

Canadian Community Initiatives Addressing Transport Poverty: Year 4 Report and Catalogue

Research
Report

August
2024

Christine Yanagawa, Nancy Smith Lea, Meghan Winters,
and David Simor



**MOBILIZING
JUSTICE** _____

Towards Evidence-Based
Transportation Equity Policy

About Mobilizing Justice

The Mobilizing Justice Partnership is funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC). Based at the University of Toronto Scarborough, the national intersectoral research partnership aims to understand and address transportation poverty in Canada and to improve the well-being of Canadians at risk of transport poverty. Learn more at www.mobilizingjustice.ca.

Our Partners

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



Table of Contents

About Mobilizing Justice	2
Our Partners	2
Author Contributions	3
Suggested Citation	3
Photo Credits	3
Introduction	4
Methodology	5
Findings	7
Conclusions	12
References	13
Appendix	14
Acknowledgements	14

Table of Figures

Figure 1 Community Initiatives by Built Environment Type 7
Figure 2 Community Initiatives by Mode of Transportation 8
Figure 3 Community Initiatives by Host Organization Type..... 9
Figure 4 Community Initiatives with Transport Poverty Focus by Host Organization Type 9
Figure 5 Host Organizations with Transport Poverty Focus by Transportation Mode 10
Figure 6 Host Organizations with Transport Poverty Focus by Equity-Deserving Focus 11

Author Contributions

This report was produced in the summer of 2024 by Christine Yanagawa, a graduate student jointly supervised by Dr. Meghan Winters, Professor, Simon Fraser University and Nancy Smith Lea, Senior Advisor, The Centre for Active Transportation (TCAT) at Clean Air Partnership. David Simor, TCAT Director, also provided input and guidance.

Suggested Citation

Yanagawa, C., Smith Lea, N., Winters, M., & Simor, D. (2024). Canadian Community Initiatives Addressing Transport Poverty: Year 4 Report and Catalogue, for Mobilizing Justice Partnership. Toronto: The Centre for Active Transportation, Clean Air Partnership.

<https://mobilizingjustice.ca/rapports/>

Photo Credits

Cover Page: Toronto Ride: <https://www.torontoride.ca/>

Page 2: The Wrench: <https://thewrench.ca>

Page 3: Horse Council British Columbia: hcbc.ca/trailsrec/road-safety/



Introduction

The [Canadian Community Initiatives Addressing Transport Poverty Catalogue](#) is a collaborative project between the Mobilizing Justice Theme 2 Transportation Modes team and The Centre for Active Transportation (TCAT). The catalogue compiles community initiatives (grassroots coalitions or programs of larger organizations with a partial or central focus on transportation)¹ across Canada that promote transport equity by expanding transportation options, particularly for people experiencing transport poverty. Transport poverty occurs when inequitable transportation infrastructure and systems impede access to employment, services, educational opportunities, food security, open space and leisure, and other essential destinations. This issue affects people across Canada, with estimates suggesting that up to 1.3 million Canadians live in transport poverty (Allen & Farber, 2019).

In the summer of 2021, graduate intern Sabat Ismail conducted a scan of community initiatives addressing transport poverty and increasing modal choices across Canada, resulting in the [Canadian Community Initiatives Addressing Transport Poverty catalogue](#) and accompanying [report](#) (Ismail, S. 2021). This first iteration contained 13 attributes (e.g. location, host organization, population focus, mode of transportation, etc.) for each of the 245 community-led initiatives. While every effort was made to capture as many initiatives as possible, some were likely missed, as with every subsequent iteration of the catalogue.

In 2022, intern Kara Martin updated the catalogue, resulting in 16 attributes for 266 initiatives. The catalogue was updated with initiatives from regions that were previously underrepresented, and more focus was added to specific equity-deserving groups and how their needs are (or are not) being met. The updated [catalogue](#), accompanying [report](#) and [blog post](#) were released in August 2022 (Martin, K., et al 2022).

In 2023, graduate student Helena Lin created an [interactive map](#) to provide a visual overview of the catalogue's community initiatives. It provides a way for advocates, academics, and practitioners alike to explore and learn about the wide range of inspiring ways that communities support transport equity. Nancy Smith Lea updated the [catalogue](#), bringing the total to 293 community initiatives, and wrote a [blog post](#) providing a sampling of new highlights and suggestions for how the catalogue and map could be used.

This report describes how the catalogue was further developed in 2024 and provides an analysis of general trends and gaps in the community initiatives that support people experiencing transport poverty.

¹ Our working definition of community initiative differs slightly from “community-based transportation” which are “transportation services outside of the conventional public transportation system that are operated by public or non-profit organizations.” ([Hosford, Pitman & Winters, 2024](#)) The primary difference is that we don't include services operated by the public sector.

Methodology

With this 2024 update, there are now 335 active community initiatives in the catalogue. We also created a new archive database to document discontinued or completed initiatives.

Following recommendations from Mobilizing Justice's [Community and Equity Advisory Table](#) (CEAT), we added three new attributes to provide more information about the host organizations, to explore how low income is defined, and to seek to understand the extent to which intersectionality is considered (see below).

We also made a deliberate effort to find more initiatives that support driving and public transit, as initiatives that have a focus on active transportation may have been over-represented in previous versions. In particular, we looked for community-based transportation services for older adults since "[d]espite filling important gaps in the transportation system, these services are often overlooked in transportation research and planning." (Hosford, Pitman & Winters, 2024).

As with previous iterations, we identified new community initiatives through Google searches, Facebook scans, news articles, and personal networks. New methods included scanning Reddit and searching the "Transportation" field of each provincial 211 website (noting we did exclude federal, provincial, territorial, and municipal organizations, given our focus on community-led efforts).

Transport Poverty: As in previous versions of the catalogue, we indicate which initiatives focus on transport poverty (whether or not the initiative uses the exact term; most do not). New to this report, we conducted separate analyses on the community initiatives that have an explicit focus on transport poverty to understand which equity-deserving groups are being served through these initiatives, in which built environments, and by which modes of transportation.

New attributes:

1. **Type of Organization:** This attribute identifies the types of organizations that host community initiatives and aims to better differentiate between those that are [grassroots and community-led](#) and those that are more [formalized or corporate](#), which the CEAT suggested is an important distinction.² We classified organization types using the descriptions found on the host organization websites. Due to the variation of the terminology used, we grouped types into four broad categories.

1. **Registered charities.** Registered charities are organizations, public foundations, or private foundations that have obtained charitable status from the federal government and are exempt from paying taxes on mission-related income. Charities must reinvest their revenue

² One of the reasons that the CEAT expressed an interest in this classification is because more formalized initiatives may function differently than those that are grassroots or "mutual aid". "Mutual aid differs from charity in that the latter is based on solving problems *for* people, while mutual aid stems from a desire to solve problems *with* people." (Gulliver-Garcia, 2022) There are four key principles of mutual aid: "1) solidarity not charity; 2) non-hierarchical organizational structures; 3) equity in decision-making; and 4) political engagement." (Kenworthy, Hops & Hagopian, 2023).

- into their mission and charitable purposes, which fall into one or more of the following categories: relief of poverty, advancement of education, advancement of religion, or other purposes that benefit the community (Government of Canada, 2016, 2024).
2. **Non-profit.** According to Revenue Canada, non-profits are distinct from registered charities; the two are mutually exclusive. Yet, many organizations use the terms interchangeably which makes the categorization process slightly more difficult. Non-profits are incorporated organizations like associations, clubs, or societies that are not charities and are organized and operated exclusively for social welfare, civic improvement, pleasure, recreation, or any other purpose except profit (Government of Canada, 2016, 2024).
 3. **Grassroots.** Grassroots organizations are created from the bottom up and are primarily comprised of volunteers campaigning or advocating a cause to spur change.
 4. **Other.** These organization types include co-ops, student-run community bike shops and workshops, and social enterprises (revenue-generating organizations whose objective is to have a social impact [Government of Canada, 2019]).
2. **Defining Low-Income:** This attribute provides a definition of low income according to each initiative that supports people experiencing low income. If no definition is provided, we mark the attribute as "Not defined". Since low income can be defined and categorized in various ways, we could examine if a common definition was used across initiatives.
 3. **Intersectionality Focus:** Intersectionality describes how social identities intersect to create systems of privilege and discrimination. This concept explains how the experiences of people belonging to multiple marginalized groups cannot be fully understood by looking at each identity separately but rather by the interactions between these identities that shape their experiences (Crenshaw, 2013). If the community initiative serves more than one equity-deserving group and the organization's website or social media explicitly uses the term 'intersectionality' or similar language, we mark the attribute as 'Yes' (Y); otherwise, 'No' (N).

Findings

Identifying and categorizing community initiatives establishes a base understanding of the work that is being done to address transportation inequities in this country. It provides insights into the type of organizations working to expand transportation options and address transport poverty. Analyzing trends in the data shows the existing gaps, including whose needs may not be adequately addressed. First, we describe the initiatives by geography (urban, rural, suburban, etc.) and transportation mode of focus (cycling, public transportation, driving, etc.); we then focus on the catalogue's new attributes/analysis (e.g., organization type, transport poverty sub-analyses, defining low-income, and intersectionality focus.)

1. **Initiatives by geography.** Similar to previous iterations of the catalogue, the greatest number of initiatives are in the urban context (50%), with a slight bump in those supporting rural areas from 31 (11%) rural initiatives in the previous catalogue version to 45 (13%) in this update (Figure 1).

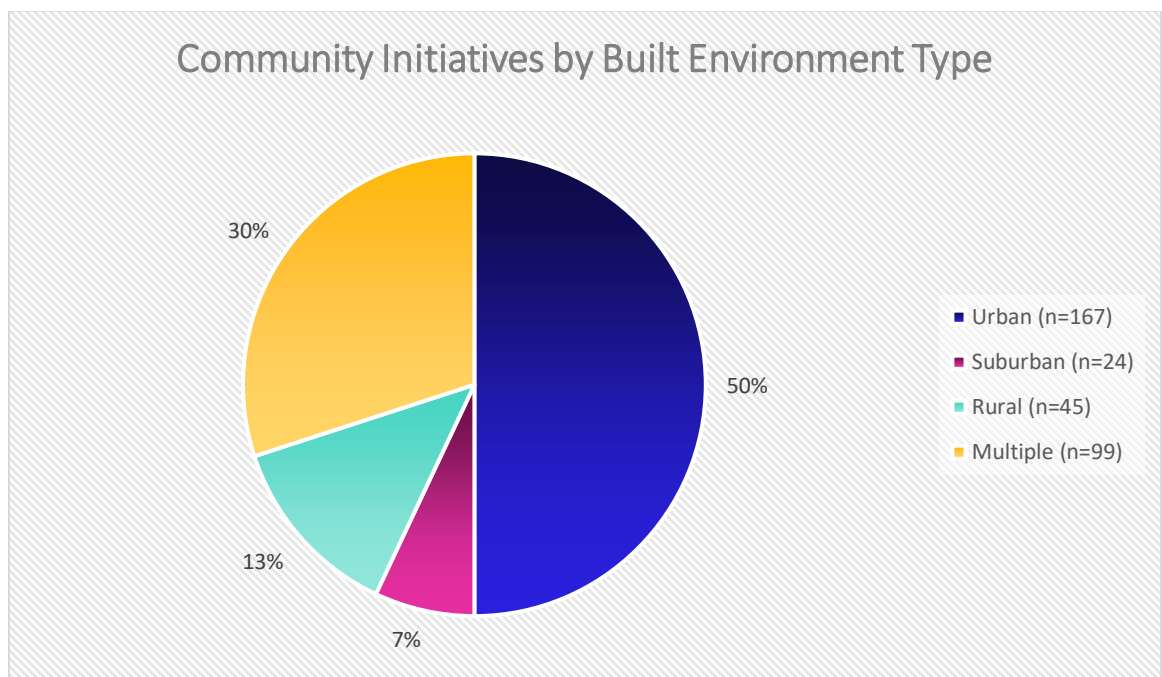


Figure 1 Community Initiatives by Built Environment Type

2. **Initiatives by mode of transportation.** The number of initiatives providing driving services has more than doubled since our 2022 report, from 7% (18) to 14% (47). These initiatives include car/rideshare, shuttle services, and community transit services operated by charities and non-profit organizations. As indicated in the methodology section above, many of the new initiatives focus on providing driving services for seniors and people with disabilities, using multi-passenger vehicles like buses and vans

Of note, new to this scan are three (1%) community initiatives focused on improving accessibility for populations engaging in equine-driven transportation (i.e., horse-riding,

carriage riding). For these populations, “road riding is a necessity... to get from one farm to another, from farm or stable to a trail...” (Horse Council BC, 2023). Initiatives like these respond to safety concerns for drivers, riders, and horses, often in rural communities where collisions between horse riders and motor vehicles are more likely to occur.

Outside of non-profit and charitable driving services, we found the distribution of community initiatives by mode has not changed substantially over time. Community initiatives continue to focus on improving travel options for active transportation: 43% (144) for cycling, 16% (53) for public transit, 13% (44) for active transportation (both walking and cycling), 9% (30) for sustainable transportation (both active and public transit) and 4% (14) for walking. (Figure 2).

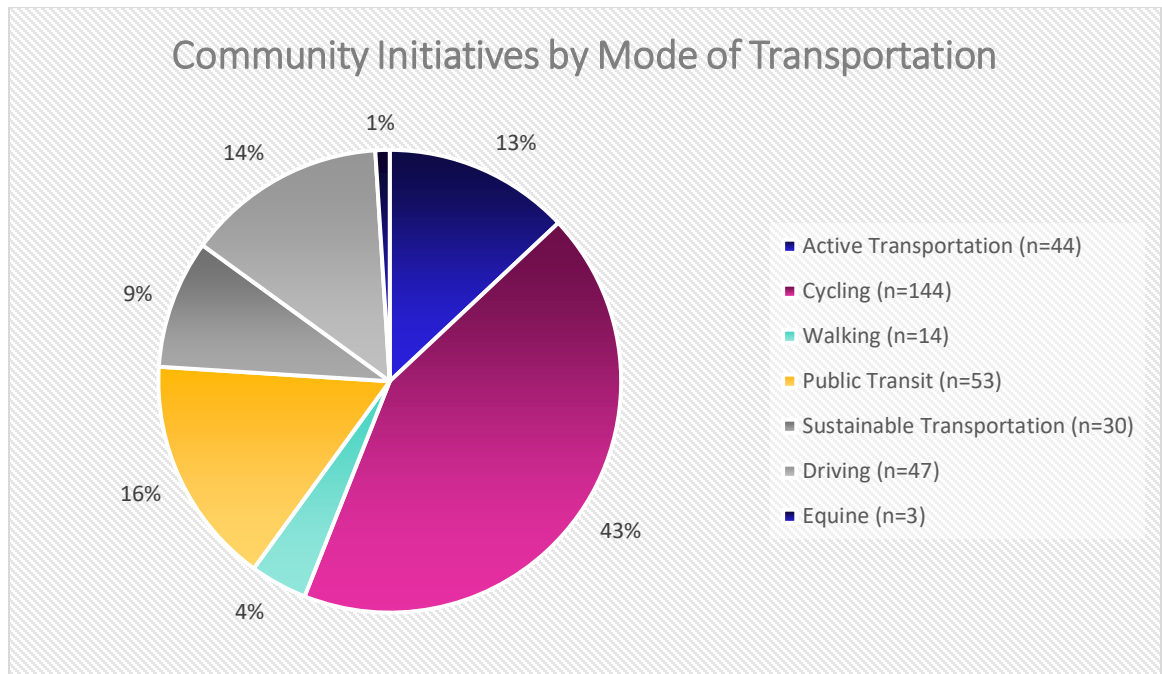


Figure 2 Community Initiatives by Mode of Transportation

- 3. Initiatives by organization type.** Both community-driven and structured non-profit organizations are working to expand transportation options. Grassroots, volunteer-driven and community-based efforts and advocacy groups make up almost a third of the type of organizations deploying community initiatives (102/335; 30%). Non-profit organizations (120; 36%) and registered charities (77; 23%), together accounting for close to 60%, underscore the substantial involvement of the more formalized non-profit sector. The other initiatives (36; 11%) include co-ops, student-run community bike shops and workshops, and social enterprises. (Figure 3)

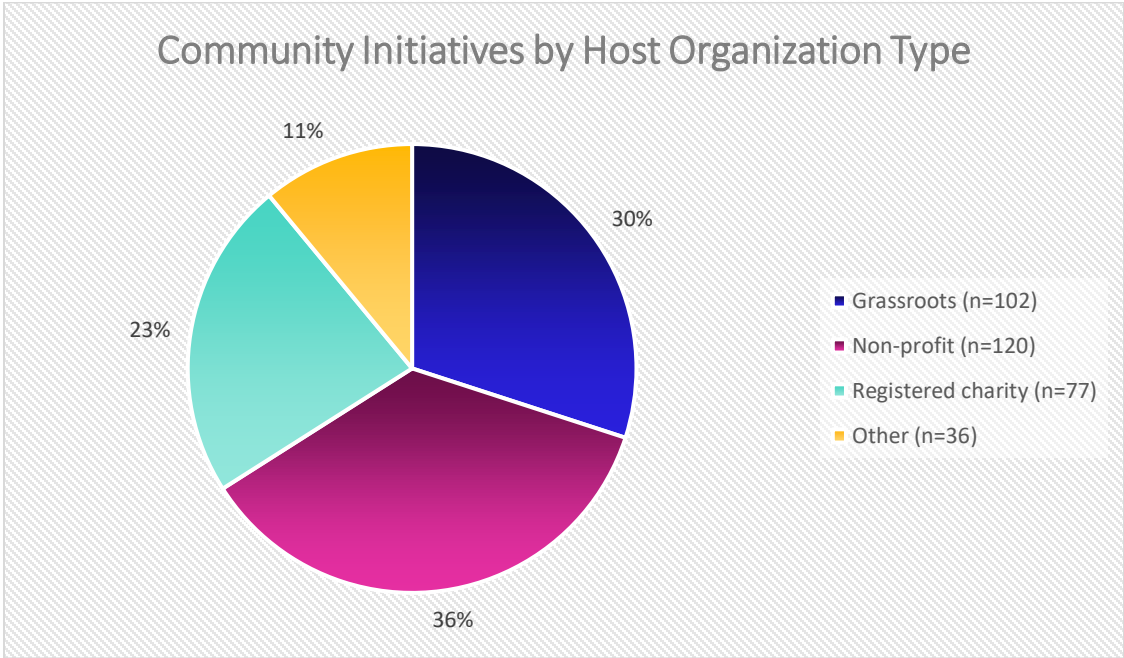


Figure 3 Community Initiatives by Host Organization Type

4. **Initiatives that focus on transport poverty.** Over half of the initiatives in the catalogue focus specifically on transport poverty (53%, n=178) according to the host organization’s stated mission, goals, and purpose. Together, the more formalized or corporate non-profit and charitable host organizations account for the majority (106/178; 60%) of the initiatives that focus on transport poverty. (Figure 4)

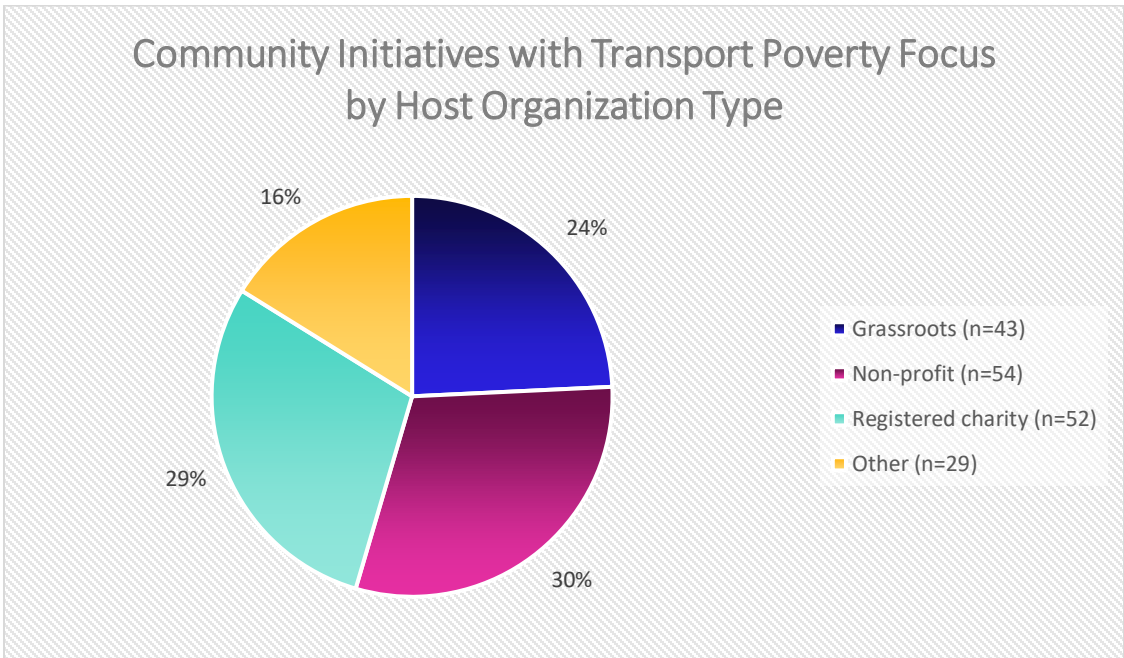


Figure 4 Community Initiatives with Transport Poverty Focus by Host Organization Type

Looking more closely at those initiatives with a focus on transport poverty, we performed the following two sub-analyses:

- By focus on transportation mode.** Looking at the different types of host organizations with a focus on transport poverty (n=178), cycling initiatives are the most prevalent mode focus for non-profits (25/54; 46%), for registered charities (28/52; 54%) and “other” (24/29; 83%). For grassroots initiatives with a transport poverty focus, the majority (30/43; 70%) are centred on public transit. Non-profit organizations and registered charities together offer the bulk of the driving initiatives (32/42; 76%) which isn’t surprising given the legal obligations associated with providing driving services. (Figure 5)

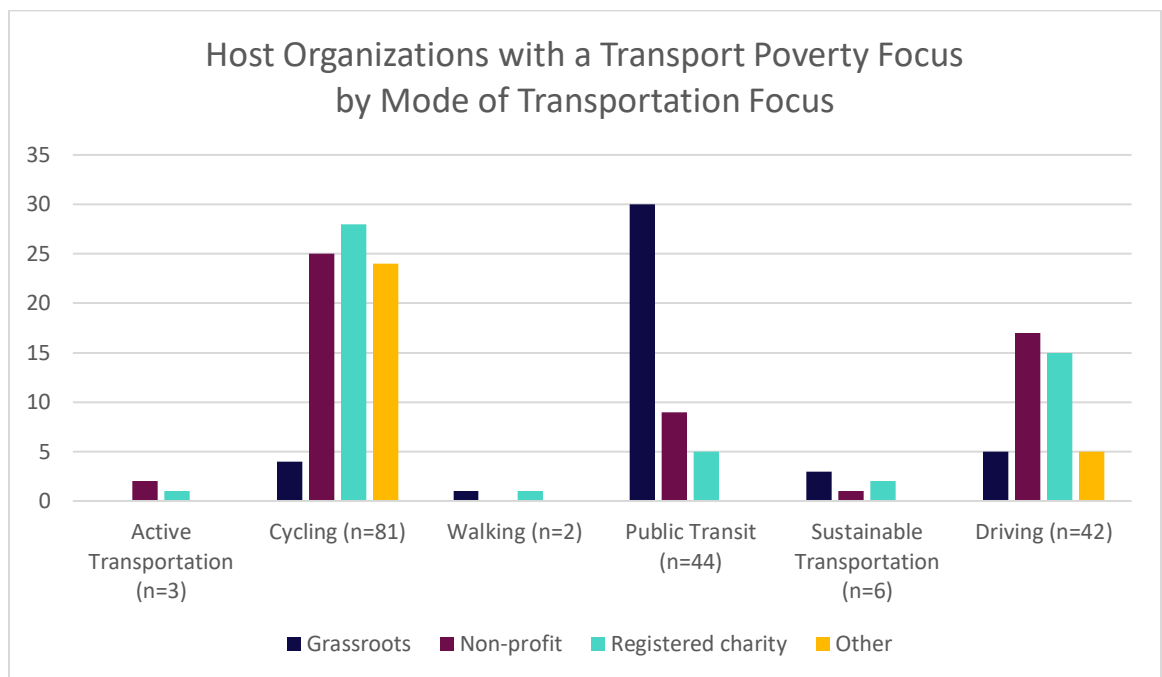


Figure 5 Host Organizations with Transport Poverty Focus by Transportation Mode

- By focus on equity-deserving population.** For the initiatives with a focus on transport poverty (n=178), the equity-deserving foci (n=227)³ are wide-ranging. The most prevalent equity-deserving focus, regardless of host organization type, is people experiencing low income (n=85). (Figure 6).

³ The number of transport poverty initiatives with equity-deserving foci (n=227) is higher than the total number of community initiatives (n=178) because some initiatives focus on more than one equity-deserving group and are thus counted more than once in this analysis.

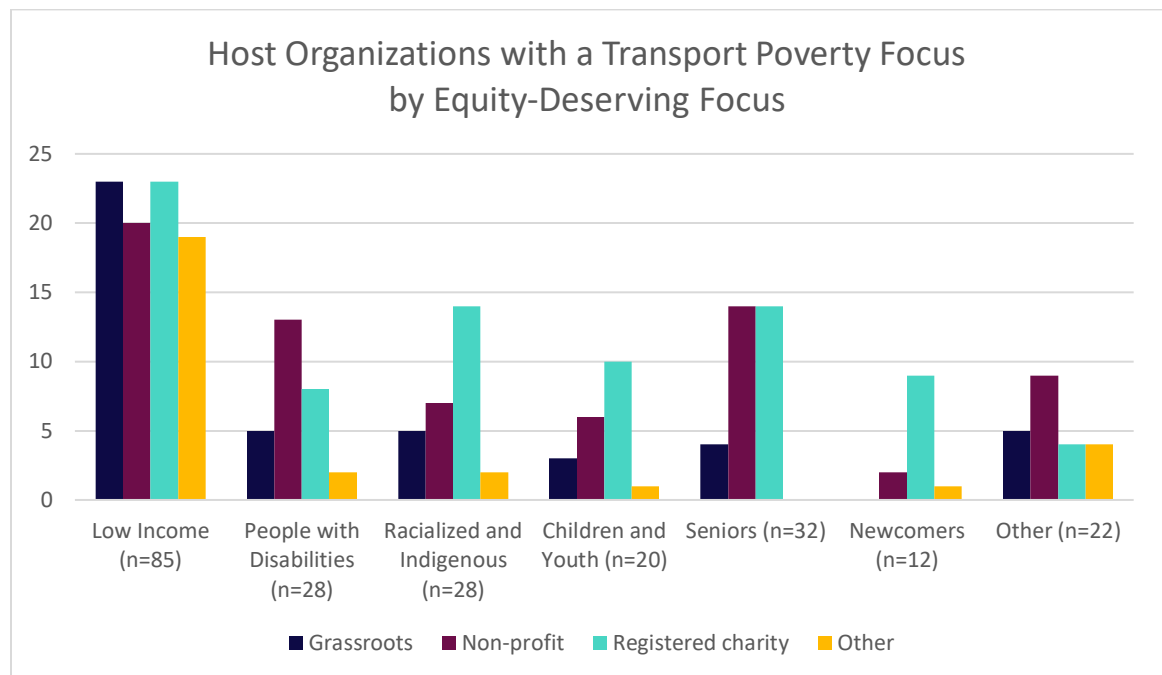


Figure 6 Host Organizations with Transport Poverty Focus by Equity-Deserving Focus

7. **Initiatives that focus on low-income.** Following a recommendation from the CEAT, we explored how low income is defined according to each initiative that supports people experiencing low income. Only 7% (n=6) of the 86 community initiatives with a low-income focus define the term. Those defining low income do so for advocacy purposes or to determine eligibility for transport-related access. Of the six initiatives, two advocate for reduced-cost public transportation fares and define low income using low-income thresholds: either a percentage of the Low-income cut-offs ([LICO](#)) to establish eligibility or as income brackets below the LICO to determine income-based fares. One of the two registered charities that provide driving services defines low income for service qualification using income brackets below \$45,001 per year, while the other uses the Canada Revenue Agency Notice of Assessment for eligibility. The final two initiatives require that people demonstrate financial need to qualify for access to bikes.

8. **Initiatives with an intersectionality focus.** The CEAT also expressed an interest in the extent to which intersectionality is considered by community initiatives (intersectionality describes how social identities intersect to create systems of privilege and discrimination). While 20% (n=68) of community initiatives in the catalogue focus on more than one equity-deserving group, only one of these explicitly uses 'intersectionality' in their organization mandate. There may be various reasons for this finding. Importantly, 'intersectionality' may not be a familiar term to the general public. Although community initiatives may support groups with intersecting social identities, they may not explicitly use the term. For example, the cycling initiative "Goal 5 Bike Project" in Winnipeg works to remove barriers for racialized women without explicitly using the term 'intersectionality'. Some initiatives include more than one mutually exclusive equity-deserving group, for instance, community organizations promoting

safe, active transportation for children and older adults. Other initiatives support more than one equity-deserving group and an intersection of social identities; in other words, belonging to one group does not exclude membership in another, as observed in driving initiatives serving seniors and people with disabilities, including older adults with disabilities.

Conclusions

The *Canadian Community Initiatives Addressing Transport Poverty Catalogue* summarizes initiatives across Canada that are working towards transportation equity. This updated version has expanded the catalogue entries and attributes, specifically to explore how initiatives may differ according to the type of organization that hosts it, to look more closely at the initiatives that have a specific focus on transport poverty, and to seek to understand how low-income is defined and the extent to which intersectionality is considered. Analysis of the 335 initiatives reveals the following key takeaways:

1. **The majority of transport poverty initiatives are in the formalized non-profit sector.** While over half of the initiatives focus specifically on transport poverty (178/335; 53%) according to their stated missions, goals, and purposes, the majority of these (106/178; 60%) are based within more formalized or corporate non-profit and charitable organizations.
2. **The most common equity-deserving population focus is people with low income.** For the initiatives with a focus on transport poverty, while we found the equity-deserving groups that are prioritized to be wide-ranging (e.g. seniors, people with disabilities, racialized and Indigenous people, children and youth and newcomers), the most prevalent equity-deserving population focus is people experiencing low income.
3. **Most initiatives do not use the term 'intersectionality' or define 'low income'.** Community initiatives that support people experiencing low income lack a standardized definition. Also, community initiatives rarely explicitly incorporate the terminology of "intersectionality" in their mandates. These findings indicate that while many community initiatives address transport inequities related to low income and intersectionality, defining terminology or frameworks may be less central to their work.

This catalogue continues to provide a foundation for understanding Canadian community initiatives working to address transport poverty and increase transportation options beyond the private automobile. We hope it will be useful for advocates and practitioners alike to better understand the transportation barriers and adaptive practices being implemented across Canada and ultimately inform the development of evidence-based policy recommendations to advance transport equity.

References

Allen, J., & Farber, S. (2019). Sizing up transport poverty: A national scale accounting of low-income households suffering from inaccessibility in Canada, and what to do about it. *Transport Policy*, 74, 214–223. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tranpol.2018.11.018>

Crenshaw, K. W. (2013). Mapping the margins: Intersectionality, identity politics, and violence against women of color. In *The public nature of private violence* (pp. 93-118). Routledge.

Government of Canada. (2016). *What is the difference between a registered charity and a non-profit organization?* Canada.Ca. <https://www.canada.ca/en/revenue-agency/services/charities-giving/giving-charity-information-donors/about-registered-charities/what-difference-between-a-registered-charity-a-non-profit-organization.html>

Government of Canada. (2019). *Start, build, and grow a social enterprise: Start your social enterprise* [Government website]. Canada.Ca. <https://ised-isde.canada.ca/site/choosing-business-name/en>

Government of Canada. (2024). *Charitable status*. Canada.Ca. <https://sbs-spe.feddevontario.canada.ca/en/charitable-status>

Gulliver-Garcia, T. (2022). The Growing Role of Mutual Aid. *Non Profit Quarterly*. <https://nonprofitquarterly.org/the-growing-role-of-mutual-aid/>

Horse Council British Columbia. (2023). *Road Safety* [Organization website]. <https://hcbc.ca/trailsrec/road-safety/>

Hosford, K., Pitman, B, & Winters, M. (2024). Facilitators and barriers to the implementation of community-based transportation services for older adults: Evidence from six case studies. *Transportation Research Interdisciplinary Perspectives* Volume 24, 101062. <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2590198224000484#s0105>

Ismail, Sabat. (2021) [Canadian Community Initiatives Addressing Transport Poverty: Report and Catalogue](#). The Centre for Active Transportation and Mobilizing Justice.

Ismail, S., Martin, K., Smith Lea, N., Winters, M, Hosford, K., & Simor, D. (2023). [Catalogue of Canadian Community Initiatives Addressing Transport Poverty](#), for Mobilizing Justice Partnership. Toronto: The Centre for Active Transportation, Clean Air Partnership. Available online at: <https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/19QIOLtEKMOZ-X8zqt4Xi5bOThop5bZqM/edit?gid=2118171211#gid=2118171211>

Kenworthy N, Hops E, Hagopian A. Mutual Aid Praxis Aligns Principles and Practice in Grassroots COVID-19 Responses Across the US. *Kennedy Inst Ethics J*. 2023 Jun;33(2):115-144. doi: 10.1353/ken.2023.a904080. PMID: 38468642; PMCID: PMC10927022. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC10927022/>

Lin, H. (2023). *Community Initiatives Maps* [Interactive map].
<https://hub.mobilizingjustice.ca/pages/community-initiatives>

Linovski, O., Dorries, H., & Simpson, S.A. (2021) *Public Transit and Equity-Deserving Groups: Understanding Lived Experiences*.

Martin, K. (2022). [Canadian community initiatives working towards transportation equity](#). Blog post for Mobilizing Justice.

Martin, K., Smith Lea, N., Winters, M., Hosford, K & Simor, D. (2022). [Canadian Community Initiatives Addressing Transport Poverty: Year 2 Report and Catalogue](#). The Centre for Active Transportation and Mobilizing Justice.

Smith Lea N. (2024). [New Interactive Map and Updated Catalogue of Community Initiatives Addressing Transport Poverty Provides Valuable Repository of Local Knowledge for Mobilizing Justice Researchers and Partners](#). Blog post for Mobilizing Justice.

Statistics Canada [StatCan]. (2024) *Population estimates, quarterly*. The Government of Canada.
<https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/tv.action?pid=1710000901>

Statistics Canada [StatCan]. (2022b) *Canada's large urban centres continue to grow and spread*. The Government of Canada. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/220209/dq220209b>

Statistics Canada [StatCan]. (2016) *Journey to Work*. The Government of Canada.
<https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/en/pub/11-627-m/11-627-m2017038-eng.pdf?st=9kjhPnEV>.

Appendix

Transport Poverty Community Initiatives Catalogue ([Version 4](#)).

Acknowledgements

This work is supported in part by funding from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council's partnership grant: Mobilizing Justice: towards evidence-based transportation equity policy. Learn more at www.mobilizingjustice.ca.

