

QUESTIONNAIRE RESPONSE

Daniel McIntyre Ward

Josh Brandon

1. Public transit was identified as the most important issue facing Winnipeggers in the 2019 budget consult, followed by active transportation and roadway construction and maintenance. In your opinion, why is public transit deemed the number one priority?

Winnipeggers care about reducing greenhouse gases, eliminating traffic congestion to improve neighbourhoods and ensuring that transportation is affordable for all. Increasing transit use benefits everyone, by reducing the number of personal vehicles on our roads and ultimately creating a greener, healthier, more livable and more sustainable city. Residents want to take the bus, but have challenges doing so because of the cost, inconvenience and unpredictability.

2. If you could give Winnipeg's transit system an overall letter grade, what would it be? What do you feel is holding the current transit system back from getting a better grade? If you could sum up your vision for the future of Winnipeg's transit system what would it be?

Needs improvement (C plus).

Winnipeg has comfortable and accessible buses; a highly skilled, professional and trained unionized workforce; a publicly owned and operated transit system; and a comprehensive network of routes that serve most areas of the city. However, there is inadequate service during both rush hour and in off-peak periods and to all neighbourhoods; fares are not affordable for low-income residents, students and seniors and do not create incentives for drivers to switch to transit; crowded buses leave passengers at bus stops, often during extremely cold days when it may be dangerous to wait outdoors for extended periods; some routes are inconvenient, with long waits between buses and multiple transfers; Handi-Transit does not provide equitable service to passengers with disabilities; and Winnipeg Transit workers are being threatened and assaulted on the job.

My vision is of an excellent transit system (A plus) that all residents want to use because it is affordable, reliable, convenient, comfortable and safe with high employee retention and a strong record of workplace safety and health. Beginning in core areas of the city with high rates of transit use, Winnipeg should work towards the completion of a frequent service network with guaranteed service every 10 minutes. I want transit to be the preferred option of transportation for Winnipeggers.

3. Safety is an increasing concern for transit riders and drivers, alike. What do you feel contributes to the lack of safety in the current system? How would you improve safety?

Safety concerns on Winnipeg Transit reflect safety issues in our neighbourhoods, the root causes of which include addictions, homelessness and poverty. Inability to pay rising fares and over-crowded buses escalate conflicts between drivers and passengers, and among passengers. Technical issues with peggo cards and lack of clarity around fare payment policies also create conflicts. Drivers are forced to deal with conflicts and may be left with agitated or aggressive passengers at the end of the route.

Passengers may feel unsafe using a transit shelter that is serving as temporary housing or an injection site. Passenger safety is also compromised at bus stops that are isolated or where criminal activities occur.

Winnipeg Transit needs to support its workers and passengers, in part through additional staff resources on the bus (such as safety officers). Safety should also be improved where passengers are waiting. A concrete example is the opportunity to improve, not demolish, the Portage Place bus shelter. Renovating the shelter to include on-site transit services would improve both customer experience and safety. This is an excellent location to sell and reload peggo cards, a service that is unavailable downtown during evenings and weekends.

Increasing the frequency of buses and ridership are the best ways to increase safety in the long term. In the short term, Winnipeg Transit needs to provide adequate staffing, training and infrastructure to ensure that all drivers and passengers are safe. Bus routes should terminate in higher traffic areas. Drivers need more support.

4. If you could sum up Winnipeg's current transit system in 3 words, what would it be?

Adequate, not inspiring.

5. Cities like Ottawa and Edmonton contribute over \$220 million to their transit networks, while the City of Winnipeg contributes just \$65 million. To match these other cities in per capita terms, Winnipeg should be contributing \$170 million. How will you fight for more funding towards transit?

Transit must be a top budget priority, reflecting the high value Winnipeg residents place on improving transit service. We must use every effort to increased funding including partnerships with other levels of government, revenue from development fees and existing tax sources towards improving transit. Winnipeg has one of the highest user fee to total operating revenue ratios of any major Canadian city. This is unsustainable for users.

Some of the revenue gap should come from a share of development fees directed towards transit as extending our suburban development has been one of the major factors stretching our transit system over the past few decades – transit has a much larger area to cover without the resources to match.

I will represent bus riders and transit workers in my ward by advocating for lower fares (starting with a reversal of the 2018 \$0.25 fare increase), more frequent service, improved safety and smarter routes. This work will include consultation with key transit stakeholders including the Amalgamated Transit Union and Functional Transit. To fund better transit, I will explore partnerships with other levels of government to access infrastructure funding, as well as opportunities to use municipal revenue from development fees to fund public transit.

Bonus question: What is your favourite Transit App and why?

The original transit app, TeleBUS, as it tells me when the next bus will arrive. I also like it because I have the 5 digit codes at my favourite stops memorized.