

QUESTIONNAIRE RESPONSE

St. Norbert – Seine River Ward

Nikolas Joyal

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?

I believe there are 2 answers to this question. The first is that because transit is in the news now more than in the past (due to the BRT, safety concerns, service and route cuts/changes/improvements etc..) people are more aware of the issues that Winnipeg Transit faces. The second is that a generational change has meant that the younger voting demographic now places more emphasis on having convenient, frequent transit options. I feel previous generations appeared to view transit as an afterthought, something to use until you bought a car, whereas younger generations (my generation) views transit as an alternative to owning a car. This younger generations realizes the benefit that a proper transit network can provide, not for themselves but for the city as a whole.

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 would give the transit system a B-, although my grading is affected by the fact that I live one street away from a stop serviced by 2 major downtown routes (the 14 and 58 express). The main reason preventing it from receiving a higher grade is the focus on routes that are too long and try to do too much. Routes such as the 14, that runs from Ferry Road, down Ellice, through the downtown, down St. Mary's and finally a suburban circuit through South St. Vital before restarting the route. The amount of time spent on the suburban portion means the service is less frequent overall, and a long route increases the odds of major delays. My vision for the future of the transit system is of one that is based on a "hub and spoke system", where multiple short, frequent routes cover suburban areas before converging on a "hub" (such as a mall or university). These hubs would then provide direct connecting routes to other hubs and the downtown. (This is effectively a frequent service network.) Of course, this vision also includes the continued build out of the BRT network, as BRT stations and end points would function as excellent hubs.

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?

I think a major contributor to the perception of a lack of safety has to do with how Winnipeggers feel about safety generally. Accurately or not, Winnipeg is perceived as having a crime rate and being a dangerous city, and this feeling is also projected onto the transit system. Coupled with a few high profile, major incidents, there is a perception that at certain times, or in certain areas, taking the bus is not safe. There is no easy solution to improving transit safety. It must be a coordinated effort between the City, Winnipeg Transit, Winnipeg Police, and organizations, while also consulting with bus drivers and passengers. Visible improvements, such as installing driver shields and surveillance are good first steps. However, for these to be truly effective, they must be enhanced by things such as identifying what areas and routes have a higher chance of confrontation, to help prevent incidents before they occur. While I am not sure the feasibility of this, encouraging police officers and cadets who take the bus to work to wear their uniform while on the bus could provide a deterrent.



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

Am I allowed to give 2 answers? I would say "good not great" but also "15 years behind".

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?

This is a difficult question to answer, as a jump from \$65 million to \$170 million is an enormous amount of money. An obvious answer would be to find ways to increase fare revenue, but this is easier said than done. Another easy answer would be to say look for efficiencies in other departments, and put money saved towards transit, although again this is no doubt harder than it sounds. While the city works towards long term solutions to greater funding, it should take full advantage of federal grants and incentives to modernize and improve infrastructure now. The \$500 million given by the federal governments to the city to be solely used on transit provides an opportunity to quickly make investments that could boost ridership, or show the potential of the system, and thus demonstrate the worth of greater funding. As a regular transit user during the summer, and an almost daily user during the winter, I will always push for transit improvements, regardless of what form they take.

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

I use the mobile Navigo site. I find that it provides an accurate time for when busses will arrive, and where on the route they are. Being able to plan trips based on when you want to leave or arrive at a destination, and being given multiple trip options is also a huge plus.