

QUESTIONNAIRE RESPONSE

Point Douglas Ward

Kate Sjoberg

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?

A well-functioning public transit system is a part of an efficient transportation network. We know that encouraging use of public transportation is one aspect of a city's role in reducing negative contributions to climate change. Further, access to transportation is a justice issue along class, race, disability and gender lines. It is no secret that many Winnipeggers cannot afford public transportation, nevermind a vehicle, and are therefore limited in the ways they are able to participate in the life of the city. This barrier to participation affects quality of life, and contributes to further inequality by acting as a barrier to education, employment, and healthcare which already has had and will continue to have generational, differential impacts on neighbourhoods. Winnipeggers are serious about public transportation for all of these reasons, and more.

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?

I hesitate to offer a grade. I think Transit workers are doing their best in a very imperfect situation.

I'd like a transit system that works for low-income Indigenous women and women of colour, is safe for trans and gender expanding people, works for parents using strollers and getting young children around (especially in the winter), and makes it easy for people with disabilities to get around the city. I think it is possible to get there- but first we need to fully acknowledge and appreciate these people's experience.

It is worth saying on this point that I am very concerned about user complaints about Handi Transit, and further that these complaints are not been appropriately dealt with in the reissuing of the contract. We need proper service for people using Handi transit, and I commit to working on this.

Another key, short-term improvement that I am hearing about on the doorstep is the need for weekend and holiday service. Improving service on these days would significantly improve quality of life for many people in Point Douglas ward.

I think Winnipeg Transit is doing as well as it can with its current resource levels. Funding for transportation is a major issue that all cities are grappling with in building the public transportation system we need and want. We need capital investment from the federal government, a reinstatement and increase of funding from the provincial government, and as a city, we could do more to prioritize transit in our own budgeting processes. A 50/50 funding model with the province is a good goal to set.

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?

Recently, Aleem Chaudhary, president of ATU 1505, noted that the majority of conflict on busses stems from farebox issues. I think it is important to pay attention to the source of problems in order to design the correct solution, and so I have been confused about the proposal to add security workers, or even police officers to busses. This is an added expense that doesn't address the source of the problem, and could very well lead to further difficulties for passengers. Instead, I believe we should commit to reducing fares back to pre 2018 levels, and then commit to freezing or reducing them going forward.

My experience both on the bus and working in communities where there are high incidences of mental illness and addiction tells me that a more effective approach to attending to conflict stemming from these kinds of challenges is to engage supports that are specifically trained to de-escalate situations and provide care. This could include mental health workers, social workers, Bear Clan members, or other appropriate options.

Further, the safety concern I hear the most from passengers is about experience at bus stops, not experience on the bus. Adding lighting and more bus stop infrastructure have been positive approaches that we should build on.

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

Trying, underfunded, friendly.

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?

I will prioritize funding for public transit within the city budget, and support advocacy efforts to increase investments from the province and federal government.

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

I use Navigo!