents these responses by individual income level, allowing the findings to show whether lower-income transit users reported mobility benefits following recent transit investments and how their experiences compared with those of respondents in higher-income categories.

Table 4. Reported Changes in Daily Mobility Following Recent Transit Investments by Individual Income Level

	How has mobility changed?					
Individual Income	Much worse	Somewhat worse	No change	Somewhat improved	Much improved	**Total**
0-30,000		4	7	6	1	18
31,000-60,000	1		2	3	1	7
61,000-90,000	1	1		3		5
91,000-120,000			3	1		4
120,000+			2	3		5
Prefer not to say			2	2	2	6
Total Count	2	5	16	18	4	**45**

From the survey, among 18 long-term residents, nine respondents (50%) reported that their mobility had somewhat or substantially improved. Among the 27 recent movers, 13 respondents (48%) reported improved mobility. Overall, 22 of the 45 respondents (49%) reported an improvement in daily mobility.

As shown in Table 4, the largest proportion of respondents reported that their daily mobility had somewhat improved following the implementation of recent transit infrastructure. 18 respondents (40%) reported that their mobility had somewhat improved, while four respondents (9%) reported that it had much improved. In total, 22 of the 45 respondents (49%) experienced some degree of mobility improvement. Sixteen respondents (36%) reported no noticeable change, while five respondents (11%) indicated that their mobility had somewhat worsened and two respondents (4%) reported that it had become much worse. These findings should be considered alongside the transit-use patterns presented in Table 1 and Tables 2(a) and

2 (b). Most respondents were already frequent transit users who used public transit either daily or several days per week. Consequently, an unchanged travel mode or level of transit use does not necessarily indicate an absence of mobility benefits.

Across the income categories, positive changes in mobility were reported in each group, although the distribution of responses varied. Respondents in the $0–30,000 income category most commonly reported either no change (seven respondents) or somewhat improved mobility (six respondents), while respondents in the $31,000–60,000, $61,000–90,000, and $120,000+ income categories most frequently reported somewhat improved mobility. Among respondents who preferred not to disclose their income, responses were distributed across no change, somewhat improved, and much improved categories.

4.3.4 Reported Changes in Accessibility

All respondents (n = 45) were also asked whether recent transit connections had improved their access to employment, education, healthcare, shops and services, and social activities. Respondents could select more than one type of opportunity; therefore, the total number of responses exceeds the number of respondents. Table 5 summarizes the reported changes in accessibility by individual income level, allowing the findings to show whether lower-income transit users experienced improved access to everyday destinations following recent transit investments.

Table 5. Reported Changes in Access to Opportunities by Individual Income Level

	Reported Improvements in Access to Opportunities					
Individual Income	No change	Employment	Education	Healthcare	Shops and services	Social activities
0-30,000	4	5	8	6	5	6
31,000-60,000		5	4	2	6	6
61,000-90,000	2	2	1	1	1	
91,000-120,000	1	2		2	2	3
120,000+	3	1			1	
Prefer not to say	1	1	2		2	1

Across the full sample, improved access to shops and services was reported most frequently, with 17 responses. Improved access to employment and social activities were each

reported 16 times, followed by education with 15 responses and healthcare with 11 responses. 11 respondents also selected no change in accessibility. Reported accessibility improvements were present across all income categories. Among respondents in the $0–30,000 income category, improvements were reported across all five opportunity types. Access to education saw the greatest number of improvements. Respondents in the $31,000–60,000 income category also reported improvements across all opportunity types. Shops and services and social activities were selected most frequently, with six responses each. Among respondents in the $61,000–90,000 income category, improvements were reported in employment, education, healthcare, and shops and services, while two respondents selected no change. Respondents in the $91,000–120,000 category reported improvements most frequently in social activities, followed by employment, healthcare, and shops and services. In the $120,000 and above category, three respondents reported no change, while employment and shops and services were each selected once. Respondents who preferred not to disclose their income most frequently reported improved access to education and shops and services.

Taken together, Tables 2–5 document several forms of change following recent transit investments. Tables 4 and 5 provide the most direct evidence related to the major research question on whether recent transit investments benefit low-income neighbourhoods for discussion.

4.4 Spatial Distribution of Respondent Neighbourhoods and Recent Transit Investments

Respondent neighbourhoods were compared with neighbourhood characteristics from the City of Toronto Neighbourhood Profile and previous studies. *Figure 5* presents neighbourhood total individual income relative to the City of Toronto average. In 2020, approximately 30% of Toronto neighbourhoods had average individual incomes below 70% of the city average, with some neighbourhoods reporting incomes as low as 53% of the city average. The average total individual income in Toronto in 2020 was $64,036.65 (City of Toronto, 2022).

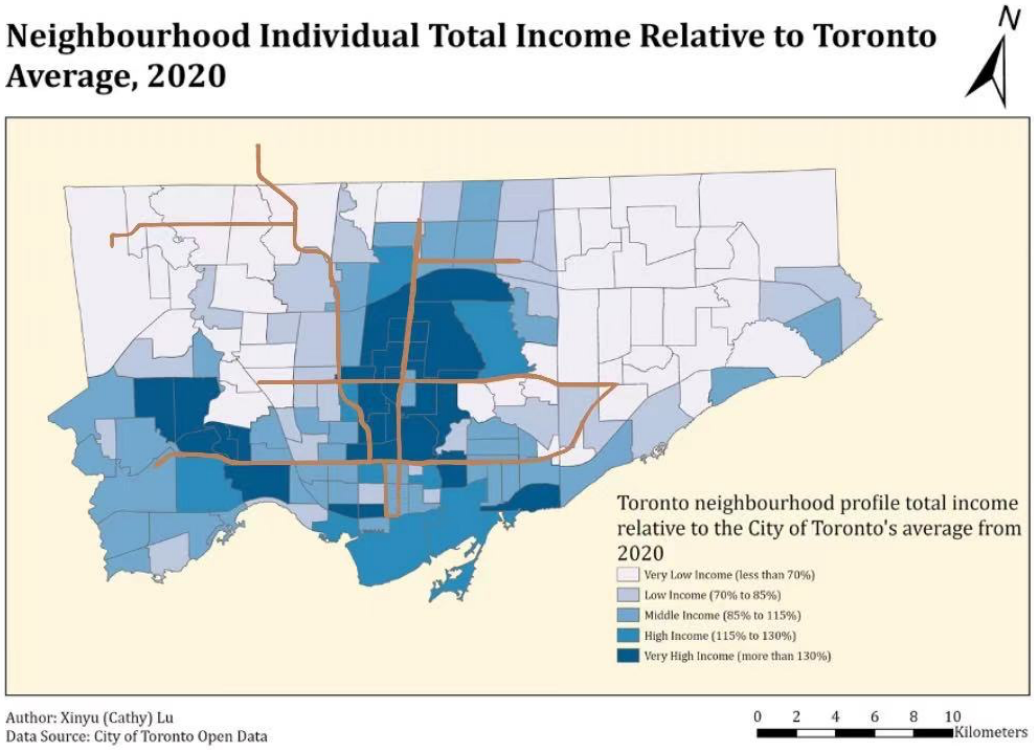


Figure 5. Toronto neighbourhood profile total individual income of 2020 relative to the City of Toronto's average

Comparison of respondent locations (*Figure 2*) with neighbourhood income levels (Figure 5) shows that several respondents resided in neighbourhoods classified as low-income (70-85% of city average) or very low-income (less than 70% of city average). These neighbourhoods include Black Creek, Glenfield-Jane Heights, York University Heights, parts of Mount Olive-Silverstone-Jamestown, parts of Agincourt North and South, and several downtown neighbourhoods. Many of these neighbourhoods are also designated by the City of Toronto as Neighbourhood Improvement Areas (NIAs), which are identified for targeted community investment based on multiple socioeconomic indicators (City of Toronto, 2022).

Figure 6 further shows that approximately one-third of the respondent neighbourhoods fall within the 800-m walking catchment of the newly completed subway and LRT stations. Respondent neighbourhoods intersecting the Line 1 Extension and Line 6 Finch West LRT are generally located within lower-income areas relative to the city average, whereas respondent neighbourhoods intersecting the central portion of Line 5 are generally located within higher-income areas. The new rapid transit investments are concentrated within two principal corridors: the northwestern corridor served by the Line 1 Extension and Line 6, and the Eglinton corridor

served by Line 5. The new rapid transit investments are concentrated within two principal corridors: the northwestern corridor served by the Line 1 Extension and Line 6, and the Eglinton corridor served by Line 5.

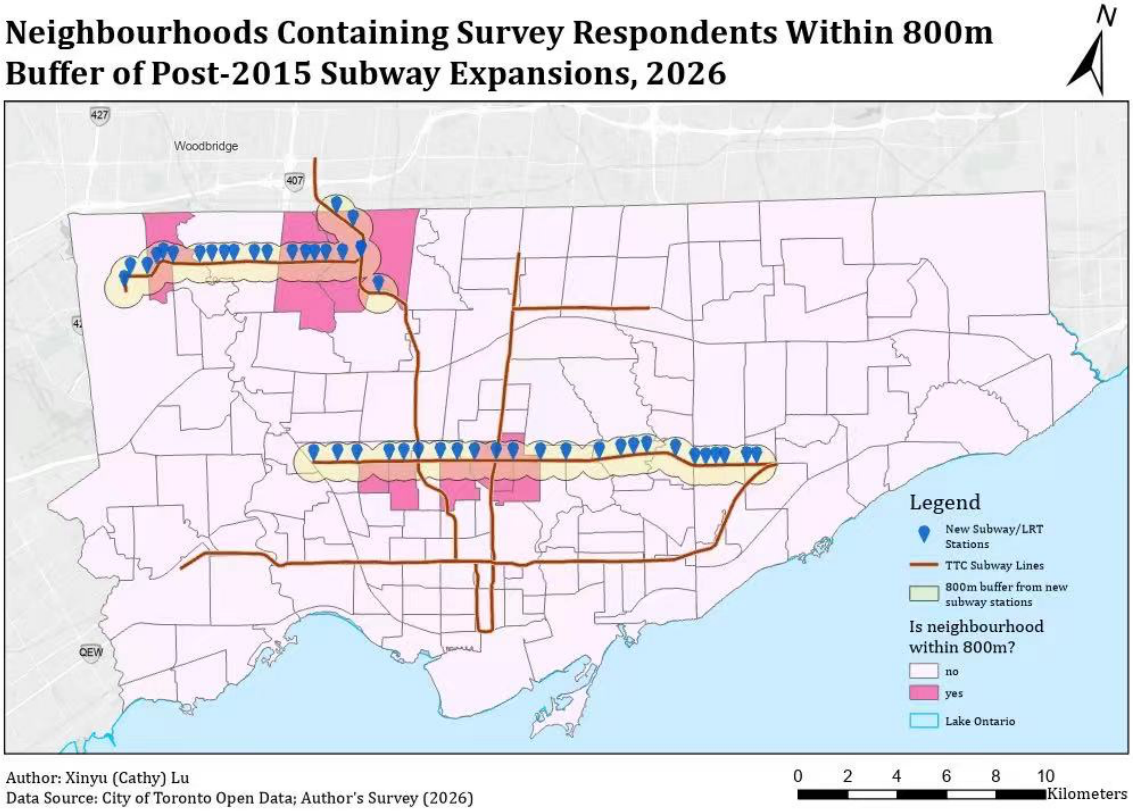


Figure 6. Locations of new stations along Line 1 (Yonge-University), Line 5 (Eglinton Crosstown LRT), and Line 6 (Finch West LRT), with an 800-m buffer representing walking catchment around each station.

Overall, the proportion of Toronto residents commuting to work by public transit decreased by 11% between 2016 and 2021, while the proportion commuting by private vehicle, either as drivers or passengers, increased (City of Toronto, 2022). Commuting patterns also varied across the lower-income neighbourhoods represented in the survey. Agincourt North and Agincourt South reported some of the highest levels of automobile commuting, with approximately 65% and 64% of commuters travelling by private vehicle, respectively, compared with the city average of 54%. Public transit accounted for 19% of work trips in Agincourt North, 22% in Agincourt South, and 22% in Mount Olive-Silverstone-Jamestown. By comparison, neighbourhoods located along or adjacent to the Line 1 Toronto–York Spadina Subway Extension and Line 6 Finch West LRT reported higher proportions of public transit commuting. In 2021, Black Creek recorded a public transit commute share of 28%, Glenfield-Jane Heights

28%, and York University Heights 34%, all exceeding the city average of 26%. These neighbourhoods also experienced smaller declines in public transit commuting than many other lower-income neighbourhoods during the same period.

Chapter 5: Discussion

5.1 Quantitative survey

Chapter 4 presented the quantitative findings from a survey of 45 public transit users across Toronto. Overall, the findings are broadly consistent with previous research on transit equity and suggest a gradual shift in Toronto's historical relationship between neighbourhood income and the distribution of rapid transit infrastructure. Compared with conditions before the implementation of the new lines, respondents generally reported improvements in their mobility and accessibility. In particular, the results show that lower-income transit users, who rely more heavily on public transit for their daily activities, experienced proportionally greater benefits from recent transit investments than higher-income respondents.

5.1.1 Unequal Benefits Across Toronto

The survey findings show that income and geography were the two strongest factors influencing how respondents perceived the benefits of recent transit investment. Before the implementation of the Line 1 Extension, Line 5, and Line 6, Toronto's rapid transit network remained largely concentrated within the urban core, while many lower-income suburban neighbourhoods relied primarily on local bus services to access the wider transit network (Hulchanski, 2010; Farber & Allen, 2019; Miller & Farvolden, 2022). As lower-income households increasingly suburbanized after the 1970s, this historical pattern created a mismatch between where transit-dependent residents lived and where transit infrastructure was located.

Recent transit investments have begun to address this historical imbalance. While respondents across all income categories reported positive impacts from the recent expansion of the transit system, the magnitude of the perceived benefits varied considerably. In this study, respondents from lower-income neighbourhoods reported some of the greatest perceived improvements following the introduction of the new transit lines, reflecting their greater reliance

on public transport for everyday activities. As these respondents depended most heavily on public transport before the new lines were introduced, improvements in travel efficiency produced proportionately greater benefits for them. Those served by the Line 1 Extension and Line 6 in particular reported shorter travel times, reduced walking distances, fewer transfers and an improved connection to Toronto's transit network. Figure 5 illustrates that several neighbourhoods in eastern Scarborough remain below 70% of the city's average income while continuing to experience comparatively limited access to rapid transit. Respondents living in downtown Toronto continued to report more direct journeys, fewer transfers, and shorter travel times than respondents living in Scarborough, North York, and the west end, where buses remain the primary feeder service to rapid transit stations. The findings suggest that new infrastructure has begun to reduce but not eliminate the longstanding inequalities in transit provision experienced by lower-income communities.

Respondents in the highest income category ($120,000 and above) also reported continued positive experiences, reflecting the advantages of the existing rapid transit network and the recent investments. In contrast, middle-income, full-time employed respondents experienced comparatively smaller improvements (Table 1). Many of them still had to make long journeys to work involving multiple transfers, suggesting that the recent expansion had not changed their established commuting patterns.

These findings both support and extend previous research on transit equity. Hess (2005) and Foth et al. (2013) found that lower-income workers living near city centres have better access to employment opportunities due to higher employment density and improved transit networks. This study similarly found that lower-income respondents benefitted from new access to rapid transit. However, the survey suggests that this advantage is no longer limited to neighbourhoods near the urban core. Instead, recent investments in Line 1, Line 5, and Line 6 have extended rapid transit into lower-income suburban communities, allowing these residents to experience comparable improvements in mobility and accessibility.

Overall, the findings show that recent investment in public transport has begun to reduce long-standing spatial inequalities within Toronto's transport network. However, they do not suggest that transport equity has been fully achieved. Respondents in several suburban

neighbourhoods continued to report longer travel times, multiple transfers, and greater reliance on feeder bus services. Planned projects, including the Ontario Line and the Scarborough Subway Extension, could further reduce these inequalities by strengthening the connection between historically underserved communities and the wider transport network. Future improvements in mobility and accessibility will also depend on how transit investment is coordinated with housing, employment, and community services so that the benefits of new infrastructure are distributed more equitably across Toronto.

5.1.2 Mobility Changes

Survey findings indicate recent transit investments in the Line 1 extension, Line 5, and Line 6 have improved mobility for most respondents, including many with lower incomes. As mentioned, these benefits were not distributed equally across the city. Some lower-income respondents experienced shorter travel times, fewer transfers, reduced walking distances, and improved reliability, while others reported no change. The proportion of lower-income residents reporting no change in response to new transit options does not necessarily see as a negative outcome (Table 4). Since most respondents were already frequent transit users before the implementation of these new transit projects, opportunities for substantial increases in their transit use may have been limited. When travel frequency remains unchanged, the reported perceived benefits serve as strong evidence that public transportation has improved as a result of the new projects. In this context, the projects appear to have enhanced the mobility of existing journeys significantly.

Respondents in Toronto's suburban neighbourhoods commonly relied on local buses to connect with subway or other rapid transit services. This often involved indirect routes, multiple transfers, longer travel times, and additional walking between services. These conditions were particularly significant for lower-income residents, who were located around the periphery of the City, as shown in Figure 5, and who were also dependent on public transit and may have had fewer alternative transportation options (Miller and Farvolden, 2022).

After the introduction of recent transit projects, the most frequently reported mobility improvements included shorter travel times, fewer transfers, shorter walking distances, more

direct journeys, and improved reliability. These changes align with the mobility indicators identified by Manaugh and El-Geneidy (2012) and Litman (2025), who emphasize travel time, convenience, connectivity, and reliability as key measures of transportation performance. Boarnet et al. (2017) also demonstrate that first- and last-mile conditions affect how easily passengers access the broader transit network. The effects of these projects depended not only on income, but also on residential tenure, neighbourhood location, and the existing connections between local buses and the rapid transit network.

Residential tenure provides an important basis for comparing conditions before and after project implementation. The responses from long-term residents provide a strong basis for comparing conditions before and after project implementation. Unlike recent movers, long-term residents were able to assess how their journeys changed over time while living in the same neighbourhood. Their responses indicate that improvements such as shorter travel times, fewer transfers, and enhanced connectivity were experienced following the implementation of new transit services. In contrast, recent movers primarily evaluated the current transit network and compared their travel conditions with their previous neighbourhood. Among recent movers, transit was not identified as a major factor influencing residential location decisions. No correlation was found among recent movers that new transit features influenced their decision to move to the new neighbourhoods. Instead, respondents more frequently identified housing affordability, housing availability, neighbourhood amenities, employment opportunities, and personal circumstances as the main reasons for moving. These findings suggest that, within this survey sample, recent transit investments have primarily benefited long-term residents by improving daily travel, rather than attracting substantial numbers of new residents because of transit alone.

The subway was the most frequently used mode of public transit among survey respondents (Table 1c). However, respondents living outside the downtown core continued to rely on buses as feeder services to access rapid transit. This finding is consistent with Miller and Farvolden (2022), which shows that lower-income residents in the suburbs rely on buses more frequently than residents who live closer to the city centre. This pattern was evident in both travel times and transfer requirements. Travel time generally decreased as income increased (Table 1d), reflecting broader differences in residential location, employment patterns, and

transportation choices. Higher-income households often have greater flexibility in selecting residential locations and transportation options, which may reduce exposure to longer and more complex transit journeys.

Several respondents identified reduced travel time and fewer transfers as the most significant mobility benefits resulting from recent transit investments, particularly where new routes have been introduced. The continued prevalence of multi-transfer journeys suggests that improving the directness of travel remains an important priority, particularly for suburban communities. For example, Respondent A travels from Martin Grove to Jane and Finch Mall for routine work. Before the opening of Line 6, they required two bus trips followed by a relatively long walk, especially during the winter. Following the introduction of Line 6, the same journey could be completed using the LRT with fewer transfers, shorter travel time, and a substantially shorter walking distance. The destination itself did not change; rather, the new transit infrastructure improved the efficiency of reaching an existing opportunity.

Lower-income lived near the new transit corridors were able to benefit from more direct access to higher-order transit. Others remained outside the immediate reach of the new projects and continued to depend on buses and indirect connections. Higher-income households may also have greater flexibility in choosing where to live, where to work, and how to travel, which can reduce their exposure to long and complex transit journeys. Income therefore influenced mobility, but neighbourhood location and network design were also important in determining who benefited.

Looking into the mobility indicators collected in the findings. The majority of respondents lived close to a transit stop, while the lowest- and highest-income groups included individuals located farther from transit stops. Consistent with El-Geneidy et al. (2013), the small number of respondents reporting longer walking distances may reflect a willingness to walk farther to access faster and more reliable rapid transit services, such as the subway, LRT, or GO Transit, rather than a nearby bus stop. Alshalalfah and Shalaby similarly found that approximately 60% of Toronto transit users live within 300 metres of a transit stop and 80% within 500 metres, indicating that Toronto residents are generally willing to walk farther than traditional planning standards assume. These findings suggest that proximity alone does not

determine mobility outcomes. Some respondents appeared willing to accept longer walking distances when those connections provided access to faster and more reliable rapid transit services. This may explain why the few respondents reporting walking times of 10–15 minutes were found in both the lowest- and highest-income groups, although these groups experienced the greatest transit benefit.

Overall, the before-and-after comparison shows that recent transit investments improved mobility for lower-income residents by reducing the time, transfers, walking, and uncertainty involved in everyday journeys. These benefits were most evident where new services created direct connections or reduced dependence on several bus routes. However, the improvements remained uneven because they depended on proximity to the new lines and the quality of the surrounding transit network. Recent transit expansion has therefore reduced selected mobility barriers in some lower-income communities, but it has not fully addressed the broader geographic inequalities that continue to shape transit travel across Toronto.

5.1.3 Accessibility Changes

The findings suggest that recent transit investments improved access to everyday opportunities for some lower-income residents, though these changes were less prominent than the mobility improvements discussed earlier. It remains unclear whether or where the Line 1 Extension, Line 5, and Line 6 have created new jobs, schools, healthcare services, or shops. Instead, these projects have provided additional routes and alternatives, making existing destinations more accessible.

Before these projects, Toronto already had an extensive public transit network, including subway, bus, streetcar, GO Transit, and other services. Most respondents were therefore able to reach major destinations prior to the recent investments. However, broad transit coverage did not provide equal accessibility across the city. Access to opportunities depended on both residents' locations and the distribution of destinations.

Residents in central and higher-density neighbourhoods typically lived closer to a greater concentration of jobs, schools, healthcare services, shops, and social activities, allowing for shorter and more direct trips. In contrast, lower-density suburban neighbourhoods offered fewer

opportunities, requiring residents to travel farther. Lower-income suburban residents often faced this disadvantage along with a greater reliance on local buses and transfer-based journeys.

The new subway and LRT lines changed these conditions for some residents by adding alternative route choices within the transit network. Before the projects, Respondent B may have only one way to reach a particular destination. After implementation, new options and alternative may open up and these new choices increased accessibility by reducing the time and difficulty involved in reaching opportunities. It also provided greater flexibility during delays or service disruptions.

The accessibility benefits of the new projects extended beyond simply adding stations closer to neighbourhoods. They also resulted from increasing the number and quality of connections across the network. Table 5 shows that respondents reported improved access to employment, education, healthcare, shops, services, and social activities after the recent transit investments. Lower-income respondents reported improvements across all these opportunity types, suggesting that new transit connections helped reduce previous access barriers.

Most respondents rated accessibility within their current neighbourhood as good or very good (Table 1(f)), indicating that many already lived in areas with strong transit access and nearby destinations. However, these ratings reflect the combined effects of Toronto's existing transit network, land-use patterns, nearby services, and earlier transit investments, not just the recent projects. This strong baseline may explain why accessibility changes were less noticeable than mobility changes. Where basic access already existed, the new lines provided incremental gains by adding route choices, improving connections, and making destinations easier to reach. Table 1(f) shows respondents' general assessment of neighbourhood access, while Table 5 identifies the types of opportunities that became easier to reach after the recent investments. Together, these tables suggest that the new projects enhanced an already established accessibility network, mainly by expanding the usefulness and flexibility of existing connections.

Unlike mobility benefits, which were reflected in measurable changes such as travel time, transfers, and directness, accessibility improvements were less distinct across income groups. This is likely because accessibility depends not only on transit infrastructure but also on the locations of employment, services, and other opportunities throughout the city (Manaugh and El-

Geneidy, 2012). Mobility changes were easier to identify, as respondents could directly report changes in travel time, transfers, walking distance, and reliability. Accessibility was more difficult to measure, since it depends on both the transit network and the distribution of destinations. Without detailed trip origin and destination data, the study could identify the types of opportunities that became easier to access but could not determine the exact increase in the number or range of destinations available to each respondent.

The study did not collect precise origin and destination data for respondents' trips. As a result, it was possible to identify the types of opportunities that respondents perceived as more accessible, but not the exact number or range of additional destinations available to them. The findings do not indicate how many more jobs, schools, clinics, shops, or social destinations became reachable within a specific travel time, nor can they isolate the impact of each transit project on individual trips. Consequently, the accessibility results are based on respondents' reported experiences rather than on calculated measures of access.

5.2 Limitation of Data

This study has several limitations. First, the survey sample does not represent the broader population of transit users in Toronto. Despite field recruitment was used to improve response rates, the sample size was small due to the short research period and limited data collection window. Second, the study relies on self-reported perceptions of mobility and accessibility, which are subjective and may be shaped by individual experiences, travel habits, and expectations. However, in-person recruitment and spatially targeted sampling helped capture perspectives from communities often underrepresented in transportation planning research. Third, as briefly mentioned above, the survey is limited at understanding the exact origins and destinations of respondents' trips. Although respondents identified improved access to employment, education, healthcare, shops and services, and social activities, it was not possible to measure how many additional opportunities became reachable, how far respondents travelled, or whether a particular improvement could be attributed to one transit project. Finally, some transit projects, such as the Line 5 Eglinton Crosstown LRT, had only recently begun operation at the time of the survey. Respondents may not have fully integrated this service into their travel routines, so changes and benefits may not yet be evident. Future research should consider a

larger, more representative sample, compare multiple transit corridors or cities, and examine additional aspects of transit investment, including land-use change, economic development, and social equity over time.

5.3 Recommendation

Future transit planning should make equitable transit as a core objective, not just network expansion. Strong connections between neighbourhoods and key destinations such as employment, education, healthcare, and community services must form the basis of service improvements. Efficiency measures like priority signals, dedicated lanes, and reliability upgrades are important, but they are most effective when all transit users can access essential destinations in the first place. Transit improvements should also promote a resilient, multimodal transportation system by providing viable alternatives such as walking, cycling, and other forms of active travel. Network expansion should prioritize underserved communities and align with land-use planning to distribute opportunities more fairly across Toronto. To achieve these goals, the city should invest in additional routes, expanded coverage, and increased service frequency and hours of operation. Equitable public transit also requires coordination with housing, employment, and community services. The survey indicates that transit equity depends not only on new infrastructure, but also alongside urban development in locations where residents can fully benefit from these investments.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

This research examined how recent transit expansions in Toronto have influenced mobility and accessibility, with an emphasis on equity for low-income communities. Survey results indicate that improved mobility alone does not automatically lead to equitable outcomes. Although new lines such as the Line 1 extension, Line 5, and Line 6 have improved travel times, connectivity, and convenience for many, these benefits are not distributed evenly. Lower-income neighbourhoods, which previously had limited rapid transit access reported greater improvement, many gained new routes and transfer options, expanding their access to more destination and improved mobility through shorter travel time and less transfers. Chapters 4 and 5 demonstrate that increased mobility alone does not ensure equity. These disparities reflect longstanding

planning priorities. While new transit investments are beginning to address historic inequities, achieving transit equity will require ongoing efforts to expand network coverage and integrate transit planning with housing, employment, and community services. In conclusion, these findings contribute to a broader understanding of how transit infrastructure, planning policies, and neighbourhood characteristics intersect to produce complex patterns of mobility and accessibility. As Toronto continues to grow and invest in its transit network, ongoing attention to the spatial and social distribution of benefits will be essential to ensure that the promise of public transit is realized for all residents, regardless of income or location.

Appendix

Appendix A: Date and Time of Field Recruitment

Date	Time	Location	Day of the week
Day1: March 16, 2026	1-3 pm	York Lanes, York University Station, Pioneer Village Station, Finch West LRT Station	Monday
Day 2: March 17, 2026	6-8 pm	Driftwood Community Centre, Yorkgate Mall, Jane Finch Mall, stations along the Finch West LRT corridor before returning to Finch West Station	Tuesday
Day 3: March 18, 2026	1-2 pm; 5-6 pm	East York Town Centre, Thorncliffe Park Community Hub, Flemingdon Community Centre, Malvern Town Cente, and nearby bus stops	Wednesday
Day 4: March 20, 2026	7-8 pm	Bus stops and community gathering areas near Sheppard Avenue East and Midland Road, Finch Avenue East and McCowan Road, Finch Avenue East and Sandhurst Circle, and outside Woodside Square.	Friday
Day 5: March 23, 2026	4-7 pm	Jane and Finch Community Centre, along Jane Street, Line 6 LRT stations continuing westward toward Mount Olive and Kipling Avenue bus corridors.	Monday
Day 6: March 25, 2026	1-4 pm	Mount Olive, Rexdale Community Hub, Emery Station, and along Weston Road toward Carmine Stefano Community Centre. Weston King Neighbourhood Centre, Community Place Hub near the Weston GO and UP Express Station	Wednesday
Day 7: April 2, 2026	8-10 pm	Downtown Toronto, TMU Station (formerly Dundas)	Thursday

Appendix B: Quantitative Survey

Online surveys are directed to the corresponding set of questions by selecting different answers for How long have you been living in the neighbourhood? Respondents selecting less than a year and 1-4 years will be directed to set A, and respondents selecting 5-10 years and over 10 years will be directed to set B of the survey questions.

Question Set A (For residents newly moved into their neighbourhood, and lived there for 1-4 years):

Q1. What is your current employment status?

[ ] Employed full-time
[ ] Employed part-time
[ ] Student
[ ] Unemployed
[ ] Self-Employed
[ ] Retired

Q2. Which of the following best describes your annual personal income:

[ ] $0-$30,000
[ ] $31,000-$60,000
[ ] $61,000-$90,000
[ ] $91,000-$120,000
[ ] Above $120,000
[ ] I prefer not to say

Q3. What are the first three digits of your postal code? _____

(This is to generate a map of respondents across different neighbourhoods in Toronto)

Q4. How often do you take public transit every week?

[ ] Everyday (my commute to other places relies on public transit)
[ ] Several days a week (for routine purposes)
[ ] Occasionally
[ ] Rarely

Q5.What types of public transit do you use most often (please select all that apply)

[ ] Subway (Please indicate Line)
[ ] Buses
[ ] Streetcar
[ ] LRT
[ ] GO Transit
[ ] Other (Please specify): _____

Q6. Is your major destination within Toronto?

[ ] Yes
[ ] No

Q7. How many transfers do you typically make during your regular commute?

[ ] No Transfer
[ ] 1
[ ] 2
[ ] 3 or more

Q8. On a scale of 1 to 5, how would you rate the current overall access to public transit in your neighbourhood?

(1 being very poor, 5 being excellent) My rating is: _____

Q9. How far is the nearest transit stop/station to where you live?

[ ] Less than a 5 minute walk
[ ] 5-10 minute walk
[ ] 10-15 minute walk
[ ] Over 15 minute walk
[ ] Requires driving

Q10. What is your typical one-way commute time using public transit?

[ ] Less than 30 minutes
[ ] 30-45 minutes
[ ] 45-60 minutes
[ ] Over an hour

Q11. Has the availability of transit projects influenced your decision to live here?

[ ] Yes, a major factor
[ ] Yes, a minor factor
[ ] Neutral
[ ] No
[ ] Not sure

Q12. If yes, which new transit features influenced your decision moving into the neighbourhood? (Please select all that apply)

[ ] New subway stations
[ ] New LRT Lines
[ ] GO Transit expansion
[ ] Bus priority infrastructures
[ ] Station accessibility upgrades
[ ] Transit did not influence my decision to move into the neighbourhood

Q13. Has transit access improved your access to any of the following? (Please select all that apply)

[ ] Jobs
[ ] Education
[ ] Healthcare
[ ] Groceries/daily needs
[ ] Social or family connections
[ ] No noticeable change
[ ] Other (Please specify):

_____

Q14. How much have the available transit services in your neighbourhood improved your mobility since moving here?

(Mobility meaning the ability, ease, and efficiency of moving from place to place)

[ ] Much worse
[ ] Somewhat worse
[ ] No change
[ ] Somewhat improved
[ ] Much improved
[ ] Not sure/ cannot measure

Question Set B (Residents who have lived in the neighbourhood for over 5 years):

Q1. What is your current employment status?

[ ] Employed full-time
[ ] Employed part-time
[ ] Student
[ ] Unemployed
[ ] Self-Employed
[ ] Retired

Q2. Which of the following best describes your annual personal income:

[ ] $0-$30,000
[ ] $31,000-$60,000
[ ] $61,000-$90,000
[ ] $91,000-$120,000
[ ] Above $120,000
[ ] I prefer not to say

Q3. What are the first three digits of your postal code? _____

(This is to generate a map of respondents across different neighbourhoods in Toronto)

Q4. How often do you take public transit every week?

[ ] Everyday (my commute to other places relies on public transit)
[ ] Several days a week (for routine purposes)
[ ] Occasionally
[ ] Rarely

Q5.What types of public transit do you use most often (please select all that apply)

[ ] Subway (Please indicate Line)
[ ] Buses
[ ] Streetcar
[ ] LRT
[ ] GO Transit
[ ] Other (Please specify): _____

Q6. Is your major destination within Toronto?

[ ] Yes
[ ] No

Q7. How many transfers do you typically make during your regular commute?

[ ] No Transfer
[ ] 1
[ ] 2
[ ] 3 or more

Q8. On a scale of 1 to 5, how would you rate the current overall access to public transit in your neighbourhood?

(1 being very poor, 5 being excellent) My rating is: _____

Q9. How far is the nearest transit stop/station to where you live?

[ ] Less than a 5 minute walk
[ ] 5-10 minute walk
[ ] 10-15 minute walk
[ ] Over 15 minute walk
[ ] Requires driving

Q10. What is your typical one-way commute time using public transit?

[ ] Less than 30 minutes
[ ] 30-45 minutes
[ ] 45-60 minutes
[ ] Over an hour

Q11. Which of the following benefits, if any, have you experienced due to new transit improvements in your neighbourhood over the past years? (Please select all that apply)

[ ] Shorter travel time (frequency improvement, more bus priority lanes and signal)
[ ] Fewer transfers (new direct connections)
[ ] Shorter walking distance (to reach new stops)
[ ] Improved reliability
[ ] No noticeable benefits
[ ] Other (Please specify):

_____

Q12. Have new transit connections improved your access to any of the following? (Please select all that apply)

[ ] Jobs
[ ] Education
[ ] Healthcare
[ ] Groceries/daily needs
[ ] Social or family connections
[ ] No noticeable change
[ ] Other (Please specify):

_____

Q13. Have you shifted your usual travel mode because of new transit options in your neighbourhood? (Please select all that apply)

[ ] I use transit more often now
[ ] I drive less now
[ ] I walk/bike more now
[ ] I use transit less now
[ ] I drive more now
[ ] No change
[ ] Other (Please specify):

_____

Q14. Compare to before new transit projects happen in your area, your daily mobility is:
(Mobility meaning the ability, ease, and efficiency of moving from place to place)

[ ] Much worse
[ ] Somewhat worse
[ ] No change
[ ] Somewhat improved
[ ] Much improved
[ ] Not sure/ cannot measure

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