



Why Public Transit Should Be a Key Municipal Priority

There are many reasons why better public transit matters for cities, such as:

- **Improving access** to jobs, groceries, healthcare, education, recreation, and much more for people who can't or don't want to drive
- **Reducing the cost of living** for households currently forced to spend thousands of dollars a year on vehicle ownership
- **Enabling denser land-use planning** focused on housing people, not parked cars, and **safer streets** with limited or no private vehicle access.
- **Cutting greenhouse gases and air pollution**, as buses (even those that burn diesel) tend to be far more efficient on a per-rider basis.

The City of Winnipeg has developed many plans about or related to transit in recent years. Many of them produced targets about mode-shifting from private automobiles to public transit and active transportation. [For context](#), 82% of Winnipeg residents commuted by private automobile in 2025, compared to 11.4% by bus and 6% by active transportation. (Those numbers only include work trips, not many other types of trips.) Some of the City's plans and targets relating to transit include:

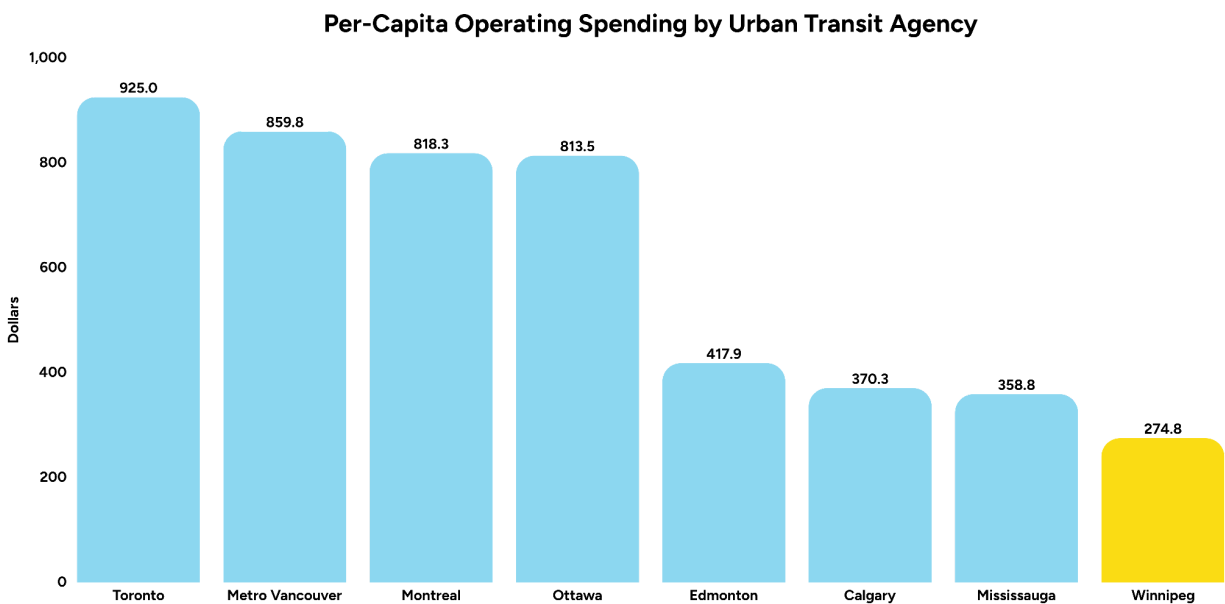
- **Winnipeg's Climate Action Plan (2018)**: By 2030, Winnipeg will have a modal share of 71% by private automobile, 15% by transit, and 14% by active transport.
- **Transportation 2050: Reimagining Mobility (2025)**: By 2050, Winnipeg will have a modal share of 50% by private automobile and 50% by sustainable transportation, especially transit, cycling, and walking.
- Other relevant plans are the **Winnipeg Transit Master Plan (2021)**, the **Winnipeg Poverty Reduction Strategy (2021)**, the **OurWinnipeg 2045 Development Plan (2022)**, and the **Complete Communities Direction Strategy 2.0 (2025)**.

Improving transit would help address many of City Council's key priority areas identified in its **2023-2026 Strategic Priorities Action Plan**, including **the Downtown** (attracting people downtown, increasing access to local business and safe community spaces), **a liveable, safe, health, happy city** (reduce poverty, increase safety and wellbeing), and **a green and growing city with sustainable renewal of infrastructure** (increased resiliency to climate change).



Yet there are many major challenges and obstacles to the City of Winnipeg achieving these goals. Specifically, transit service in Winnipeg continues to be hampered by:

- **Low per-capita spending on transit operations**, which the City frames as running “one of the most cost-efficient transit systems in Canada.” Low operating spending translates into low frequency of bus service, which is especially impactful in a transfer-dependent system.
- **Cancellation of the 50-50 transit funding agreement in 2017**, which split operating spending between municipalities and the Province after service revenues (mostly fares) had been subtracted. This move further downloaded the fiscal responsibility of growing service onto municipalities and transit riders.



- **Failure to prioritize buses on streets**, meaning that they are required to compete with congestion caused by private automobiles. This greatly hurts the reliability of transit. There are many practical solutions to this problem, including dedicated bus lanes, transit signal priority/queue jumps, and in-lane bus stops.
- **Continued urban sprawl and road-building** that structurally incentivize driving and limit the viability of transit. While the City recently overhauled restrictive zoning bylaws to access federal housing funding, developers continue to build many low-density communities on the city's edges. The City's plan to expand Kenaston and Chief Peguis will also lock in car-dependency.