

HOW DO PEOPLE GET TO THE BUS?

BACKGROUND

Most people get to the bus on foot: Of the 439 public transit stop visits reported in 2018-2019, 418 stops were reached by foot (95%), and only 6 public transit trips were started by driving to a bus stop or station.

How far are people willing to walk to get to public transit? A systematic review conducted by van Soest et al. (2019) highlights a frequently used guideline, that suggests people would be willing to walk up to 400m for buses and 800m for rail transport, though research observing real distances report wide differences. Some of the factors that influence people's willingness to walk to a stop include: frequency of transit, route spacing, density, station location, walkability, safety, and weather.

WEATHER

Saskatoon's winter weather can be a deterrent to taking the bus for some, especially when factoring wait times in cold temperatures. One participant explained "I really enjoyed taking the bus and it works really well for my schedule and for where I work," yet she considered driving instead during the pandemic, since there were no places for her to stay warm while waiting for the bus, and the bus schedules no longer aligned with her end of work day.

Design elements and infrastructure are key. Elements like heated waiting area, and structures to protect from wind and precipitation should be included into station design plans to favour bus use.

The changes in routes and features during the pandemic (i.e. indoor places to wait for the bus) have made bus travel less convenient and comfortable. Consideration should be paid to essential workers and captive riders who rely on bus service despite pandemic restrictions.

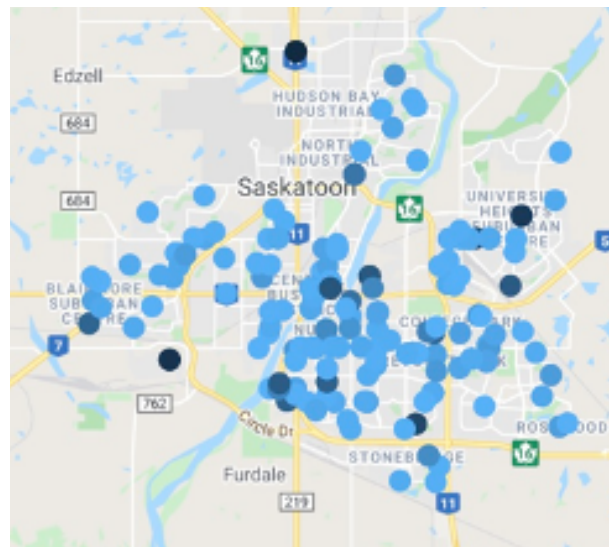
DISTANCE

Bus users are willing to walk to a further stop, if it provides them with better service.

On average, the nearest bus stop participants report habitually using is 730m farther than their actual nearest bus stop.

In general, people tend to say their closest stop is a major line or hub (downtown or a mall) when in fact they have a stop much closer to their home. For these people the walking times for getting to what they think is the closest stop could range from a 5- to 30-minute walk longer compared to their actual closest stop. When considering the frequency of bus service on routes closer to their home, walking to a stop that is further away but has more frequent service is a trade-off people appear willing to make. Additionally, bus stops that are further away might serve more direct routes than routes which have closer stops but might require transfers to reach one's destination.

Communicating route frequency, stop locations, and major line, and network connections to potential users would raise awareness for transit accessibility.



Map of INTERACT participant showing difference between participant's actual nearest bus stop and the nearest bus stop used by the participant. Darker points indicate a larger difference, lighter indicates shorter distances between the two.