



UNIVERSITY OF  
**TORONTO**  
SCARBOROUGH

**MOBILIZING  
JUSTICE**



# MOBILIZING COMMUNITIES

Grassroots case studies exemplifying responsive mobility equity

Jay Pitter Placemaking - Authored by Jay Pitter - January 2023



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Amalgamated Transit Union Canada	Esri Canada	Statistics Canada
Autorité régionale de transport métropolitain (ARTM)	Federation of Canadian Municipalities	Toronto Transit Commission
Canadian Institute of Planners	Infrastructure Canada	Transit App
Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC)	McGill University	TransLink
Canadian Urban Institute	McMaster University	United Way Greater Toronto
Canadian Urban Transit Association	Memorial University	University of British Columbia
The Centre for Active Transportation (TCAT), a project of Clean Air Partnership	Metrolinx	University of Manitoba
CIRODD (École de technologie supérieure)	Pantonium	University of Oregon
CIRRELT (Université de Montréal)	Pembina Institute	University of Texas Austin
City of Calgary	Region of Waterloo	University of Toronto
City of Edmonton	RideShark	University of Waterloo
City of Toronto	Simon Fraser University	Urban Strategies
City of Vancouver	Spare Labs	Via Transportation Inc.
	SPIN	Ville de Montréal
		York Region



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## Introduction

On Dec. 1, 1955, seamstress and Black civil rights activist Rosa Parks was arrested after refusing to vacate a seat on a Montgomery, Alabama, bus for a white passenger. That sparked a 381-day boycott of the Montgomery bus system and led to a 1956 U.S. Supreme Court decision banning segregation on public transportation. This historic case is well-known in Canada, too, but what is less well-known is that the kind of discrimination that led to Parks' arrest was also a common practice in Canada. For example, in 1841, Peter Gallego, the son of a free Black man from the southern U.S., was instructed to ride on an external carriage seat due to his race during his tour of southwestern Ontario.<sup>1</sup> Like Ms. Parks, he refused. These kinds of incidents and resistance were far more frequent than is often reported in both countries. Black peoples' refusal to subordinate themselves to white passengers on public transit, staging bus boycotts and establishing guides listing safe(r) accommodations for Black people while traveling were powerful acts of defiance that shaped the civil rights movement and led to significant changes.

That such a seminal movement occurred within the milieu of a daily commute is no accident. Throughout North America, transportation and mobility remain inexorably linked to politics, power and the struggle for mobility justice. As scholar Virginia Parks notes, the act of “commuting continues to embody, reveal, and sometimes contest the twenty-first-century city as a generator of racial inequality.”<sup>2</sup> Moreover, inequities in mobility and transportation reflect larger disparities, ranging from race, class, ability, gender and sexuality to public health outcomes and access to opportunity.<sup>3</sup>

Consequently, mobility-oriented advocacy extends beyond Black movements and communities. Women are on the forefront of advocating for stop-request protocols—allowing disembarkment from public transit at undesignated points after dark for greater safety—and organizing “take back the night” marches to raise awareness about gender-based violence while traveling. Disability advocates make exceptional contributions to identifying multiple mobility barriers, both visible and invisible, while raising awareness about fundamental accessibility gaps that also adversely impact other demographics such as caregivers using strollers and elders with reduced mobility levels. Anti-poverty activists petition transit providers and municipalities to eliminate fares for children and for passengers of all ages in some circumstances. Gay rights activists combat rampant homophobia when openly expressing affection and love on the street. Unhoused people share information through word-of-mouth networks about transit stations and heated shelters for surviving frigid winter weather. These and many other examples demonstrate the breadth of mobility injustice and inequity, and the power of people who care deeply about their communities.

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1 Henry, N. (2019, May 28). Racial Segregation of Black People in Canada: Transportation. The Canadian Encyclopedia. <https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/racial-segregation-of-black-people-in-canada>

2 Parks, V. (2016). Rosa Parks Redux: Racial Mobility Projects on the Journey to Work, *Annals of the American Association of Geographers*, 106:2, 292-299, DOI:10.1080/00045608.2015.1100061

3 *Homobiles: Transportation With A Social Mission*. (2014, October 5). [Audio file]. Weekend Edition Sunday, 2014-10-05; National Public Radio, Inc. (NPR)

Laverne, A. J. (2017). Human Rights Tribunal Decisions on Transportation and Disability Discrimination in Canada: 1976 to 2016 [Data set]. University of Windsor Dataverse.

Patterson, R.F. (2021, July). Gender, Climate and Transport in the United States. WEDO. [https://wedo.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/WEDO\\_PolicyBriefonTransport\\_July15.pdf](https://wedo.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/WEDO_PolicyBriefonTransport_July15.pdf)

National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls Canada. (2019). Reclaiming power and place: final report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. Canada. Privy Council Office, Vancouver. Volumes 1-2 and Calls for Justice. <https://publications.gc.ca/site/eng/9.867037/publication.html>

This document features 10 grassroots case studies exemplifying responsive mobility equity initiatives. Each case is derived from a conversational interview and adheres to first-voice and lived-experience. They define and explore a range of mobility justice issues within a compelling narrative framework. These stories are not intended to serve as universal “cookie-cutter” approaches for addressing mobility equity challenges. Instead, they are situated in the specific geographic, social and cultural contexts of each advocate’s communities. They culminate in key themes, lessons and approaches, which may be considered to encourage community-centred research approaches and mobility planning, policy and investments.

Equally important, this document disrupts conventional, institutional research approaches, which either “speak over” communities by locating scholars as sole “experts” and/or erase long-standing grassroots action. It is both a celebration and a respectful nod to the individuals and organizations, oftentimes unsung and under-funded, working on the frontlines to create mobility justice on a daily basis.

In solidarity with grassroots mobility justice and equity advocates across Canada,

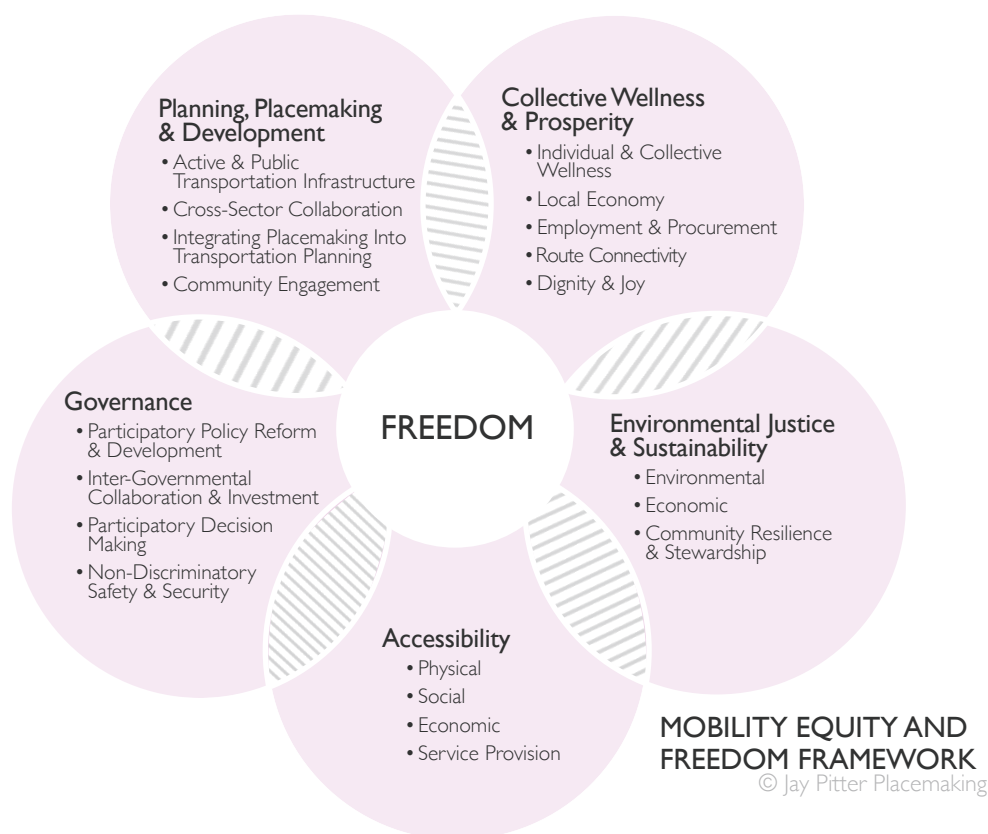


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## Mobility equity is...

Mobility equity refers to the provision of transportation policies, funding, infrastructure and services that are responsive to diverse demographic needs and aspirations. This entails recognizing how state-sanctioned policies and planning approaches have significantly limited mobility options for Indigenous Peoples, Black people (particularly those descended from enslaved people), disabled people, LGBTQ2IA+ people and other groups. In addition to acknowledging and rectifying these fraught histories, mobility equity tenets include sustainable approaches that counteract car-centric infrastructure, require interdisciplinary knowledge exchange among scholars, and promote cross-sectoral and intergovernmental collaboration. Most importantly, mobility equity strives to ensure that everyone—regardless of race, class or any other social identity—is able to access safety, joy and prosperity with dignity while journeying. It is not simply about moving people from point A to point B. Mobility equity is freedom.



**Planning, Placemaking and Development:** It is impossible to enhance mobility-related services, infrastructure and policies without an understanding of the community's context. Far too often, strategic decisions and design approaches pertaining to mobility related development such as street infrastructure investments or establishing new transit routes are informed by traditional, often quantitative data such as traffic counts, mode of travel, revenue, carbon dioxide emissions, and trip origins and destinations. While this data is extremely important, it is also essential to gather additional and under-collected data such as the social identities of community stakeholders, unsafe public realm pockets, sacred sites, commute complexity and the uneven power dynamics that mediate all bodies in motion. Responding to a broader range of mobility related data requires an equitable and holistic placemaking approach, which considers social, spatial, cultural and policy factors that determine the mobility mode and quality of each individual's experience in the public realm. This approach will also reveal hidden routes and fraught histories that are

not represented on a map or visible from a design studio. Given the complexity of this approach and plethora of issues creating barriers to achieving mobility equity, cross-sector collaborations—within and beyond land-use professions—that optimize expertise and resources are required for positive change.

**Collective Wellness and Prosperity:** A body in motion enhances both health and mental wellness within a matter of moments. Numerous bodies in motion enhance a sense of community, improving our collective wellness and prosperity, while addressing growing issues such as loneliness, lack of civic participation and growing social divides. Equitable mobility contributes to this collective benefit in multiple ways such as ensuring that local businesses and residents benefit from infrastructure projects, reforming the procurement process to create greater pathways for vendors from historically oppressed groups, and ensuring that community stakeholders can access opportunities and social networks across suburban neighborhoods and not just downtown cores. Moreover, the quality of movement—in terms of feelings of joy, dignity and belonging—must be reframed from being a “soft” aspect of mobility to being central to realizing the audacious goal of freedom.

**Environmental Justice and Sustainability:** The vast majority of sustainability discourse, both policy and practice, is hyper-focused on mitigating the climate crisis. This is a time-sensitive issue and a collective concern. However, mainstream sustainability efforts must continue to centre this urgent collective concern while tethering it to an environmental justice lens, explicitly acknowledging a range of long-standing mobility-related environmental issues such as sacred Indigenous sites being paved over for roadways, numerous occurrences of racialized and poor people residing dangerously close to health-diminishing highways (particle and noise pollution), and the adverse impact of tourism travel on natural ecosystems in developing countries. Also, economically just and supportive solutions that protect the livelihoods of everyday people need to be concurrently considered alongside environmental imperatives. This integrated approach reduces occurrences of relatively privileged advocates speaking over, or down to, the community stakeholders facing the greatest harms, while strengthening movements to heal and honour the Earth by creating greater pathways for co-learning, leading to increased positive behavioural change, knowledge co-production and hyper-local stewardship models.

**Accessibility:** For centuries, abhorrent physical accessibility barriers have restricted the movement of individuals living with a range of disabilities, elders and in some cases families with young children. In addition to addressing these issues—considering visible and invisible disabilities—it is imperative to consider how other aspects of accessibility can create barriers to free and joyful movement. An economic issue such as not being able to afford both food and transit fare, a social issue such as being racially profiled on public transit and streets, and a service issue such as residing in a rural community without a diverse range of transportation options, all constitute accessibility barriers. It is important to remember that these barriers are not mutually exclusive nor are they in competition with one another. Mobility equity requires nuance and a commitment to removing all forms of accessibility barriers.

**Governance:** Historically, numerous state-sanctioned policies were instituted to restrict the mobility of Indigenous Peoples, enslaved Black people, disabled people, poor people, women and other historically marginalized groups. These structural mobility inequities continue to exist while being compounded by an intractable and lengthy list of additional governance issues such as state- and corporate-sanctioned strategies promoting car culture, lack of pathways for community stakeholders to contribute to decision-making processes, and the proliferation of partisan politics obstructing transportation planning and development—all of which have created considerable mobility equity barriers. Addressing these and other mobility-related governance issues requires new governance models including the reformation of laws policing particular bodies, participatory policy development processes, and the institution of clearer social justice and environmental metrics.

## Who is this document for?

- » Scholars engaged in mobility equity-related research, interested in grounding theory in community knowledge and action;
- » Placemaking and planning practitioners dedicated to taking action alongside mobility equity grassroots leaders;
- » Private and public sectors leaders and policy professionals striving to make more responsive decisions, investments and guidelines;
- » Grassroots leaders and advocates interested in gaining a better line of sight into initiatives outside their immediate communities.

Overall, this document is for any individual or institution that believes in building on existing good practice, honouring community knowledge and contributing to the audacious vision of leveraging equitable mobility to create freedom for all.

## Methodology

This investigation is informed by both participatory research and community-based participatory research approaches, which disrupt uneven power relations between researchers and research subjects by ensuring that the latter group has an opportunity to co-shape the research agenda and process. This work finds its origins in feminist research that “challenged biases inherent in traditional research practices and called for methodological approaches that were aligned with feminist theoretical perspectives”<sup>4</sup> and asks, “who defines research problems and who generates analyses, represents, owns and acts on the information which is sought.”<sup>5</sup> Similarly, community-based participatory research promotes a collaborative approach and is focused on actions that contribute to social justice. Among the core principles of both research approaches is an explicit recognition of power dynamics between researchers and oftentimes subordinated “research subjects,” a commitment to co-learning and the importance of action leading to mutual benefit for all parties. Observing these and other equitable research approaches, Jay Pitter Placemaking employed the following case study development methodology:

### 1. Research Questions and Instructions

The Graduate Research Assistant was provided with the following five questions tethered to instructions for ensuring that critical equitable placemaking approaches and analysis was captured during each 1.5-hour interview. As further orientation, he also shadowed Jay Pitter for the first interview.

#### QUESTION

Can you begin by describing the transportation/mobility inequity challenge you set out to address with your initiative in a few sentences?

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4. Darroch, F., Giles, A. (2014, February 23). The Canadian Journal of Action Research. Vol. 15 No. 3. p. 24.

<https://journals.nipissingu.ca/index.php/cjar/article/view/155> DOI: <https://doi.org/10.33524/cjar.v15i3.155>

5. Cornwall, A. and Jewkes, R. (1995) What Is Participatory Research? Social Science and Medicine, 41, 1667-1676.

[http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/0277-9536\(95\)00127-5](http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/0277-9536(95)00127-5)



#### INSTRUCTIONS

Be sure to capture the spatial and social aspects of the challenge along with the key equity- and sovereignty-deserving groups most impacted. Also, there will likely be policy implications. Many interviewees may not initially consider or include policy-related information; so, if necessary, follow up by asking, “Are/Were there any rules, restrictions or policies contributing to this challenge?”

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#### QUESTION

Can you please describe the three key steps you/your group took to address this challenge? In answering this question, please highlight things such as a barrier you overcame, a unique community engagement approach you implemented and/or an important partnership you established to successfully implement your initiative.

#### INSTRUCTIONS

There may be more than 3–5 steps but interviewees tend to be better able to better organize their thoughts when they hone in on a few key steps/ideas first. After you listen to their initial responses, you may ask a follow-up question that creates space for interviewees to unpack a significant step into sub-steps to enhance nuance and clarity. Be sure to inquire about the barriers they overcame, unique community engagement approaches and important partnerships they formed to address their challenge. Also, listen keenly but use active affirmative body language and explicitly commend interviewees on their important work as this is a supportive, affirmative approach that increases confidence and connectivity while making the interview more conversational. This is important because being interviewed can be daunting and many grassroots leaders are more focused on “doing the work” not “talking about or commending themselves for their work.”

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#### QUESTION

Can you please describe the impact of your project/initiative?

#### INSTRUCTIONS

Gently guide the interviewees by prompting them to consider things like the number of stakeholders engaged, something positive they helped to increase by xxxx % or something negative they helped to decrease by xxxx %. Also, impact can be focused on raising awareness about the challenge they’re addressing and/or shifting related public conversation. Great impact statements include both qualitative and quantitative content.

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#### QUESTION

Can you please share a brief story that really demonstrates the impact or spirit of your project/initiative?

#### INSTRUCTIONS

Stories may highlight the impetus for commencing their mobility equity initiative, challenges overcome along the way and supportive collaborators. In some cases, stories are focused on a single heartwarming, capacity-building or trust-building moment. The point of this question is to create more creative and flexible space for interviewees to authentically share.

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#### QUESTION

What is the most important lesson you’ve learned that will help researchers to build on the incredible work of transportation/mobility justice advocates like yourself?

#### INSTRUCTIONS

This is an opportunity for interviewees to directly advise the research team.

## 2. Aligning Lived Experiences and Research

Employing a phenomenological research approach—a qualitative research approach that examines everyday lived experiences—recurring words and broader concepts were translated to five key mobility equity themes. The insights of the grassroots mobility advocates and other leaders were then woven throughout each theme, knitted together with academic research and practice expertise, which is also informed by the former. This was done as a way of both validating and situating lived experiences within broader evidence-based discourse while concurrently validating and situating evidence-based discourse in communities where mobility inequities are rooted. In this way, the document models the value of integrating lived experiences into knowledge-production processes while highlighting the interdependency and value of diverse ways of knowing and acting.

## 3. Interviewee Review and Final Sign-Off

According to scholar Leoni Sandercock, “Stories are central to planning practice: to the knowledge it draws on from the social sciences and humanities; to the knowledge it produces about the city; and to ways of acting in the city. [...] We still need to question the truth of our own and others’ stories. We need to be attentive to how power shapes which stories get told, get heard, carry weight.”<sup>6</sup> As a practice that incorporates storytelling into all aspects of our work—client collaborations, academia and professional publishing—we have a special appreciation for both the weight and potential issues that can arise across all forms of narrative processes. These include perpetuating power imbalances between storyteller and researcher/story collector, emotional hangover (regret) after over-telling or sharing an unhealed aspect of a story and misinterpretation caused by bias and/or identity differences. To mitigate these issues, the practice refrained from over-editing each interview in the interest of maintaining the authentic voices of each interviewee. The first phase of edits removed excess raw text from the 1.5-hour interviews. This raw case study text was then lightly edited. Afterwards, all interviewees were given the opportunity to review their case study a couple of months after the interviews, which built in time for reflection and provided an opportunity for them to edit their respective case study.

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6. Sandercock, L. (2003, April, 4). Out of the Closet: The Importance of Stories and Storytelling in Planning Practice, *Planning Theory & Practice*, 4:1, 11-28, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1464935032000057209>



## CASE STUDIES

# ANTIGONISH COMMUNITY TRANSIT

Fueled by dedicated volunteers and strategic partners, Antigonish Community Transit keeps seniors and others living in rural communities on the move.

**Location:** Town and Country Areas of Antigonish County, Nova Scotia

**Interviewee:** Madonna van Vonderen, General Manager

**Online:** [antigonishcts.ruralrides.ca](http://antigonishcts.ruralrides.ca)

**Can you begin by describing the transportation/mobility inequity challenge you set out to address with your initiative?**

**W**hen the organization was established, it was to address the significant challenges that poverty poses for local community members in accessing the basic services that they require and that ensure a good quality of life. We have a regional hospital and a university, which are two large employment centres that attract very well-educated professionals, like doctors and professors. Real estate is incredibly expensive here because it is expected that such professionals can afford to pay more. Also, many property owners prefer to rent to students because they can charge more to have multiple students paying per room in the same house. So, the person who's working in the service sector in the local area often cannot afford to live in the town. Many live in rural areas and they may not have access to a vehicle or be able to drive to get where they need to go—to access food, medical appointments, the library, and to occasionally participate in recreational activities. These are services that contribute to a good quality of life, that everybody should have access to.

We really focus on seniors, who are disproportionately affected by poverty. There are a lot of seniors in our community, many of whom (especially in more rural areas) are affected by limited access to the services they require. There is a huge benefit for seniors in our community to be able to age in place and to stay in their own homes as long as possible. Before Antigonish Community Transit, there were a lot of people who didn't have that choice. They had to leave their homes and find a place in town because they could not access the services they needed. We allow people to age in place, which is wonderful for them and adds to the strength of our communities. We also provide service to Paqtnkek, the local Indigenous community, and provide free bus passes for refugees who have recently moved to the area.

**Can you please describe the three key steps you/your group took to address this challenge? In answering this question, please highlight things like a barrier you overcame, a unique community engagement approach you implemented and an important partnership you established to successfully implement your initiative.**

We encouraged the use of transit in the community by seeking partnerships. For example, we established a partnership with the local Victorian Order of Nurses to deliver a project called Lessons on the Bus, where a local person who was working within the seniors' community took residents from different seniors' complexes to local attractions. The next step was to encourage the seniors to take part in the program. It engaged people, got them out of their homes, and had the local guide acting as an instructor to engage them in conversation, etc. It also encouraged the use of transit by allowing seniors to actually experience the bus. They became very comfortable with going to a bus stop and getting on the bus. It has had an incredible impact on the seniors in our community, and they still talk about it.

Similarly, we established a partnership with the two local supermarkets to do a weekly shopping run for university students. The supermarkets sponsored a bus service from the campus to both grocery stores. This allowed students without cars to access food. A significant number of international students took advantage of this service. The three key steps were securing the partnership and funding, encouraging the use of the program, and promoting transit in the community.

### Can you please describe the impact of your project/initiative?

It has provided many opportunities for our community members, especially our most vulnerable members, to enjoy a quality of life that everyone should have, including access to medical care, food and recreational opportunities, and has

allowed people to socialize by getting out of their homes, seeing other people, and enjoying the freedom to do so at their convenience.

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### Can you please share a brief story that really demonstrates the impact or spirit of your project/initiative?

Here is a testimonial from one of our long-time clients living in her own home on a fixed income with no other means of transportation.

“This transit service has been a very significant factor in my life since I moved to Antigonish County in 2016. I am slightly disabled, visually and in mobility. I am a senior living alone on a fixed income in a rural area. I do not own a car. I depend on Antigonish Community Transit for transportation to and from town and other rural areas.

Through the service, I have access to grocery and other

shopping, health care and recreation. The costs are reasonable and the drivers make every effort to make the service convenient. The dispatcher and other staff have done their best to facilitate my transportation needs. It is due to this that I'm able to age in place and enjoy the benefits of living in a rural area. I believe that the service offered by Antigonish and other community transit organizations has made a difference.”

### What is the most important lesson you've learned that will help researchers to build on the incredible work of transportation/mobility justice advocates like yourself?

One of the most important outcomes is ensuring that people have access to the services they need in a respectful, dignified manner that allows them a quality of life that most people take for granted.

# LEGALSWIPE

Legalswipe places critical rights-based information at the fingertips of racialized people targeted by discriminatory profiling & harassment while travelling through their communities.

**Location:** Toronto, Ontario

**Interviewee:** Christien Levien, Founder & Criminal Defence Lawyer

**Online:** [twitter.com/legalswipe](https://twitter.com/legalswipe)

**Can you begin by describing the transportation/mobility inequity challenge you set out to address with your initiative?**

I recognized that there was a lack of publicly and quickly accessible information surrounding legal rights as they pertain to conversations between the public and the police. So, I wanted to develop an application that would assist people in being able to reference their legal rights from their phone.

There were several challenges that we encountered. We realized that legal rights, including interaction with the police, are always changing. At the same time, these rights are highly contingent on the space in which they are invoked. The situation or environment where the interaction is occurring adds a layer of complexity. Things can get complicated, for example, in situations like community housing, where the land is owned by Toronto Community Housing (TCHC). The police can easily interrogate the residents and visitors there. So, the law doesn't necessarily apply the same way as to somebody who was simply standing on the sidewalk.

Another huge challenge is that the law doesn't apply to everyone equally. If any police officer randomly stopped and searched Toronto Mayor John Tory in his driveway, there would be serious repercussions for the officer who did that. However, there are youths who are searched routinely by the police—whether or not they are living in the public housing. The Charter-protected rights of racialized people, youth and the impoverished are functionally not recognized to the same degree as other members of the public. There is a general sort of apathy or indifference. So, even for them to be educated on their rights was not sufficient to ensure that they could walk freely unless there are appropriate mechanisms in place.

**Can you please describe the three key steps you/your group took to address this challenge? In answering this question, please highlight things like a barrier you overcame, a unique community engagement approach you implemented and an important partnership you established to successfully implement your initiative.**

I think one of our most important partnerships was working alongside the Ontario Justice Education Network, an organization that exists to educate youth. We also worked with Community Legal Education Ontario, which serves the public more broadly. Another major partnership was with St. Stephen's Community House. Our partnership with St. Stephen's allowed us to provide legal rights workshops where we show participants how precisely they can exercise their rights. It wasn't sufficient to simply educate people by having the information easily readable. Rather, they needed to see how precisely utilizing their rights worked in practice.

Another thing that was key for me was having the personal lived experience of being a victim of police brutality. I was able to, I think, develop something which resonated with a lot of community members. That's what went into ensuring that it works in such a way that it was easy to understand. When it comes to legal rights, the people who require the information the most are the least likely to access it because many of them have a distrust of the legal system. For some of them, they might simply be too busy. But I think for the most part, it is their negative historical experiences with the legal system.

### Can you please describe the impact of your project/initiative?

I think there were two main impacts. First, awareness. I think it brought the legal rights conversation to the fore. Second, and more importantly, it shone a light on the ability to develop community-based solutions. Often, external agencies or external bodies just pour on resources to try and create solutions, but those solutions aren't necessarily going to work long term, given the cyclical nature of the problems we face. So, we end up in a position where we're continuously relying on these organizations.

With Legalswipe, at one point in time, I thought that simply being educated on our legal rights was crucial. In retrospect, after having the opportunity to develop the application, I came to realize that we were going to continue to be stopped and questioned by police at will, and not because of a lack of education, but because again there aren't appropriate accountability mechanisms to hold the police responsible when they engage in this type of activity. So that's another reason why it didn't make sense to me to continue the development. So, I think it allowed for continued conversation about this matter.

### Can you please share a brief story that really demonstrates the impact or spirit of your project/initiative?

I've had several community members, mothers in particular, tell me that they encourage their children, especially their young sons, to download the Legalswipe app because they understand the importance of being educated on their legal rights and policing practices. If police continuously stop people, they're going to be able to charge people to meet their quotas. That's part of why they engage in this behaviour. However, they do this only in specific communities where they know they will not be held to account because the community either doesn't have access to resources, or it lacks the knowledge about rights, or it's disenfranchised.

Community members are disillusioned with the legal system altogether, which is a systemic problem. The only way you're going to solve a systemic problem is with a systemic solution. In my opinion, we can't expect that—by simply giving one-off lessons to people or in small groups—they're necessarily going to be able to utilize or understand their legal rights. Rather, we need the ability to access and capture the attention of a lot of people at once.

### What is the most important lesson you've learned that will help researchers to build on the incredible work of transportation/mobility justice advocates like yourself?

You are going to find many obstacles in mobility justice. Fundamentally, I believe many of these problems are entrenched in financial and capitalistic motives. If we are going to truly address these issues at the root, we need to ensure that for those who don't recognize mobility rights, for those who do not recognize the right for certain groups, or entities to exist in spaces, it's important that they can be held to direct account and that they're held accountable in some meaningful way.

Second, it shouldn't be solely the responsibility of those who are negatively impacted by a lack of mobility to necessarily advocate for themselves. Rather, these are problems that need public recognition, so that we can establish some kind of global community.

More broadly, I'd say to those in the space and community of advocacy, we need to ask ourselves, "Is it just about a lack of accessible space or is it also about intentionally inaccessible spaces. Who are the groups that benefit from inaccessibility? How can we ensure that when they are purposefully, or incidentally, creating inaccessible spaces, they will be held to account?"



Source: Start Up Toronto<sup>7</sup>



Source: The Toronto Star<sup>8</sup>

7. Gairola, V. (2017, September 14). [In article photo of Christien Levien and fellow co-founder of Legalswipe]. Rights Education. Start Up Toronto. <https://startupperetoronto.com/type/profiles/swipe-rights-legalswipe-wants-fix-knowledge-gaps-legal-rights-education/>
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# COMMUNITY REACH

As a bridge between urban and rural areas, Community Reach works with paid drivers & volunteers (mostly retired first responders) to mitigate numerous local mobility barriers.

**Location:** North Simcoe, Ontario

**Interviewee:** Cathy Greer, Executive Director

**Online:** [communityreach.ca](http://communityreach.ca)

Can you begin by describing the transportation/mobility inequity challenge you set out to address with your initiative in a few sentences?

We serve seniors, people with disabilities and people who do not have access to transportation, either physically or financially, in North Simcoe. North Simcoe is made up of two very small urban areas and two larger rural areas. Our areas have two towns and two townships. We have only two urban shopping centres and the rest of it is rural. There is accessible transportation in the two towns (Midland and Penetanguishene) but they don't serve the rural areas. The Red Cross does serve the rural areas, but they provide service for only medical reasons.

We have a door-to-door service using volunteers and paid drivers. Most of the drivers are retired first responders, so they have expertise in working with people and they understand how to transport people with different needs and abilities. One of the main issues we're responding to is the financial aspect of developing a transit system in a rural area. Because our region is so large and so spaced out, there's not enough density for the government to run public transit. There is a small population in a large area, with little funds. So, this combination—the geographic size of the area, the low population density, not much financial

“People in the rural areas have no transportation alternatives—not even taxis or Uber.”

support coming from the provincial and federal governments—contributes to the lack of transportation for our communities. People in the rural areas have no transportation alternatives—not even taxis or Uber.

Can you please describe the three key steps you/your group took to address this challenge? In answering this question, please highlight things like a barrier you overcame, a unique community engagement approach you implemented and an important partnership you established to successfully implement your initiative.

Our biggest challenge is financial. Being a charitable organization means that we rely primarily on donations, and we're working right to the line of our budget. We have grown to having three accessible vans and many volunteers using their private vehicles, and we get almost no base funding to operate. At first we were very volunteer-driven, but with the accessible vans, we need to pay hourly wages to our drivers, we need to pay for insurance costs, and we pay our volunteers for their mileage. As we've grown in popularity, our financial needs have grown as well. We are now providing 350–400 rides per month.

We receive some funding from the county and townships for purchasing vehicles, but it is hard to get consistent operational funding from the different townships because we operate across boundaries. Mostly, we rely on private

donations and some organizations like the Lions Club. This has become more and more challenging as we've grown in size, and especially during COVID because charitable donations have shrunk. We are trying to make the case to our Local Health Integration Network (LHIN) for funding and we are trying to make relationships with local organizations like the Lions Club, the Legions and the various organizations that help to support the community, so they see the importance of our work. But it's very difficult in these times.

**Can you please describe the impact of your project/initiative?**

Our impact is on community health. We are providing a service to improve the health of our community, not only physically, but emotionally by providing these rides to people who normally wouldn't be able to get to their medical appointments or social events or to go shopping. It's very important for the people in the rural areas to not feel isolated.

**Can you please share a brief story that really demonstrates the impact or spirit of your project/initiative?**

Yesterday, we had a lady come into the office whose mother-in-law lives out in one of the townships. None of her family lives close by. All her mother-in-law needs is to come in once a week to get her groceries. When she came in, and we walked her through the process, I mean, she was teary-eyed and now they know that mom can get into town, or someone's going to be there, pick her up, make sure she gets in with her bags. So, the pressure on her and on the family is lessened. Because they know that's something that mom can look forward to. So, our impact goes further than the individual rider. The impact is also on the family members. They don't have to take time off work. They don't have to drive in bad weather.

**What is the most important lesson you've learned that will help researchers to build on the incredible work of transportation/mobility justice advocates like yourself?**

I think the awareness of how individual we are. Each individual in each area has their own idiosyncrasies and transportation needs.

I feel we've learned as well. We're realizing, especially for seniors, that if we can keep them in their home, provide them with the transportation they need to stay physically and mentally healthy, then we're saving the government health dollars that can be used in other ways. A healthy, safe community keeps people out of the hospital, keeps people out of doctors' offices. Sometimes people just need a chat in the car or to get to Walmart. That is enough to sustain them for a week.

We've heard about the crisis, especially during COVID, of residents in long-term care facilities. If we could have kept some of those residents at home and provided them with the transportation they needed to keep them linked to their community, to their family, to their doctor's appointments, etc., then those outbreaks would have been lessened.

# COALITION MOBILITÉ ACTIVE MONTRÉAL

With a focus on cyclists' safety, Coalition mobilité active Montréal collaborates with volunteers and government agencies to advance joyful, year-round riding.

**Location:** Montréal, Québec

**Interviewee:** Geoffrey Bush, Spokesperson

**Online:** [coalitionmam.org](http://coalitionmam.org)

**Can you begin by describing the transportation/mobility inequity challenge you set out to address with your initiative in a few sentences?**

**M**ontréal is governed by borough councils and a central city council. Coalition mobilité active Montréal was founded to foster local borough-based cycling associations and create a locus for exchange among these groups to share best practices. In the process, we also identify and represent issues that individual boroughs are facing that fall under city-wide government jurisdiction.

One of our main goals is to make cycling universally accessible. The number one reason people don't use their bike as a mode of transportation is they don't feel safe. How do you make people feel safe? You separate them from car traffic if you can. You set up protected bike paths along arteries, with physical barriers between cyclists and cars, trucks and buses. We figure the only way we're going to get to a respectful cycling modal share is to get people out of their "auto solos," or single-occupancy vehicles.

Many people ride their bikes everywhere all the time and never really feel threatened. However, one has to ask: If we want more people to cycle, what needs to happen? If cycling is to be a year-round transportation alternative, we need to make sure that the bike paths are rideable in winter. One of the very first protected bike paths in the city runs along Rue de Maisonneuve, which is an artery that goes through three different boroughs. We said, okay, we want to have snow clearing on this particular bike path, so that people can use it as a reliable means of transportation year-round. It took about 10 years of lobbying but this is now happening and has dominoed to a number of other paths as well.

**“**We said, okay, we want to have snow clearing on this particular bike path, so that people can use it as a reliable means of transportation year-round. It took about 10 years of lobbying but this is now happening and has dominoed to a number of other paths as well.  
**”**

**Can you please describe the three key steps you/ your group took to address this challenge? In answering this question, please highlight things like a barrier you overcame, a unique community engagement approach you implemented and an important partnership you established to successfully implement your initiative.**

At the end of the day, it was about identifying the right people at the Department of Public Works and developing a collaborative relationship with them. It's about going to council meetings and holding councillors to task on what was supposed to be done. First of all, engaging with the idea that we can clear these bicycle paths during the winter.

Thankfully, this is not fresh territory. Globally, there are a number of places that clear their bike paths year-round. The first response you get is, “It can’t be done.” Well, it can be done. It’s done elsewhere; this is how they’re doing it and we think it should be done here.

The particular challenge was trying to get this path cleared. We worked in a collaborative fashion with both the public works departments and the councils in three different boroughs. We set up very simple guidelines about what we expected. If you’ve cleared the street for cars, why not for bikes, right? Then, we just held them to task.

It takes very dedicated volunteers. We were very fortunate to have an incredible individual who is retired and has a lot of time and energy, and he took it upon himself to document every snowfall. He’d be out there, taking pictures, riding the full length of the 10-km path, recording it and reporting back to Public Works. He’d do it very wisely. He’d make sure that in the photo you’ve got someone on their bike, hopefully with a child.

Then we developed a contest. We started comparing one section of the path against another and developed a little bit of competition amongst boroughs. At the end of the season, you’d go into the council meeting and say, “Look, you know, we had these many days where the snow clearing was inadequate.” We had a standard where the snow clearing had to be down to asphalt, predictable (timely, to allow for commuting) and dependable.

Close to 750,000 people use the Rue de Maisonneuve bike path on an annual basis, making it an important part of Montréal’s active transportation network. We’re fortunate in Montréal because we do generate a fair number of statistics, with 53 bike counters throughout the city. So, the data is there to interpret and use. But going beyond the data by taking pictures is also powerful in terms of getting engagement from the elected officials and public works staff in the three boroughs. You send them an email after a snowfall with a couple of pictures and say, “Hey, great job,” or “Oops, you missed this space, maybe you should look at how to drain water because ice is accumulating here all the time.” Again, it’s trying to develop a collaborative partnership as opposed to just saying everything sucks. It’s easy to rag on stuff, as opposed to being constructive and positive.

But it’s a long-term game. A lot of people like to think something can be done immediately. Again, the snow clearing on this particular bike path was several years in the making, as many as 10 years to get it up to speed. So you have to be very dedicated and you must recognize how slowly the wheels of change move.

### **Can you please describe the impact of your project/initiative?**

It’s consistent messaging politicians, taking them to task on their promise to increase modal share. We don’t want to look back at the end of a mandate, four years after having been told of a modal share target of X per cent and find out we have come nowhere near meeting that target.

One contribution is to pour through the commitments made during election campaigns and then make sure they’re realized. Try to rope in the larger community of cycling advocates throughout the different boroughs and bring their voices to the table. Again, there are different jurisdictions. So some things play out on a borough level while others do so on the city level. Through a collaborative effort, maybe we can encourage the boroughs to learn from each other and we can bring their issues to the city level. It’s about trying to harness the energy that’s out there, to focus it and hold elected officials to task.

**Can you please share a brief story that really demonstrates the impact or spirit of your project/initiative?**

I would go back to the winter bike-path clearing. It was a long-term project, but it was successful. It actually forced other boroughs and parts of the bike network to be held to the same standard. It's sort of trickled down. I don't want to overstate our influence, but I think we did push to have this one bike path cleared to a decent standard. Symbolically, it was interesting because it was one of the first protected bike paths in the city.

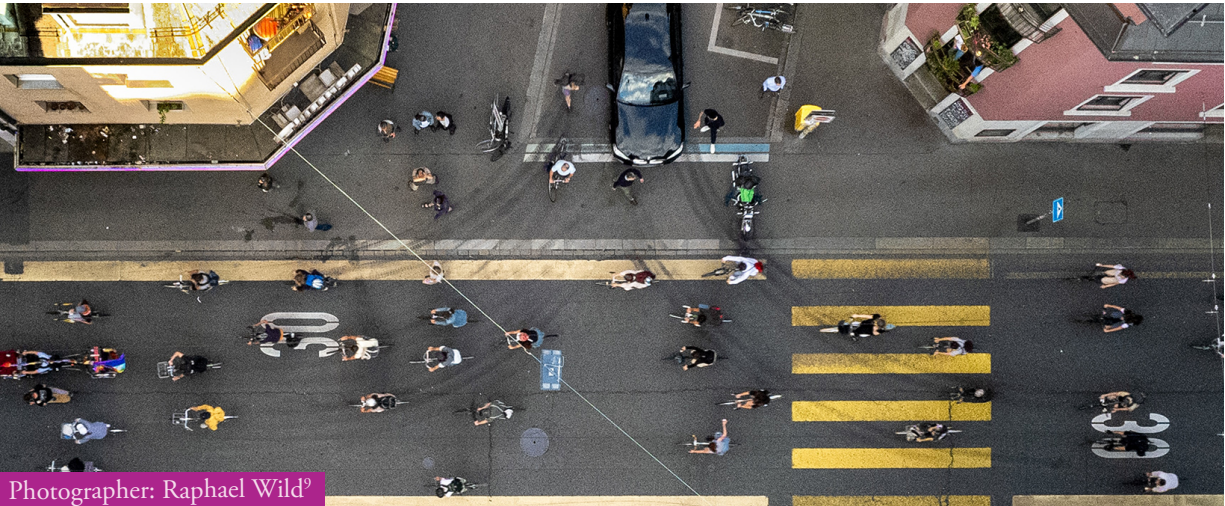
**What is the most important lesson you've learned that will help researchers to build on the incredible work of transportation/mobility justice advocates like yourself?**

Patience and persistence. It's a long haul; it's not instant. A lot of people come in with ideas, but they'll be gone very quickly because they don't have the patience. A lot of people think nothing's happening, but it's not the case. A city is a very complicated, multi-pronged thing. There's a myriad of priorities. It really comes down to trying to just make sure that your priority is not overlooked.

I think that's the most important message for anyone who wants to get involved with advocacy. It is the squeaky wheel that gets the grease, so to speak.

Do it respectfully, constructively and from a partnership approach. Recognize what value your input can have in the overall game. It's a game that plays out on several levels. You've got elected officials, you've got all your bureaucrats, your public works people, and then the citizens.

We hopefully contribute citizen feedback in a very structured and respectful way, while others may hold a demonstration one or two times a year. Really, we are at them all the time. We pour through their political platforms. They've made these commitments. So great, wonderful, well, what's the next step? What's the timeline on those? Hold them to task.



Photographer: Raphael Wild<sup>9</sup>



Credit: Audrey McMahon<sup>10</sup>



Source: Coalition Mobilité Active Montréal<sup>11</sup>

9. Wild, R. (n.d.). [Photograph arial street]. Coalition Mobilité Active Montréal. <https://coalitionmam.org/>

10. McMahon, A. (n.d.). [Photograph cyclists with bike trailers]. Coalition Mobilité Active Montréal. <https://coalitionmam.org/>

11. Coalition Mobilité Active Montréal (n.d.). [Photograph of a bike infrastructure]. <https://coalitionmam.org/>

# WHITEHORSE WALKS

Embracing the alchemy and curiosity of walking, Whitehorse Walks engages community members in this activity to advance civic participation, health and safety.

**Location:** Whitehorse, Yukon Territory

**Interviewee:** Peter Long, President

**Online:** [whitehorsetwalks.com](http://whitehorsetwalks.com)

**Can you begin by describing the transportation/mobility inequity challenge you set out to address with your initiative?**

Walking is the most fundamental thing you can do. With the exception of those who can't because of age, ability or physical barriers, everybody walks. You walk almost from birth and you walk almost to death. If you have greater walkability, you have safer spaces, you have health, you have recreation, you have social interaction. They are all part of the same thing. I worked on this concept of how to make walking more of a fun activity. This initiative has Jane Jacobs as a great inspiration. Having more eyes on a street allows you to have more protection and safety. I realized that by having more people using trails, I was going to get protection. The only way of having more people using trails is to get walking more popular. So the idea is, how do you get more people feeling comfortable being out there?

**Can you please describe the three key steps you/your group took to address this challenge? In answering this question, please highlight things like a barrier you overcame, a unique community engagement approach you implemented and an important partnership you established to successfully implement your initiative.**

What you are asking for, the three steps, is a bit tricky because it's an ongoing process, right? It's not completed. I lived in an area in the midst of a great big semi-wilderness, and an official community plan was being developed. I got involved in that to see how to protect that area. I started responding to city plans, area plans, transportation plans. The authority wanted a four-lane highway from one end of the city to the other. To me, that's a huge barrier. How can we make active transportation good by going alongside the highway? I said, "Well, let's try to connect trails and create a network. If you put connections or go through an underpass, you are going to get more people using it."

So I'm now involved in planning. The process often goes through these phases: consultation first, asking what people think. Then you have a base document explaining project components and then you have stakeholders. Everybody, including the city, gets to touch base. Some people make comments on the document, suggesting some ideas. But when I've made comments, I had no effect because the people who actually make the decisions—the politicians and the municipal council and the mayor—don't go back and consider changes in the project. I might spend two months putting together a 20-page document that you might charge \$15,000 to produce. I proofread it, spend a lot of time and send it in, and I don't even get a "thanks" or anything. Just once, one of the city planners said, "You know, that document that you sent me a couple of years ago, I still use that all the time." But that was the first time I ever got in.

I always push to see if I can get to be a stakeholder. Sometimes they let me and sometimes they don't. I say that there's got to be somebody in the city whose job it is to say, "Okay, what's in it for walking? Will it affect walking? Will it make it better? Or will it impede walking?"

When I've made comments, I had no effect because the people who actually make the decisions—the politicians and the municipal council and the mayor—don't go back and consider changes in the project. I might spend two months putting together a 20-page document that you might charge \$15,000 to produce. I proofread it, spend a lot of time and send it in, and I don't even get a "thanks" or anything.

I don't have a formal rule because I'm only one person, but I'm always networking. Some people have said to me, "Why don't you formalize? Why don't you become a non-profit?" And I think, "Okay, but then I wouldn't be able to just go walking." For example, I live close to an underpass, and I can see the advantages of having it whenever I go for a walk. I was able to get other people to see the advantages. But I try not to be confrontational. I'm a behind-the-scenes activist. I like to convince you logically.

### **Can you please describe the impact of your project/initiative?**

Whitehorse Walks works to make walking more attractive, more intriguing and gets more people out on

the trails. There is much more awareness of walking when people walk in different areas. We try to do this not just for trails but for the city as a whole, challenging whether the infrastructure we have is appropriate for walking.

### **Can you please share a brief story that really demonstrates the impact or spirit of your project/initiative?**

For years, we have had a group of friends that walked every Sunday. We never organized formally, because then you have to get official permission and you become legally responsible. A few years later, I talked to the local elder active group, and I said, "Well, you know, what would really be nice is doing this as a group of elders." One person says, "Okay, let's do that! But how we do it?" I said "Well, what you really need to do is to pick a walk. I'll give you a list of walks, you pick the walk every week, and say, meet here."

We are a bunch of seniors. I'm 73 and I could die tomorrow. So you don't want to rely on me, but rather to rely on the group. I'm going to make a bunch of loop trails where people can walk. They'll get to know that trail. There's enough variety in there to start the project. So, we did it.

For the first walk, some people actually took the map and did the walk the day before so they could know how they did it and say, "Oh, I can't go any further in that." There were stories where people said, "I lived here all these years, I brought up kids, I lived in this subdivision, and I never walked in the hills before." Now, we are planning to come back after COVID with shorter hikes, this time with group leaders and signed waivers. There are people with all sorts of abilities and desires.

### **What is the most important lesson you've learned that will help researchers to build on the incredible work of transportation/mobility justice advocates like yourself?**

They are always talking about active transportation. It's a catchphrase. But what does it mean? Active transportation can be going to the store, as long as it's a purposeful walk. That's active transportation, in a sense. But sometimes the purpose of walk is to go for a walk. It's to walk over to the park and go for a walk. Why don't we have a walking meeting somewhere, or go for a walk and chat and all that kind of stuff? You are much better off walking for enjoyment and fun than if you are forced to, or need to do something. Many people fail because they don't want to do it. So you have to work even further back in the process. The fundamental behaviour you have to inspire is the enjoyment of being outdoors, of walking in nature.



# IKWE SAFE RIDES

Serving Indigenous and non-Indigenous women, IKWE Safe Rides not only mitigates gender-specific transportation gaps; it provides culturally competent training, transforming the sector.

**Location:** Winnipeg, Manitoba

**Interviewee:** Christine Brouzes, Co-Director

**Online:** [ikwesaferrides.wordpress.com](http://ikwesaferrides.wordpress.com)

**Can you begin by describing the transportation/mobility inequity challenge you set out to address with your initiative?**

A lot of women who choose not to own a car often need to take a taxi home from work or shopping if they feel unwell, or if they have a lot of groceries they can't carry on the bus. But women using taxis in Winnipeg were reporting—and continue to report—being asked and told things that made them uncomfortable. They hear phrases like, “Do you want to pay another way?” or “Now, where's your husband?” Or they receive uncomfortable compliments about their physical appearance or the clothing that they wear. It's so common that it's not just occasional—it's repetitive. Women were experiencing trauma having to expose themselves to this kind of behaviour if they were planning to get transportation.

**Can you please describe the three key steps you/your group took to address this challenge? In answering this question, please highlight things like a barrier you overcame, a unique community engagement approach you implemented and an important partnership you established to successfully implement your initiative.**

First, we had to organize the group. I reached out to, and built a good relationship with, the lead for transportation and taxi services at the City of Winnipeg to understand the laws. Although a friend could legally give a friend a ride for free in the city, exchanging money with a friend, etc. for transportation—even as a donation—was illegal. We convinced the City to make a couple of small changes to the bylaws to allow our group to exist, and making that change was very rewarding. They made two changes. First, donations were allowed if there was no set amount or fee structure, and they allowed non-profits accepting donations to operate legally as rideshare groups.

Second, we had to legitimize what we were doing. We had to show the City that we weren't there to just collect money, but that we were trying to make change through social justice advocacy. We started to gather data about our rides. Every day, our drivers had to report some statistics, but we also gathered stories. Gathering stories helped us have a regular connection with the drivers and helped us to understand whether they were hearing things change or stay the same. A lot of people also reached out to us from across North America, saying, “I've seen an article about you on vice.com. I want to do that. How can I do that?” So, I replied, “Hi, we'll give you all of our information. I've written a little policy and procedure manual, and a driver-training book. I'll explain the process we went through and you can take all that and make it your own.”

Third, we changed the taxi industry. I decided to be brave and reach out to the owners of the two largest taxi companies in the city. I said I would love to do a presentation or some sort of training on cultural sensitivity, or even just offer a brochure or list of simple reminders—like do not ask about body parts, do not say the word “breasts.” But they wouldn't let me provide that sort of information. So I thought, “How do I get this implemented? I'll go to the City.” The City of Winnipeg was developing a transportation advisory council. I applied to join and was successful. It was fabulous. I went in saying that I had three goals being on that committee: I wanted to see it become legally required that all taxis are

equipped with audio recording, that taxi drivers take sensitivity training on a regular basis, and I also wanted to diversify the taxi industry itself to reflect the population it serves. So far, I've achieved the first two, but the third is yet to come.

### **Can you please describe the impact of your project/initiative?**

We have given over 100,000 rides. We achieved the goals of Winnipeg requiring audio recorders in taxis and more frequent training for taxi drivers that includes appropriate use of language.

### **Can you share a brief story that really demonstrates the impact—or spirit—of your initiative?**

I once picked up a young Indigenous mom in the centre of the city, and it was a longer ride, probably 25 minutes. I said, "Oh, you're going to the Westwood area?" She replied, "Yeah, I've never been there."

As we passed the shopping mall in the area she said, "I've never been this far." When we got close, she asked, "Can you watch me when I go in the house? I'll just be a minute." I said sure. She told me "I'm going here because I'm buying a TV for my son. He's two years old. When I was a kid, I always dreamed of having a TV in my bedroom. Someone was selling one on a social media, second-hand site, and I'm feeling a little worried that I'm going into a stranger's house in an area I've never been to."

She went inside and then she came out. I tell you she was beaming and smiling like a proud mom, giving her child the dream that she always had. We put the TV in the car, drove her home, and she thanked me because she finally felt like she had safe transportation. She wouldn't have felt safe taking a bus, scared that someone would steal a TV from her on a bus to an area of the city she didn't know and she wouldn't have felt safe taking a taxi to pay for it.

For a lot of low-income folks who don't have transportation, it's not an individual issue that they don't have transportation. Their family and their support network often have lower incomes as well and may not own a vehicle. Many times, we've heard of moms or parents saving up to be able to pay for a donation for us to drive them to the beach, because they haven't left the city boundary in years.

We often hear people say, "I've never been this far." For a lot of low-income folks who don't have transportation, it's not just an individual issue. Their family and their support network often have lower incomes as well, and they may not own a vehicle either. Many times, we've heard from parents saving up to be able to pay for us to drive them to the beach, because they haven't left the city boundary in years. We have a beautiful beach 20 minutes outside the city and they look forward to going, so they're saving and planning for that.

One summer, we arranged a bus and got a female bus driver. We requested \$5 per person. We took a load of people to the beach and brought them home. We brought sunscreen and noodle toys, as well as water bottles and granola bars, because we knew some would have no food. It was wonderful.

### **What is the most important lesson you've learned that will help researchers to build on the incredible work of transportation/mobility justice advocates like yourself?**

The Transportation Advisory Council that the City has built is a beautiful thing. Change takes time, especially when it involves politics and laws. I always think about this when I think of reconciliation and such—that it comes down to individuals having the bravery to reach out, but also for the systems to offer a platform for those voices. For departments to offer advisory councils, it costs nothing for them to put out an open invitation, to hear the voices, and to specifically include different groups that they may hear about in media.



Source: The Canadian Press<sup>12</sup>



Source: Ikwe Safe Rides<sup>13</sup>

12. Malone, K. G. (2018, April 16 ). [In article photo of Christine Brouzes, co-director of Ikwe Safe Rides, in a car]. 'I felt unsafe': Indigenous safe-ride service for women can't keep up with need. The Canadian Press. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/manitoba/winnipeg-safe-ride-service-ikwe-1.4621212>

13. Ikwe Safe Rides(n.d.). [Photograph of Car with IKWE logo on door and Indigenous Art wall mural in the background]. <https://ikwesaferrides.wordpress.com/>

# SCARBOROUGH CYCLES

Using an intersectionality lens, Scarborough Cycles addresses numerous mobility barriers encountered by local cyclists across racialized groups.

**Location:** Scarborough, Ontario

**Interviewee:** Marvin Macaraig, Health Promoter and Co-ordinator

**Online:** [scarboroughcycles.ca](http://scarboroughcycles.ca)

**Can you begin by describing the transportation/mobility inequity challenge you set out to address with your initiative?**

**W**e are trying to address the barriers experienced by racialized communities in Scarborough. BIPOC folks, particularly senior citizens, are barely counted in the public consultation process. But they are the people biking every day to the grocery store, library or the community centre, and they have to bike on the sidewalks because of a lack of cycling infrastructure. There is a huge language barrier as well because a large number of these people are not native English speakers.

Another challenge is the lack of understanding among the planners and policymakers about the local context of Scarborough. It's a suburban space with curves and bends, not a grid pattern. A two-minute drive can become a 20-minute walk. Your bus stop or school could just literally be 300 metres away, but when you actually get there, it is effectively double the distance because of the crescents and turns, and there are no cut-throughs in many of these environments. People who haven't lived in this city would barely understand this huge gap by just looking at the map. So, there is the question of representation in the planning boards, not just in terms of race and gender but also geographic representation.

**Can you please describe the three key steps you/your group took to address this challenge? In answering this question, please highlight things like a barrier you overcame, a unique community engagement approach you implemented and an important partnership you established to successfully implement your initiative.**

First, we tried to remove the barriers by understanding the environmental psychology. It is not helpful to just prescribe people to bike. You need to make it easier for them, and you need to address the issues that are preventing them from biking. We consider the bicycle a community development tool. For example, if someone doesn't know how to bike, we can get them connected to a mentorship program so that they can learn that skill. Newcomers and refugees are often more willing to ride, but they have economic challenges that prevent them from buying a bike. In addition to mentorship for cycling, we also offer training to acquire soft and hard skills to get jobs.

Second, we sought to get as many people as possible on board, from grassroots organizations and neighbourhood groups to major institutions like the University of Toronto, Centennial College and the municipality.

Third, it's about placemaking. When we started our project, there was only one bike shop in Scarborough and no bike hubs. Now, there are three bike hubs. These are physical places for folks to rally around, connect and meet other people. We have the graffiti on the walls, it's meaningful public art and it looks great. In the beginning of the pandemic, we were the only community bike hub that remained open. Nobody was on transit; all the bike community hubs downtown were closed. But people knew that our door was still open and they could get their bikes fixed for free, and if they needed any help with cycling, we were still there.

### Can you please describe the impact of your project/initiative?

I think the biggest impact is that we could demonstrate there is an appetite for active transportation, for walking and cycling in Scarborough. It is not a fringe activity of white, cisgender men; it is much more inclusive than that. We have been able to give the community voice and agency where members can connect with elected officials at all three levels of government and point to why active transportation matters to their community.

### Can you please share a brief story that really demonstrates the impact or spirit of your initiative?

There are many, but one that stands out is the Jobs and Helmets Program that started in 2019. We got some good funding from the MLSE Foundation, just a couple of days before the Islamophobic attack in London, Ontario. When that happened, we knew that we needed to fight Islamophobia with our initiative.

We hired a hijab-wearing woman to facilitate the group. Women volunteers have always been our strength—doing it for women, by women, just made sense. When we talked to the women who joined our program, they said they felt an immense sense of freedom and empowerment—something many of them never experienced in their former countries. At the same time, there was a feeling of being very exposed in this climate, of wearing a hijab while biking. But we have always been very fortunate because we did it together as a group, and we could convey the message that women wearing hijabs belong in this society.

### What is the most important lesson you've learned that will help researchers to build on the incredible work of transportation/mobility justice advocates like yourself?

I would say it is the understanding that infrastructure alone is not enough. Bike share programs and painting the street are all good, but you need to build a social network too, and foster the feeling of safety. You need to remove the barriers

“Infrastructure alone is not enough. Bike share programs and painting the street are all good, but you need to build a social network too and foster the feeling of safety. You need to remove the barriers and give people the agency and voice. Where will people park their bikes safely? How will they get bikes into the high-rise condos and apartment complexes? These are some crucial questions that needed to be addressed.

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People need to feel safe while biking. Different treatment by police based on race is very common. One of my volunteers experienced a police officer yelling at him, “Where’s your helmet? Where’s your helmet? You can’t ride on the sidewalk.” But it’s like, “I don’t need a helmet. I’m 18. I know the rules, right?” That’s why I’m not a huge advocate of enforcement anymore. People often do not want enforcement; they want to feel a sense of belonging and safety in their community.

At the same time, you need to acknowledge that it is always a place-specific context. What works downtown won’t necessarily work here because the people, businesses, streets—all are very different. Scarborough’s whole built

environment is for cars. If you have a car, it’s easy. But if you don’t have one, it’s extremely challenging to pursue day-to-day activities. It’s often assumed that everyone in Scarborough has a car. But the reality is that less than half of the population here has a driver’s licence.

# DriveHER

How do you model a gender-responsive transit service while creating economic opportunities for women drivers?

**Location:** Toronto, Ontario

**Interviewee:** Aisha Addo, Founder & Social Entrepreneur

**Online:** [facebook.com/DriveHERApp](https://facebook.com/DriveHERApp) and [instagram.com/drivcherapp](https://instagram.com/drivcherapp)

**Can you begin by describing the transportation/mobility inequity challenge you set out to address with your initiative in a few sentences?**

One of the issues that I heard a lot from my employees at the non-profit that I run was transportation. Sometimes, I became a designated driver for them. I started asking people around me if they encountered uncomfortable transportation rides. Uber had just come to Toronto so it was a very interesting time to ask what that experience was like.

DriveHER was set up as a transportation service that focuses on providing economic empowerment for women, as well as providing safer transportation alternatives for women. We asked: how do we create a product that provides safe transportation for women at every intersection of their life and at every point in their lives?

The ridesharing space was a bit new when we started. We're not a traditional taxi, so there was a bit of red tape in that regard. The city came up with a policy around rideshare and put it in place in a week or so. But it marginalized folks who didn't have money, because the licensing fee alone was around \$20,000. Then, let's say you get a licence in Toronto, but then you have to get a licence in Peel and you have to get a licence in Durham. That adds big cost for a small organization like ours.

There were so many other hurdles. We ended up having to get a human rights lawyer to send a letter stating that our service was not discriminatory just because we catered specifically to women. The other challenge was access to capital, and I think any Black entrepreneur will tell you that accessing capital as a Black woman, especially creating solutions for women, well, it's not a walk in the park.

**Can you please describe the three key steps you/your group took to address this challenge? In answering this question, please highlight things like a barrier you overcame, a unique community engagement approach you implemented and an important partnership you established to successfully implement your initiative.**

It took a bit of time to get licensed. We really mitigated red tape by just being transparent and having open communications. For example, there is a special provision in the Human Rights Code that talks about services for vulnerable sectors. Women are considered under the code to be a vulnerable sector. So our human rights lawyer submitted a letter explaining to the city that this service that we are offering was not discriminatory because it catered to vulnerable sectors.

We also tried to create partnerships. I think one of the notable partnerships that we were able to acquire was with Nissan and Infiniti. It was a partnership that allowed women who did not have access to vehicles to be able to get a vehicle at a discounted cost. So while DriveHER did not pan out as a whole, that was one of the notable partnerships that we were very, very proud of.

**Can you please describe the impact of your project/initiative?**


Overall, the tech space is male- and white-dominated. One of the big impacts was being able to create a space for women to be themselves and be heard and have access to economic empowerment because while it was creating a safe space for women to have services, at the same time it was also supporting other women economically. I think that's phenomenal.

**Can you please share a brief story that really demonstrates the impact or spirit of your project/initiative?**

Around the time we were trying to start DriveHER, and experiencing all these technical glitches, someone I didn't know sent an email to our info accounts. In that email, she explained to me in detail why she needed DriveHER and why I shouldn't give up on DriveHER, because she was waiting to be able to use the service. She shared her very personal experiences. It came out of the blue at a really great time when I was asking myself: "Do I keep doing this? There are so many roadblocks." Keeping that message and that person in mind—that if we do this, we are taking care of this person—it was monumental.

**What is the most important lesson you've learned that will help researchers to build on the incredible work of transportation/mobility justice advocates like yourself?**

One of the lessons is recognizing that the sector is sexist and racist. Racism is not just about calling someone the N-word. It is also the way that it's embedded in the systems that have been put in place. I've had people share with me lately that if DriveHER was led by a white person, I wouldn't have the issues that I have right now and that I should find a [white] co-founder who would, like, be able to raise capital. I've had folks say that to me, blatantly.

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Source: The Toronto Star<sup>14</sup>



Source: The Toronto Star<sup>15</sup>

14. Ngabo, G. (2018, March 14). [In article photo of Aisha Addo]. All-female ride-sharing service DriveHer ready to hit Toronto roads. The Toronto Star. <https://www.thestar.com/news/gta/2018/03/13/all-female-ride-sharing-service-driveher-ready-to-hit-toronto-roads.html>

15. Kerr, J. (2018, April 5). [In article photo of Aisha Addo]. DriveHer, ride-sharing app for women, suspends service after data breach exposes personal information. The Toronto Star. <https://www.thestar.com/news/gta/2018/04/04/driveher-ride-sharing-app-for-women-suspends-service-after-data-breach-exposes-personal-information.html>



# URBAN/RURAL RIDES - TRANSPORT URBAIN/RURAL

Urban/Rural Rides serves people disproportionately impacted by transit inequity & isolation while safeguarding their dignity.

**Location:** Fredericton, New Brunswick

**Interviewee:** Kelly Taylor, Executive Director

**Online:** [urbanruralrides.ca](http://urbanruralrides.ca)

**Can you begin by describing the transportation/mobility inequity challenge you set out to address with your initiative?**

The population of the area we cover in southeast New Brunswick is not dense. The organizations that eventually formed Urban/Rural Rides started as an initiative to help fill that gap primarily for the rural areas, because they don't have any bus systems, the trains don't stop in the rural areas, and they don't have taxis. It leaves a vast portion of our population without transportation, so unless their neighbours drive them, or if a senior's adult children take time off work to drive them, they are isolated. They're cut off from services that they need.

Our clients are primarily seniors, low-income families and newcomers. They all have difficulties affording transportation, either because they do not have their own vehicle or are not able to operate their own vehicle. The economic issue is two-pronged: it's the lack of transportation options, but it's also the lack of finances for people living in rural communities. If it costs about \$16,000 a year to operate a vehicle, a low-income person earning \$20,000 a year can't afford both a vehicle and a place to live. So instead of having them make that choice, we're providing that transportation source so that they can stay in their community. Our primary goal is to keep seniors in their homes, keep people independent, and allow people to stay in their communities, instead of having to migrate to the urban centres because they can't get transportation to essential life needs.

A lot of our urban clients are newcomers. Sometimes they'll use cabs, but if they're going frequently to a second-language learning training, or they're travelling with several children, sometimes it's difficult. Several newcomers in our community have children with special needs who require trips to the children's hospital in Halifax. To send a child and a mother in a taxicab to Halifax is ridiculously expensive, so we have been able to help fill that need. The service allows newcomers to make connections with the drivers and they're so thrilled to meet people in their community.

**Can you please describe the three key steps you/your group took to address this challenge? In answering this question, please highlight things like a barrier you overcame, a unique community engagement approach you implemented and an important partnership you established to successfully implement your initiative.**

Step one is to get your volunteers in place. What I think makes us unique is that it is a volunteer-driven transportation service. It is a community transportation service provided in the community by people in the community. The best part is that it connects people within the same community, and it's not-for-profit. Because it is not a commercial transaction, the people using the service get an increased sense of value and worth because someone in their community cares enough about them to give their time to take them to a medical appointment. That is a much different experience than when someone is paid to do it for them.

Step two is to connect with local stakeholders such as social development workers, health-care services, extra-mural nurses and seniors residences. People working for these organizations have a hands-on connection and can refer folks to the service when they see that they need transportation.

Step three is to create financial partnerships with municipalities, the federal government, corporate sponsors, etc. to ensure it's a sustainable program. Looking for partnerships is an ongoing exercise. Our partnerships with funders allow us to keep the rates very low and we can subsidize the rates for our low-income clients. It allows clients to contribute and take ownership of their transportation, but it's still affordable. Part of people's self-worth and their identity is "I'm in control of my transportation and paying for my transportation fee. You don't have to give it to me, I want to pay for it." It gives them the dignity of being able to use the transportation and afford it, and still meet their other needs.

### **Can you please describe the impact of your project/initiative?**

The service gets the clients where they need to go, but also it helps limit isolation, and helps with their dignity, independence, self-confidence and self-worth. It's about them being able to access transportation on their own terms, without begging for it. The number of users continues to increase, and we continue to expand to new areas. The impact is not limited to the way it changes the lives of those who need transportation; it also enhances the lives of the volunteers (who are mostly retired) because it gives them a purpose and a social connection to their community. Overall, it enhances the communities by allowing people to stay in their homes, to stay in their rural communities and to continue to participate in community activities because they have access to the transportation they need.

### **Can you please share a brief story that really demonstrates the impact or spirit of your project/initiative?**

I'll give you an example of the impact on a volunteer, then I'll give you an example of the impact on a client, so you get a well-rounded picture. One volunteer had committed to driving a gentleman three days a week to his dialysis appointment. Then his wife fell ill. But even with his wife sick, he continued to drive this gentleman to dialysis three times a week, because it gave him something he could control. With his wife being sick, it was something that he enjoyed doing and it gave him a break from what was going on in his own life. He was so committed, I think he even drove on Christmas Day.

From a client's perspective, we had a gentleman who was traveling for dialysis treatment. Three days a week, our drivers looked after him for two years. We had a different driver for each day of the week, and when they weren't available, we'd have substitute drivers come in. He had a roster of about seven gentlemen who would drive him to his dialysis appointments. He got so ill near the end that he decided he was done, he wasn't going to go anymore. Five to ten days before he passed away, he had a party in his home. He invited his children, his best friend and his drivers. He had developed such a close connection with his volunteer drivers that they, in addition to his immediate family, were who he wanted with him at the end of his life.

### **What is the most important lesson you've learned that will help researchers to build on the incredible work of transportation/mobility justice advocates like yourself?**

The biggest lesson? Don't make the assumption that the service isn't needed, even in urban areas where we have taxi cabs and buses. For some people, these options are out of reach, or don't make sense for them to use. For example, if you have a senior who's living three blocks away from a bus stop and has mobility issues, is it practical to assume that they can walk three blocks to the bus stop to go to a doctor's appointment? Or, if you need to have a test done on your eyes and you have no friends or family in the community who can drive you, what are your options? So, it's not always just about affordability. The people who need these services are isolated, you can't see them. But we know where those people are. You just ask and look for them. There is always a need in any community we go into.

# TORONTO SENIORS HIKING CLUB

Conventional mobility services focused on seniors strictly address access to services but the Toronto Seniors Hiking Club places an emphasis on important social and health imperatives.

**Location:** Toronto, Ontario

**Interviewee:** Ilo Puhm, Past President

**Online:** [torontoshc.com](http://torontoshc.com)

**Can you begin by describing the transportation/mobility inequity challenge you set out to address with your initiative?**

**T**he club is a combination of physical exercise and social interaction for seniors. We have all been told that hiking is a less strenuous form of exercise, and that doing it once a week is a healthy activity.

As we are hiking, we typically talk to different members on the trail. It's not like we are just all hiking and everybody's silent. You learn a lot about other members. You are always surprised how much more interesting lives a lot of these members lead have led, and what their backgrounds are.

**Can you please describe the three key steps you/your group took to address this challenge? In answering this question, please highlight things like a barrier you overcame, a unique community engagement approach you implemented and an important partnership you established to successfully implement your initiative.**

The club works because there are volunteers who agree to lead hikes. They choose the location, the starting spot, where we can break for lunch and where the hike will end. Generally, the hikes are 10–15 kilometres long. The vast majority of people, with a few exceptions, take public transit to get to the hikes. The hike has to stop at a pub, so we get together for a drink and we socialize with anybody who wants to come.

The club is split into two groups. The main group is called the hares and it's the one that I participate in. But there is a smaller group of hikers that are getting older and are losing some ability, and they call themselves the turtles group. The turtles hike a shorter distance. They will also start at 11 a.m. like we always do, but they generally only go until noon. By contrast, we hike until around 2:30 p.m., or even as late as 3 p.m.

Some of the hikes are a little more challenging in the sense that they venture into steeper trails or they go into the woods. Sometimes you even have to climb over, or under, fallen trees. Some people will use hiking sticks, which help them to walk and assist them in situations where they are either going up or down a steep hill. In the winter months when there might be ice on the trails and roads, we highly recommend that people have ICERs that you attach to your boots. They will have spikes underneath so that you will not slip on ice or snow.

Also, we designate sweeps for each hike. Their only job is to be the last person on the trail at the height, so nobody is behind them, or so that if somebody has an injury or has to stop, they don't get left behind. If there is a problem, they will catch up with the group, and then everybody has to stop and look after the injured hiker.

Finally, people who get injured will sometimes hike with the turtles. Then, once they have fully recovered, they come back to the hares. But some people have to stop entirely; they cannot hike anymore. But they often remain members, so that when we have our annual picnic and Christmas party, they will often show up in those events.

### **Can you please describe the impact of your project/initiative?**

I guess the impact, or the spirit, of the Toronto Seniors Hiking Club has been to provide an environment for seniors to socialize. Sometimes friendships and warm relationships come out. It maintains quality of life in retirement through connections.

I guess the impact, or the spirit, of the Toronto Senior Hiking Club, has been to provide an environment for seniors to socialize. Sometimes friendships and warm relationships come out. It maintains quality of life in retirement through connections.

### **Can you please share a brief story that really demonstrates the impact or spirit of your project/initiative?**

I'm not the type of person that focuses on these little details. But I do get the sense that most people who come out regularly enjoy the club. There is no doubt that people do not come out because they have to exercise, and they are forced to come out. They come out because they enjoy hiking with a group. A lot of them have established long-term friendships in the club.

I don't know the details, but one marriage came as a result of the club. I don't know what their personal backgrounds were, or whether either of them were previously married. I would speculate they probably were. But one day we found out they got married.

### **What is the most important lesson you've learned that will help researchers to build on the incredible work of transportation/mobility justice advocates like yourself?**

When I joined the club for the first two years, I felt like I was exploring a city. I was really amazed at the number of parks and ravines that Toronto has, that I had never known about, areas that I had never really walked through. Before joining this club, I would go out hiking/walking on my own. But it was always a struggle to do so because I was not motivated to do it. Now, because there is a club with a lot of people, and you can interact with these people, there is no problem with me motivating myself to go out. Every Wednesday, I go hiking. It's very easy for me. I have no difficulty with that at all. I never sit at home and say, "I don't really want to hike today." Keep in mind that groups such as Toronto Seniors Hiking Club have many senior members who are motivated to remain active and use parks and walking routes. It can be pleasant from a nature point of view and because of the interaction with other people.



Source: Toronto Seniors Hiking Club<sup>16</sup>

16. Toronto Seniors Hiking Club (n.d.). [Photograph of hiking group in summer]. <https://torontoshc.com/>



## KEY THEMES

## THEME 1

### Social identity compounds and exacerbates mobility inequity.

Mobility equity challenges span an unwieldy range of historical eras, divergent geographies, place-based policies and legal contexts tied to our social identities. This is why no two demographic groups, or even individuals within the same demographic groups, have the exact same mobility needs, experiences and aspirations. Intersectionality—a theory and analytic lens coined by African American scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw—helps us understand this complexity. This framework provides the basis for analyzing how various aspects of our identities, such as race, class and gender, can create overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination. While this theory is evoked most often within discourse pertaining to structural inequities, it is as applicable to physical environments where structural inequities collide with social identities in a tangible manner.

For example, Marvin Macaraig of Scarborough Cycles notes that in addition to mobility barriers such as unsafe infrastructure, many of the community members with whom he engages also contend with Islamophobia. Both unsafe infrastructure and Islamophobia are structural issues, intertwined with identity. Along with Christien Levien of Legalswipe, Mr. Macaraig underscores how overpolicing and other forms of discrimination compound challenges for low-income, racialized individuals. Madonna van Vonderen of Antigoinish Community Transit explains how the high cost of housing has pushed vulnerable residents, particularly seniors and renters, to urban peripheries, limiting transit access. Peter Long of Whitehorse Walks highlights political issues pertaining to urban planners and city officials who often refuse to recognize pedestrians as civic stakeholders. While social identities tied to race, class, ability and gender tend to increase compounded experiences of mobility inequity—both within structural and community contexts—social identities such as “renter” or “mentally unwell” and “pedestrian” are increasingly creating emergent intersections of inequity.

This analysis, combined with the aforementioned case study references, are aligned with a growing body of academic research, including a Toronto Transit Commission report revealing that Black and Indigenous Torontonians are targeted by enforcement policies far more than other groups. Researchers concluded that the observed racial disparities are “at a minimum, consistent with allegations of racial bias.”<sup>17</sup> Similarly, researcher Tiffany Lam employs an intersectionality lens to explore how “structural and spatial inequalities contour urban mobility, as evidenced by well-documented gender, racial and socioeconomic disparities in cycling.”<sup>18</sup> More than ever, there is an acknowledgment of the intricate web of factors that constitute and influence mobility inequity.

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17. TTC (2021, April 08). TTC releases first phase of new race-based data collection strategy. <https://www.ttc.ca/news/2021/April/TTC-releases-first-phase-of-new-race-based-data-collection-strategy>

18. Lam, T. (2022). Towards an Intersectional Perspective in Cycling. *Active Travel Studies: Active Travel Studies: An Interdisciplinary Journal*, 1(1), 1–11. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.16997/ats.1264>

## THEME 2

### Mobility equity is an important aspect of community-building.

Mobility plays an important role in the consolidation of local and global culture; its routes and pathways create a series of often invisible, yet powerful, community networks. In addition to moving bodies and goods, mobility networks transport ideas, values and daily acts of care that define the character of communities. Mobility is not merely the connective tissue between communities; it is central to the community-building process.

Across all these 10 case studies, knowledge of community needs, community care and community engagement are centralized. Most of these mobility equity leaders explicitly reference community in their objectives, mission statements and/or approaches.

According to Kelly Taylor of Urban/Rural Rides in southern New Brunswick, genuine community connection reveals invisible mobility challenges. “The people who need these services are isolated. You can’t see them. But we know where those people are...” For organization such as Urban/Rural Rides, Antigonish Community Transit and IKWE Safe Rides of Winnipeg, community members are not simply served; they play an integral role in service delivery. This peer-to-peer approach mitigates unhealthy power dynamics between those delivering services and those receiving services while building community capacity and pride. Even a tech-based app such as Legalswipe, which provides accessible legal information to racialized people disproportionately profiled and harassed by police, ultimately “shone a light on the ability to develop community-based solutions,” co-founder Christien Levien recalls.

Mobility and community-building are part of a growing discourse among grassroots leaders, land-use professionals and scholars alike. Untokening, a mobility justice organization in the United States, stresses that an inclusive definition of safety must draw from a wide range of communities and experiences, centring marginalized and vulnerable groups.<sup>19</sup> The U.K.-based Design Council recognizes the importance of good infrastructure while making an argument for a reframing that centres community. “By seeing mobility as the means, rather than the goal, and starting with a positive vision of an inclusive city, we can design the infrastructure needed for inclusive mobility.”<sup>20</sup> The paper *Next Step: EQUITY*,<sup>21</sup> authored by foremost mobility equity scholars, centralizes community in terms of recognizing the socio-economic and geographic realities of groups that have not historically been considered and benefited from the provision of transit. These and many other examples, coupled with the case study narratives, represent a seismic shift moving community from the periphery to the centre of mobility equity discourse.

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19. Untokening Collective (2017, November 11). *Untokening 1.0 — Principles of Mobility Justice*. Untokening. <http://www.untokening.org/updates/2017/11/11/untokening-10-principles-of-mobility-justice>

20. Design Council (2021, November 17). *Redesigning Mobility for Sustainable and Inclusive Futures*. Medium. <https://medium.com/design-council/redesigning-mobility-for-sustainable-and-inclusive-futures-178b4a100f4>

21. Hertel, S., Keil, R., Collens, (2016, February). *Next Step: Equity: Routes to fairer transit access in the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area*. The City Institute at York University Toronto, Ontario Canada. [https://assets.metrolinx.com/image/upload/v1663240159/Documents/Metrolinx/Next\\_Stop\\_Equity\\_Routes\\_to\\_fairer\\_transit\\_access\\_in\\_the\\_GTHA.pdf](https://assets.metrolinx.com/image/upload/v1663240159/Documents/Metrolinx/Next_Stop_Equity_Routes_to_fairer_transit_access_in_the_GTHA.pdf)



## THEME 3

### Mobility equity fosters social connections.

Intertwined with community-building, mobility equity also fosters social connections. Specifically, active and public transportation creates a distinct opportunity for individuals to engage in ethereal encounters. A passenger, with nothing more than a knowing nod, offering their seat to an elder. A family of cyclists with the youngest member breaking in their training wheels in a protected bike lane. Neighbours travelling along similar routes finally breaking out into bus shelter chatter. Families pausing alongside a trail while children and dogs delightfully squeal in the background. These and other rarely recognized social connections directly contribute to physical and mental health benefits derived from equitable mobility.

The Toronto Seniors Hiking Club, creates “an environment for seniors to socialise,” says Ilo Puhm “and a way to maintain quality of life and social bonds in retirement.” Although the club is the most explicitly mandated to fostering social ties among the 10 case studies, aspects of social connectivity are interwoven across all of them from Halifax to Whitehorse. For example, Kelly Taylor notes that Urban/Rural Rides in southern New Brunswick “allows newcomers to make connections with the drivers” and “meet people in our community,” while facilitating access to crucial amenities. Madonna van Vonderen says that for the seniors using Antigonish Community Transit, the service allows “folks to socialise by getting out of the house.” In Scarborough, the bike clubs supported by Scarborough Cycles also serve a powerful social purpose as “physical places for folks to rally around, connect and meet other people,” notes Marvin Macaraig. As Christine Brouzes points out, IKWE Safe Rides of Winnipeg promotes a richer vision of community well-being, incorporating social outings, such as a group bus ride to the beach, into its safe transportation mandate.

The correlation between mobility equity and social connectivity is also the topic of academic research. Jessica Stroope’s 2021 study of mobility in Wisconsin found that communities with higher active transportation modes, such as walking and cycling, enjoy greater social interactions, which leads to networks of community trust, and feelings of reciprocity and connectedness.<sup>22</sup> Here in Canada, research conducted by the federal government’s Urban Transportation Showcase Program concluded, “Walking and cycling opportunities can enhance social capital by providing greater opportunities for neighbours to interact. Conversely, social capital can be undermined if there are more single-occupant vehicles on the road and fewer pedestrians, cyclists, public transit users and carpoolers.”<sup>23</sup> Clearly, social connectivity is far more than a “soft” programming approach or peripheral mobility equity benefit; it’s a primary success indicator and outcome.

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22. Stroope, J. (2021). Active transportation and social capital: The association between walking or biking for transportation and community participation. *Preventive Medicine*, 150, 106666. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ypmed.2021.106666>

23. Urban Transportation Showcase Program (n.d.). The Social Implications of Sustainable and Active Transportation. Transport Canada. [https://publications.gc.ca/collections/collection\\_2012/tc/T41-1-45-eng.pdf](https://publications.gc.ca/collections/collection_2012/tc/T41-1-45-eng.pdf)

## THEME 4

### If mobility isn't dignified, it isn't equitable.

Dignity—a moral and behavioral construct—is fundamental to the pursuit of mobility equity. Like respect, it is subjective and defined differently across diverse demographics. However, common understandings of dignity across sectors and situations include an acknowledgment of inherent human value, agency and the right to confidentiality. Moreover, dignity is predicated on not undermining an individual's sense of worth; rather, dignity is reinforced through personal, professional and public space interactions.

Across all 10 case studies, there were either direct references to dignity or overlapping aspects of dignity. Kelly Taylor of Urban/Rural Rides, stresses, “The service gets the clients where they need to go, but also it helps limit isolation, helps with their dignity, independence, self-confidence and self-worth by their being able to control accessing transportation on their own terms, without begging for it.” She also shares that a community member undergoing dialysis had his dignity safeguarded by being able to develop a relationship with a small group of drivers during this difficult time—all of whom were invited to a party alongside his family and closest friends shortly before his death. Christine Brouzes of IKWE Safe Rides of Winnipeg emphasizes how her service has restored the dignity of women, many of whom are Indigenous, by sparing them regular past occurrences of being explicitly objectified and propositioned by taxi drivers. Moreover, the quiet provision of subsidized services across numerous case studies addresses poverty in a dignified manner.

Within the sphere of mobility equity, dignity—a prominent theme in human rights law—has been primarily addressed through disability justice scholarship. The book *Disability with Dignity* describes dignity as “a moral importance” that should be situated in the centre and asserts that treating an individual as though they have “equal status” is a way of conferring dignity onto that individual.<sup>24</sup> Canadian scholar and disability justice activist Catherine Frazee asserts that justice and dignity are “great quests of human progress.”

At once philosophical and profoundly practical, key tenets of dignity such as the acknowledgement of inherent human value—combined with consent, agency and community care—are crucial for advancing mobility equity.

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24. Barclay, L. (2018, July, 18). *Disability with Dignity: Justice, Human Rights and Equal Status*. Routledge. <https://www.routledge.com/Disability-with-Dignity-Justice-Human-Rights-and-Equal-Status/Barclay/p/book/9780367588328>

## THEME 5

### Radical policy change is required for moving forward.

Fundamentally, all place-based inequities are rooted in invisibilized policies that contribute to the environmental crisis, socio-economic stratification and personal harm. This is especially applicable to mobility-related strategies within and well beyond land-use sectors. These policies govern aspects of mobility including, but not limited to, operation of electric vehicles, parking minimums required for housing development, transportation services and policing. In addition to being inequitable and antiquated, these and other policies are unresponsive to emergent technologies, the housing crisis, climate crisis targets, demographic shifts and polarized intergovernmental politics. Radical policy change is the only way to address intractable mobility equity challenges while meeting multifarious mobility objectives that will benefit everyone.

One key issue that emerges from the case studies is that success in overturning rules and/or policies limiting mobility equity usually requires hard work and perseverance over a long period of time. For example, Coalition mobilité active Montréal won an important battle for cyclists with the City of Montréal and three of its boroughs over their refusal to clear snow from bike paths at the same time as they were clearing snow from the adjacent streets—but only after a 10-year struggle. Now, that change has spread to many other roads and areas. Geoffrey Bush notes, “You must recognize how slowly the wheels of change move. Patience and persistence. It’s a long haul.” Mr. Bush says too many people get discouraged when a protest or one appearance at a meeting doesn’t lead to the desired change. Developing long-term relationships with politicians and bureaucrats is what worked for his group.

That view is echoed by Christine Brouzes of IKWE Safe Rides of Winnipeg. “Change takes time, especially when it involves politics and laws,” she says. In her case, she lobbied the City and its staff for years, eventually becoming an enthusiastic volunteer on its Transportation Advisory Council. Her efforts paid off with changes to City regulations that had blocked her rideshare service, then to key changes to overall taxi services to better protect women passengers.

Relatedly, Aisha Addo, founder of DriveHER, remembers a long but successful battle with the City of Toronto about whether her service was discriminatory because it was for women-only, both in terms of passengers and drivers. Ultimately, the City agreed her service could operate that way—but only after a lawyer’s letter, constant communication and a lot of persistence. How did she get the change? “We really mitigated red tape by just being transparent and having open communications,” she says.

The emphasis of policy change exemplified in these and other case studies is echoed throughout numerous academic texts. Since the late 1990s, scholars in the United Kingdom—revered for its exceptional active transportation systems and culture—noted, “Studies (predominantly in the United Kingdom) began to make more explicit the links policy between poverty, transport disadvantage, access to key services and economic and social exclusion.”<sup>25</sup> Despite growing advocacy in this specific area across the U.K. and North America, a report examining inequitable effects of transportation policies on “minorities” found, “Many transportation planners and policymakers have failed to recognize the link between transportation and land use policies and the impact of transportation policy on access to

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25. Lucas, K. (2012). “Transport and social exclusion: Where are we now?” in *Transport Policy*, Volume 20, p.p. 105-113, ISSN 0967-070X, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tranpol.2012.01.013>. PDF: [https://drive.google.com/file/d/1jPabxveTW5z1fTemu0VYxQ-p4aAu-16P/view?usp=share\\_link](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1jPabxveTW5z1fTemu0VYxQ-p4aAu-16P/view?usp=share_link)

social and economic opportunities. Also, they have not recognized the need to take a regional approach in trying to address the inequitable effects of transportation policy.”<sup>26</sup>

A growing number of grassroots leaders and professionals working across mobility sectors are advocating for specific permissions that benefit groups within the mobility margins. Their efforts and incremental gains are commendable and celebration-worthy. However, mobility equity is contingent on structural change, not situational case studies/ precedents and individual advocacy. Brent Toderian, a foremost city planning, and mobility and transportation expert states, “It’s hard to think of an urban policy shift that would do more to help achieve better, more equitable North American communities and cities than a complete transformation of urban transportation policy. From the need to fully integrate land-use and transportation thinking, to the prioritization (not balancing) of active transport in all our strategic decision-making, almost everything in current mobility policy needs to change.” Mr. Toderian goes on to underscore the futility of policy change without action, “But even if the policy is changed, things won’t get better if there isn’t follow-through.”

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26. Sanchez, T.W., Stolz, R., & Ma, J. S. (2003). Moving to equity: Addressing inequitable effects of transportation policies on minorities. <https://escholarship.org/uc/item/5qc7w8qp>

## Mobility Equity and Freedom CALL-TO-ACTION CHECKLIST

These recommended actions are not intended to be prescriptive nor sector- or discipline-specific. Rather, we have prioritized actions aligned with structural change and respectful community engagement, which can be translated across professional contexts and roles. Begin by incorporating 3–5 actions in a manner that is slow enough to be thoughtful and fast enough to respond to urgent needs.

- ✓ Invite the mobility equity grassroots leaders featured in this document (and others) to speak at lunch-and-learns, and/or to co-lead community engagement initiatives. In the interest of modelling equity throughout every aspect of this work, kindly provide respectful honorariums and fair contracts.
- ✓ Compile a list of corporate, philanthropic and public grant opportunities, and related program resources, for supporting grassroots mobility equity initiatives.
- ✓ Conduct a cross-sectoral mobility equity policy evaluation process, employing a participatory approach centring the lived experiences of community collaborators—particularly Indigenous Peoples, racialized people, disabled people and other equity-deserving groups—to identify and reform policies contributing to explicit discrimination, or an impingement on dignity, or socio-spatial obstructions to free movement.
- ✓ Use this guide as a professional development tool by hosting convenings that create space for scholars, students, practitioners and/or decision-makers to collectively review the Mobility Equity and Freedom Framework, case studies, themes and this checklist to share learnings and identify potential actions—individual and collective scope of influence, available resources (time, expertise, networks and budget), and institutional mandates and goals.
- ✓ Using the Mobility Equity and Freedom Framework, along with case study insights, conduct an invisible mobility-barriers audit in collaboration with Indigenous Peoples, racialized people, disabled people and other equity-deserving groups.
- ✓ Develop community engagement approaches that both contest and transform notions of “customers” or “user-groups” or “research subjects” to “stewards” and “lived-experience experts.”
- ✓ Develop educational mobility equity stewardship campaigns and workshops to highlight the important civic role that community stakeholders play in ensuring everyone experiences safe, dignified and joyful journeys.
- ✓ Initiate more cross-sectoral collaborations with professionals in the field of mobility equity, such as working closely with housing developers, public health professionals, mental health practitioners, racial justice advocates, gender-based violence advocates, anti-poverty advocates, newcomer and settlement workers.
- ✓ Allocate a budget line or fund to support initiatives that directly integrate mobility equity into planning and placemaking development projects, or support grassroots mobility equity initiatives or contract grassroots mobility equity experts to contribute to technical teams.
- ✓ Based on new insights and/or key themes derived from this document, develop a personal learning agenda, which may include reading articles or listening to podcasts featuring individuals with professional expertise and/or lived experiences outside your own; and/or enrol in a certificate course; and/or establish a cross-sectoral mutual mentorship relationship.

**Jay Pitter Placemaking** is an award-winning, bi-national practice mitigating growing divides in cities across North America. The practice leads institutional city-building projects focused on public space design and policy, mobility equity, cultural planning, gender-responsive design, transformative public engagement and healing fraught sites. Additionally, Jay Pitter, Principal Placemaker, shapes urgent urbanism discourse through media platforms such as the Los Angeles Times and Canadian Architect. Ms. Pitter is a sought-after speaker who has delivered keynotes for organizations such as United Nations Women and the Canadian Urban Transit Association, and is also an urban planning lecturer who has engaged students at Cornell University, Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), Princeton University and numerous other post-secondary institutions. Guided by Ms. Pitter's expertise, which is located at the nexus of urban design and social justice, the team translates community insights into the built environment and urban policy.

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