

Towards Inclusive Public Transport: Immigrant Mothers and their Daily Mobility



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Executive Summary

“When I got off the plane [from China], I got information on finding a job, and finding a house, but nothing on transportation. In fact, that is as important ... Being able to access services is key to feeling integrated and settled.”

- *M., a woman from Richmond Hill living in Canada for 2 years*

With many new immigrants choosing to live in Canada’s suburbs, I examined the experiences of immigrant women in the suburbs who use public transit, and proposed recommendations for service improvements. The ability to confidently and successfully navigate around a new environment is an often-overlooked component of the immigrant settlement experience. Little work has been done on immigrant uses of public transit, and since women in particular are responsible for a larger share of domestic responsibilities, I focused on public transit trips made by new immigrant mothers for household and childcare tasks. I conducted semi-structured interviews with recently arrived women from China who live with their families in the Toronto suburbs of North York, Scarborough, Markham, and Richmond Hill.

From my interview results I identified four areas of concern that I used to inform my discussion on transit policies:

- Fare structure
- Customer relations training
- Stroller policy
- Outreach to new transit riders

I analysed the existing practices of the Toronto Transit Commission (TTC) and evaluated best practices from Vancouver and San Francisco, to generate recommendations for improvement of transit in Toronto. Recommendations include an extension of time-based transfers across the system, proactive empathy training for employees, an official policy on baby strollers, improvements to the Language Line phone service, new immigrant public transit orientation workshops, and the creation of Translation Cards of commonly used transit phrases.

This report explores what options the TTC can implement to make public transit in Toronto more *inclusive*; enabling immigrants, women, and a broad range of riders, to more easily meet their daily mobility needs using transit. The importance of public transit in the immigrant settlement process should be given a higher profile among transit authorities, in the academic literature, and from all levels of government.

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I'd particularly like to thank the following people for giving so freely of their time and expertise to help me: the Strategic Planning division at TransLink for developing my ideas on inclusive transit, Shall Shao for being so immediately supportive of my research, my interviewees for lending their voices of experience, my aunt Brenda for expert translation of my written documents, Minelle Mahtani for her feedback and contacts, Sandeep Kumar for his suggestions and guidance, Philippa Campsie for her instruction and support, and especially my phenomenal supervisor Paul Hess for his frequent and much-needed advice, and for listening to more half-baked ideas than anyone else and never complaining once.

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1 *Introduction and Research Context*

To become completely lost is perhaps a rather rare experience for most people in the modern city ... but let the mishap of disorientation once occur, and the sense of anxiety and even terror that accompanies it reveals to us how closely it is linked to our sense of balance and well-being. The very word "lost" in our language means much more than simple geographical uncertainty; it carries overtones of utter disaster.

- Kevin Lynch, *The Image of the City*, pg. 4

Lynch has described a feeling familiar to anyone who has tried to tour an unfamiliar city without the assistance of a local resident or a tour group leader. For Canada's new immigrants, confidently navigating their chosen environment is an essential part of the settlement process. The 2001 Census showed that recent immigrants¹ comprised 6.2% of Canada's population at that time, and that 73% of those immigrants lived in the three largest cities: Montréal, Toronto, and Vancouver (McIsaac 2003, 2). For many newly arrived immigrants in these cities, public transit will be the most viable option for going about their daily lives. The only study done on public transit use among Canadian immigrants showed that recent immigrants were much more likely to use transit than the Canadian-born public across all twelve cities examined (Heisz and Schellenberg 2004, 172-173). However, this study was based on Census data, which collects information on public transit use only for the work commute and not for any other kind of trip.

This report explores the immigrant experience using public transit for non-work related trips, particularly childcare and shopping, which are vital aspects of daily life. As women often assume these responsibilities, I specifically asked new immigrant mothers about their perceptions, experiences, and challenges as they negotiate public transit. I then highlight some key transit issues raised from the female perspective on adaptation to urban environments. Using these issues to inform my analysis, I examine current and proposed practices in the public transit industry that are, and would be, beneficial to immigrant women. Finally, I propose recommendations for a more inclusive public transit system in Toronto.

¹ In the Census and in this report, recent immigrants are defined as having arrived within the past 10 years.

2 Review of Existing Literature

Immigrant settlement studies have become an increasingly important area of research. The Metropolis Project is a national research network created by the Canadian government in 1996 to promote research on immigration, integration, and diversity to policy makers. Metropolis comprises government departments, academics, and non-governmental organizations, and operates five Centres of Excellence in Vancouver, Edmonton, Toronto, Montréal and Halifax/Moncton (Citizenship and Immigration Canada 2006). Research generated through the Project is designed to be relevant to policy makers and practitioners.

2.1 Research on Immigrant Settlement

Much settlement research has focussed on the residential and housing patterns of immigrant groups (Lo and Wang 1997; Balakrishnana and Hou 1999; Murdie and Teixeira 2000; Myles and Hou 2003; Kumar and Leung 2005). A comfortable neighbourhood with affordable and adequate housing is seen as the first step to settlement, as education, employment, and income can follow from this (see Figure 1).

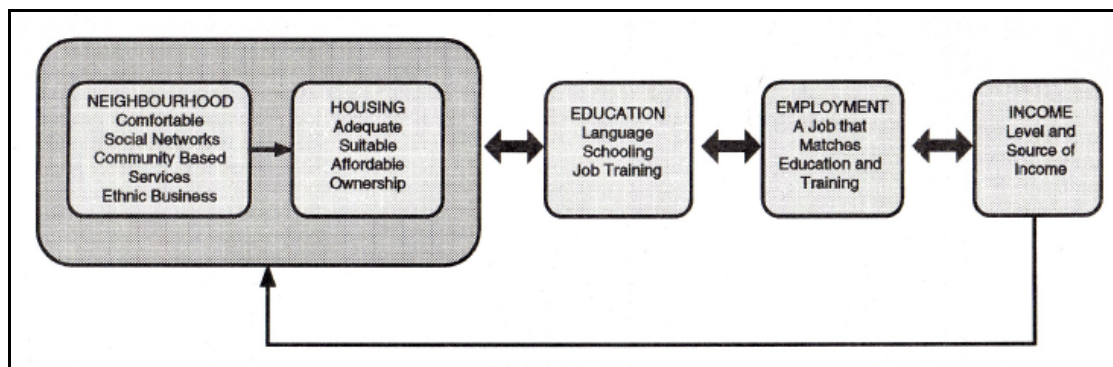


Figure 1: The Importance of Neighbourhood and Housing in Immigrant Integration (Murdie and Teixeira 2000, 4)

Within settlement studies, little attention has been paid to how confidence in navigating transportation systems is a vital component of the integration process. Immigrants are well aware of the importance of spatial mobility for accessing jobs and educational opportunities, and thus mastering the public transit system or learning to drive is paramount to successful settlement (Rose *et. al* 2002).

Seemingly mundane tasks like one's first experience of taking the subway or bus can be a momentous achievement and a key aspect of developing confidence in a new society.

Heisz and Schellenberg's article on work commute patterns showed that immigrants, even when controlling for gender, age, income, commute distance, and residential distance from the city centre, are more likely to use public transit than Canadian-born commuters, but the study did not look deeper into the experience of riding public transit as a new immigrant (2004). In the city with the highest proportion of recent immigrants (Toronto at 17 percent), they found that women were heavy users of public transit with a 6 percentage point difference between immigrant women and Canadian-born women, and a 17 percentage point difference between immigrant woman and immigrant men.

New immigrants need to do a lot of travelling around the city to set up their new life in Canada, and the women of the household are often responsible for running these errands (Rose *et. al* 2002). From visits to government agencies, social services, language training, and health care providers, there are many trips to be made, even if the women do not have paid employment.

2.2 Research on Women and Transport

It is, however, well documented that men and women have different transportation experiences (Cichoki 1980; Franck and Paxon 1989; Hanson and Pratt 1995, Niemeier and Morita 1996). While the Heisz and Schellenberg study focused on the work commute, women often have many additional household responsibilities and it is worth examining how public transit serves their needs. Transit systems have traditionally been designed to move large numbers of individual commuters to and from the central business district during peak hours, and service frequency declines during off peak hours. Women often travel for more reasons, and with more people in their party, than men, because of trips associated with childcare and the activities of children (Franck and Paxon 1989, 128). For women who work in addition to their household obligations, it can be a

huge challenge to find amenities such as day-care facilities within easy reach of both home and work. Research from the United States, Great Britain and Sweden also shows that women are primarily responsible for grocery shopping, whether or not they are employed (Franck and Paxon 1989, 128).

In addition to time spent in housekeeping and childcare activities, mothers who depend on public transit spend a lot of time making these trips, particularly if they live in a suburban area with infrequent transit service. This has important implications for leisure, recreation, and discretionary enjoyment of public spaces. Fear of sexual attack or other crimes also restricts the times and places where women feel comfortable being alone or with their children (Franck and Paxon 1989, 130). Robin Law (1999, 572) noted that the male domination of transport geography, as determined by a survey of American Association of Geographers speciality groups, has resulted in a dearth of literature that considers the female experience of taking public transit. Linda McDowell once wryly remarked that, "*The gangs, the urban crowds, the flaneurs, the political activists, even the stolid figures of urban commuters were never encumbered by a baby, a stroller and the week's shopping.*" (1993, 166).

Law, in examining the evolution of gender and mobility studies, noted that the field has narrowed to two main streams of research that stem from Anglophone feminist scholarship: mobility constraints resulting from the fear of sexual predation, and the gender differences of travel to and from a place of employment (Law 1999, 569). The journey-to-work research has been a particularly productive branch of urban feminist studies (Hanson and Hanson 1981; Hanson and Johnston 1985; Hanson and Pratt 1995). Law argued that the success of this line of inquiry has overshadowed issues such as the non-work trip, trips by the unemployed or unemployable, and potential trips that are not made (1999, 570). She proposed broadening the study of gender and transport to include social and cultural geographies of mobility, such as the use of unequally distributed resources, the experience of social interaction in transport-related settings, and cultural beliefs and practices. This report touches on all of these aspects of daily mobility, from

the point of view of new immigrant mothers living outside the downtown core of Toronto.

2.3 Immigrants and the Suburbs

Studies show that the suburbs have become the primary reception areas for new immigrants to Canada (Ray, Halseth and Johnson 1997; City of Toronto 1998). Toronto has a much higher proportion of recent immigrants than any other urban area in Canada, and many have settled in three post-war suburbs in particular: North York, Scarborough and York. Recent immigrants make up 16% of the population in both North York and Scarborough and 13% of York, compared with 11% in the old city of Toronto (City of Toronto 1998, 5).

The suburban spatial patterns of segregated land-uses and the temporal uncertainties of public transport in the suburbs generate time-space constraints that affect the mobility of immigrant women in these areas. These factors can hinder parenting tasks, household responsibilities and access to settlement services, particularly if the women do not have good access to resources for overcoming distance, such as public transit information or driving lessons (Rose *et. al* 2002).

The City of Toronto's 1998 profile of immigrants recognised that new immigrants are more dependent on public transit than the non-immigrant population, and that "for those living in the post-war suburban areas of the city not well served by the subway system, this transit dependence can only add to the difficulties of settling in." (City of Toronto 1998, 8). This report further focuses specifically on immigrant women from China, as the Chinese population in those three suburbs was over 20%, according to the 2001 Census (Chiu, Tran and Flanders 2005, 30).

3 *Research Methods*

In addition to a review of the existing literature, I gathered exploratory data through semi-structured interviews with immigrant women. I focused specifically on recently arrived women from China who live with their families outside Toronto's downtown core and take public transit (the Toronto Transit Commission or TTC). My research approach involved asking community agencies for their assistance in recruiting interviewees who met my search criteria, and the Working Women's Community Centre (WWCC) in North York was happy to oblige.

WWCC is an organisation that assists immigrant women and their families through services and programs aimed at settlement, language training, employment, health and wellness, and education and community development. In total I was given access to 17 women over two interview sessions that were each one hour long. These women were in advanced levels of the English language program, and the interviews were conducted in English. I also interviewed a family acquaintance, and this interview was conducted in the interviewee's native language of Cantonese. The women I spoke to lived in North York, Scarborough, Markham, and Richmond Hill. The results of these interviews are not intended to be representative of the experiences of all Chinese immigrant mothers in Toronto. They serve to highlight, from a user's perspective, some of the issues I have identified through discussion with interviewees and transit riders, and observations from riding public transit in Toronto.

During the interviews, I asked the women when they arrived in Canada, what forms of transportation were used in their family, and how they accessed shops and services while balancing childcare and other duties (please see Appendix A). I also asked about the experiences or potential challenges they faced while using public transit in Toronto. As the women were all very recent immigrants, I heard vivid stories about their adjustment to this system of mobility. In the following section, I quote my interviewees at length, without paraphrasing their stories. This treatment is influenced by Geraldine Pratt's interviews with Filipina and native-born nannies, and their employers, in Vancouver's suburbs (Pratt 2003). By letting

the women's experiences stand on their own, I can provide a poignant glimpse into the struggles and challenges encountered in the daily mobility of immigrant mothers.

4 Key Issues and Findings

Throughout the interviews, issues emerged that can be grouped into five major themes, which will be discussed throughout this section:

- The importance of transit
- Familiarity with the transit system
- Specific challenges concerned with taking public transit for non-work trips like childcare and groceries
- Strategies for dealing with language barriers
- Transportation costs

4.1 Importance of Transit

Public transit played an important role in these women's lives. Whether for integration, daily mobility, or environmental air quality, transit was a highly valued aspect of life in Toronto:

It's very hard as a new immigrant. I can't afford a car, and my English isn't good enough [to feel comfortable taking transit]. I want to go home, I feel very alienated. Transportation is crucial to integration.

- *M., a woman from Richmond Hill living in Canada for 2 years*
(This interview was conducted in the speaker's native language)

North York is more convenient for me than [when I used to live in] Mississauga. There are lots of activities downtown within easy reach. In North York, I can take the TTC, but only on Saturday and Sunday, 'cause I can buy a daypass to take my kids. We go to see the parades, and museums and the science centre, Ontario Place. They like these trips a lot.

- *L., a woman from North York, living in Canada for 3 years*

I think the bus is important in Toronto. If there are too many cars, the air is not clean. The bus, I think, is very important for seniors and for people that stay at home and those that don't have a job. For those that do have a job, downtown is too crowded with cars - many,

many cars - [and] taking the bus is better ... I think the government needs to buy more buses. That would be good.

- H., a woman from North York, living in Canada for 8 years

4.2 Familiarity with the Toronto Transit Commission

Navigating the TTC can be daunting for the uninitiated, whether or not they have a good grasp of English. The transfer system is particularly confusing. The stipulation on the back of the transfer leaves little room for uncertainty in navigation: *This transfer can be used at TTC transfer points for a one-way continuous trip with no backtracking. Most direct route must be taken.* For new users of the system, or even for long-time residents heading to an unfamiliar part of the city, finding the most direct route can be quite challenging. Some of the women I interviewed had difficulties with the transfer system:

Here, with the northbound and southbound lines, if you're not paying attention, you end up in the totally wrong direction. When you find out you're wrong, and you didn't get a transfer at the beginning, you need to walk, or ask somebody, or pay again. When I didn't know much English, I would have to pay again.

- F., a woman from North York, living in Canada for 1 year

Bus 39 at Finch...the buses are different. One bus stops at every major intersection, and I had to stop at a minor intersection, but I didn't know [this], and the bus passed my stop. In the beginning I was very shy and I couldn't speak English, and [when we passed my stop] I asked the driver why he didn't stop where I wanted to get off, and he just said, "Oh, your stop has passed." At that time, I didn't know I could ask for a transfer to take another bus back. And the driver didn't tell me. And so in the wintertime, I walked 1 and a half major intersections... Very long. And then I came home and my husband said I could've gotten a transfer, but I didn't know.

- J., a woman from Markham, living in Canada for 3.5 years

Another caveat of the one-way continuous trip requirement is that a transfer must be used at the first available transfer point, and the rider cannot walk to the next stop unlike with a time-based transfer system, where the fare is valid at any stop within a certain time period. For those used to the time-based transfer system, walking ahead to the next, less crowded, bus stop seems logical:

At the beginning, I didn't know you have to [transfer] at a major intersection. One time, it was raining, and at the major intersection, there were too many people at the shelter. If I stood there, I would

get wet. So I walked one stop, and I got on the bus, and I gave them my transfer, and the bus driver said, "No you can't, you have to wait for a major intersection!" And he ripped up my transfer and told me to pay again. I didn't know what to say, but I was so mad! ...The worst was that I only had \$2, but the [fare was] \$2 something... I also had a \$5 bill and asked him to please change it for me. And he said, "No, I don't have change." So I paid \$5.

- *J., a woman from Markham, living in Canada for 3.5 years*

4.3 Specific Mobility Challenges for Non-Work Trips

The women I spoke to discussed the difficulties of juggling grocery shopping and travelling with children on public transit. In a survey of women's travel patterns in a suburban development in Toronto, shopping activities comprised the majority of outings for nonworking women, and many hours were devoted to this activity (Cichocki 1980, 157). This was due to irregular public transit schedules in the suburbs, and the constraint of being able to carry only enough groceries to last a few days. In most cases, the families that I spoke with did have a car that the husband took to work; large grocery trips were therefore reserved for weekends.

Other than [weekend daytrips into downtown], we walk everywhere, even in the winter. It's very difficult. During a typical day, we get groceries, and maybe if my kids are sick they go to the doctor, and to school, and the Mandarin school. There are lots of activities around the school, like skating and swimming, but they always walk there. I walk with them.

- *L., a woman from North York, living in Canada for 3 years*

[My son in junior high] would like to do some piano after school or something, but it's hard without an extra car. Right now, it's not convenient.

- *F., a woman from North York, living in Canada for 1 year*

Taking a child in a stroller on the TTC was an issue that raised strong emotions. For any caregiver, immigrant or not, being stranded at the bus stop with a young child is not a desirable situation:

One time, I wanted to get on the bus at 5 o'clock, after work. [The bus driver] said, "Oh because it's crowded, you can't get on." Maybe they think it's not safe for the stroller. I think all, not all of them, but MOST of the drivers are very friendly, they lower down the steps, but since they don't have a special space [for strollers] so we could not get on the bus. That day I waited for two buses and then the

third bus, I decided to fold my stroller and hold my baby... it was cold and windy, my baby was crying, I was very upset that day... If I go out with my friend, and my friend also has a stroller, we cannot get on the same bus.

- *F., a woman from North York, living in Canada for 1 year*

It is not easy to take the bus in Markham. I have to transfer 3 times. It takes me about 1-1.5 hours, depending on traffic. I take my children here [to the community agency] on the bus. It's very difficult! I have one child, under 5. When she was young, as a baby, we needed a stroller; it was very difficult. Once they told me they didn't have room for the stroller on the bus. I didn't understand what they were saying. I thought that there was enough space for the stroller, but the driver said no.

- *J., a woman from Markham, living in Canada for 3.5 years.*

4.4 The Language Barrier

New immigrant women had different ways of dealing with the challenges associated with their initially poor grasp of English:

When I first arrived [in Canada], I didn't know my directions and once I was lost on the bus and got off, but I didn't know which way was my house. I couldn't ask another person because I didn't know enough English. So I just walked. I walked a long time until I found something that I recognised and I knew I was one block from my house.

- *H., a woman from North York, living in Canada for 8 years*

When I got to Canada, I knew a little bit of English. If I didn't know the directions, I could ask, but I needed to know more vocabulary to understand the answer. If they used a lot of words, I couldn't understand very much. Now it's a little better.

- *F., a woman from North York, living in Canada for 1 year*

When I first moved to Canada, it was very difficult to get around. I didn't know any more English, but now I've learned more at this school. [Before,] I only moved small distances, where I could walk!

- *L., a woman from North York, living in Canada for 3 years*

When I first got here, if I had to take the TTC, I used to write down a map at home, and then show people. I'd show them the main intersections, and ask them to let me down here. Then the driver would say, 'Ok you wait here and sit beside me.' Now I always help people on the bus that don't speak English. I remember that feeling I had!

- *J., a woman from Markham, living in Canada for 3.5 years*

From route selection to finding the right stop; being informed of the rules, or dealing with changes to the daily transport routine, taking public transit requires much better English skills than using a car as the primary form of mobility. Throughout my interviews with women and transit authorities, I believe that this is the biggest obstacle to overcome in terms of making transit an attractive option to those with little or no English skills.

4.5 Costs of Transportation in Toronto

The women I spoke to had all learned to drive when they arrived in Canada. Many families had one car that the husband drove to work, but only one woman had two cars in her family. The women without access to cars would take their children on the TTC, or walk to destinations within a half-hour's walk to save the TTC fare. All spoke about the high costs of car maintenance, and were actively making choices about the costs versus the convenience of owning a car (or a second car, as the case may be):

I used to live in Mississauga and my husband had a car. Now that he's working in China, we moved to North York and we sold the car to take TTC. A car is too expensive to insure and I am very scared of driving it in the winter, but in the future I would like to buy another one because it is so convenient.

- L., a woman from North York, living in Canada for 3 years

Having two cars is very convenient for us [despite the high cost]. Last year we didn't have a car, and I was pregnant with my youngest child and walking my older child to school before taking the TTC to my doctor's appointments.

- S., a woman from Scarborough, in Canada for 6 years

I know how to drive. I learned in Canada. I didn't buy a car, because at the beginning, we didn't have jobs and it was too expensive. And now my husband is in the US, and it's only me and I don't know how to take care of cars. I think it would be a huge problem for me! I don't know! So I said, 'OK, I'll take the TTC.' But it's inconvenient. If I go somewhere, I have to leave 1 or 2 hours early to take the bus. In China I took taxis. I could take a taxi for the same price as I pay for the TTC here. I preferred taking taxis.

- J., a woman from Markham, living in Canada for 3.5 years

If I can suggest, I hope the government will help seniors to get a cheaper monthly card. The bus is a necessity. I hope Toronto can get

a cheaper seniors' Metropass, because then seniors can attend many, many activities, every day.

- *H., a woman from North York, living in Canada for 8 years*

I also think the bus tickets are too expensive... [so] I walk to get my groceries. I can get to the No Frills in 30 min, but I only do that in the summer. In winter, I take the TTC.

- *J., a woman from Markham, living in Canada for 3.5 years.*

4.6 Summary of Findings

My interview results identified six main areas of concern for new immigrant mothers who use the TTC:

- Prohibitively high cost of transit
- Suburban amenities and services are too far apart to make transit a convenient option
- Confusing transfer system
- Need for greater driver empathy
- Frustration with the policy on strollers
- Mechanisms for dealing with the language barrier

Some of these concerns are problems that are applicable to a wider audience than just immigrant women, although these problems may be especially challenging when combined with a language barrier, unfamiliarity with Canadian society, and the traditional roles of women in Chinese culture. The first issue, transit costs, is an issue that affects every transit rider. The spatial arrangement of suburban destinations affect all users of suburban transit, while the confusing transfer system and need for driver empathy apply to any newcomer to Toronto (i.e. immigrants, tourists, students or those who have recently moved to the city from elsewhere). The need to get strollers onto crowded buses applies to any caregiver, whether immigrant or Canadian-born. Making the system more intuitive to navigate (wayfinding) while also providing comprehensive language translation would be beneficial to all new users of the transit system, including immigrants.

Viewing the public transit experience through the eyes of immigrant mothers highlights areas that also affect other subgroups. Improvements in any of these areas would provide better service for many riders. My report focuses on service improvement recommendations that the TTC could easily implement, and therefore will not cover the first two concerns listed: suburban land use policy or fare cost changes. Suburban land use, although a crucial component to better transit service in the suburbs, is outside the jurisdiction of the TTC. The current cost of a one-way fare poses a major challenge to new immigrant mothers, however the TTC relies heavily on fare box recovery to maintain its operations, and the uncertainty of additional sources of funding from other levels of government makes it difficult to offer workable solutions.

Therefore, I analyse the final four areas of concern: fare structure, customer relations training, stroller policy, and outreach to new transit riders. In the following section, I use the highlighted issues to inform my analysis of current and proposed practices in the public transit industry and to propose new solutions where there are currently gaps.

5 *Towards Inclusive Transit Planning*

An issue paper published by the Canadian Urban Transit Association (CUTA), a group that represents the public transit industry in Canada, discussed the mobility challenges of people with disabilities (physical, sensory or cognitive), senior citizens, youth, low-income persons, and new Canadians (CUTA 2003, 1). Such a broad and comprehensive definition of accessibility is rare, as the term has become synonymous with wheelchair-friendly policies and amenities. As such, I have used the term *inclusive transit* to discuss policies and practices that could benefit a diverse group of transit users, in addition to immigrant women. This type of policy reflects the principles of universal and inclusive design, which is the design of environments to include as many people as possible (Clarkson *et. al* 2003). Inclusive design does not cater to the lowest common denominator, nor does it attempt to reconcile the often-conflicting needs of all potential minority groups. Rather, by considering many varieties of need, inclusive design tries to break down barriers to avoid unnecessary exclusion. For example, well-placed signage that relies on pictures rather than text is beneficial to immigrants, visitors, the visually impaired, and senior citizens.

The discussion paper by CUTA provided an overview of current Canadian initiatives to serve a culturally diverse transit ridership. CUTA and the National Literacy Secretariat developed a computer program called *conneXions* to help train new English or French speakers to use public transit. At \$50 for a limited time period, it is not easily accessible to individuals and therefore, is offered at only 100 schools, agencies, and centres across Canada. None of the community agency workers, interviewees, or transit agency representatives I spoke to seemed to know about this program, which indicates that either better outreach is needed or the material covered is not as useful as intended. In one review of the software, it mentioned that the *Fares and Transfers* section explains rates and how to use transfers in the City of Mississauga only (McCargar 2003).

CUTA identifies only one immigrant-specific transit policy currently used in Canada: language translation (CUTA 2003, 3). This is available at ticket dispensers in Vancouver, on two phone lines in Toronto and Ontario, and on a website in

Toronto. As discussed below, these offerings in their current form are limited and difficult to use. As a result, awareness of these programs is low and their utility to the immigrant community could be improved. I begin by discussing the current state of multicultural transit policies in Toronto, before looking to the Greater Vancouver Transportation Authority (TransLink) and the San Francisco Municipal Railway (Muni) for industry best practices.

5.1 Ontario Transportation Policy

The needs of immigrant transit riders are not well addressed in existing transit policy. For instance, the Transportation Tomorrow Survey is an important survey on urban travel patterns, administered by the Ontario Ministry of Transportation, 18 municipal governments, GO Transit (the commuter rail system) and the TTC (TTS 2006). This survey was first undertaken in 1986, and it is updated every five years. The results are used in hundreds of transportation planning studies, and provide a database for long-range transportation planning decisions in the region. About 150,000 randomly selected families from across central Ontario are asked questions about trip origin, destination, time, purpose, and method of travel for every member of the household. However, this key planning tool is administered only in English and French. The travel patterns of new immigrants who may not yet be fluent in these languages are not captured. Such a major source of information for road and infrastructure planning in central Ontario should ensure a representative sample.

5.2 The Toronto Transit Commission

5.2.1 Service and Communication

The TTC's *Ridership Growth Strategy* details efforts to attract more riders by increasing service comfort and reliability, and improving the cleanliness and ambience of subway stations and trains. It also has a section on improving passenger focus in service delivery:

The TTC's operating practices, business culture, and sensitivity to passenger needs - factors that will affect the TTC's ability to be a serious travel option in Toronto well beyond the medium term - must reflect and continually adapt to the needs and expectations of its changing passenger base (TTC 2003, 11).

The *Ridership Growth Strategy* identified a number of initiatives aimed at communicating effectively with passengers, all of which are in need of more funding for improvement and expansion: more effective signage at stations and across the system; electronic information on the TTC website; display of vehicle arrival times at stations, bus stops, and streetcar stops; direct marketing of community-specific service information, and automated stop announcements on the subway (TTC 2003, 11). Improvement of these programs would be beneficial to the women that I interviewed:

In the main stations, they have the TTC map on the wall but it's too small to see. A lot of [bus] stops do not even have the map.

- F., a woman from North York, living in Canada for 1 year

When I first got to Toronto, [taking the bus/subway] was a big problem for me because of the language. [When the drivers announce the stops] sometimes they speak too fast or they say too many words, and I don't know what they're saying.

H., a woman from North York, living in Canada for 8 years

[The language barrier] was a problem when I first got here, because they [the drivers] speak very fast and the street names are unfamiliar...and I can't catch them. They need to speak slowly, or repeat again.

- F., a woman from North York, living in Canada for 1 year

I would love to see Chinese translations [of stop names], in print and over the PA. Then when I take the buses, I wouldn't be so panicky, and afraid that I will miss my stop. If buses become easier to use for immigrants, maybe people will not want to drive so much, and use the buses more often. In China, it's a recorded message announcing the roads in English and Chinese, not the driver. In Hong Kong, the next stations are displayed in English and Chinese on the electronic signs.

- M., a woman from Richmond Hill living in Canada for 2 years

The TTC does not currently provide language translations at individual stops, however they do have language translation over the phone and website, as discussed in the following section.

5.2.2 Language Translation

Marilyn Bolton, the Public Affairs Director for the TTC, listed the language line and webpage translation as the TTC's immigrant-targeted policies. The TTC offers automated telephone information in 20 languages, route maps in 12 languages, and webpages in 15 languages (CUTA 2003, 3). No active program of outreach for immigrants is run by the TTC; however, in the 1980s, when the TTC had more funding, it created and periodically updated a video that could be shown to immigrant groups (Bolton 2007, *pers. comm.*). Now the TTC relies on community agencies to gather this information on their own. J., a woman from Markham living in Canada for 3.5 years, mentioned that, "*In the introductory-level English classes, they talk a bit about taking the bus, but not so much in the older levels.*" In another example, a page at www.settlement.org discusses where one can find schedules, routes and fares for the TTC (Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants 2007). It also mentions the 20 languages available on the TTC Language Line and provides links to TTC websites in 15 different languages.

While the language lines are an impressive offering, and the TTC advertises these services across the TTC system, outreach is still ineffective. Immigrants I spoke to for this study, and for a prior study on senior citizens in immigrant-heavy Scarborough (Au *et. al* 2006), did not know about the TTC's language lines or multilingual web pages when told about the services. The following quote from one of my interviewees, suggesting a Chinese hotline, also indicates unawareness that this service is currently offered:

You should get a public transit pamphlet as soon as you get off the plane, to prevent immigrants from feeling lost. A pamphlet sorted into areas (i.e. Richmond Hill, Markham) about what buses to take, where they run, how much it costs, etc. A Chinese hotline, or a guidebook you can carry on the bus with you.

- M., a woman from Richmond Hill living in Canada for 2 years

A call to the language line revealed a number of obstacles that a non-English speaker would face. The TTC's Telephone Info page is in English, and lists the phone number with words (i.e. 416-393-INFO), which is perhaps not a universally

recognised way to know to dial 416-393-4636.² Other pages on the TTC site that were targeted specifically at immigrants listed the phone number as a number and contained translations into different languages. However, consistency in providing this information is needed.

When this number is dialled, the recorded message lists seven options (in English) and there is no way of knowing that at the very end, one is instructed (in English) to push 7 for multilingual service. After pushing 7, the recording gives groups of options: "For Cantonese, Mandarin, Japanese, and Korean, push 1"; "For French, Portuguese, etc. push 2" and then the caller is transferred to a third menu where the individual languages can be chosen (again, in English).

This process is cumbersome and someone with a poor grasp of English would be easily lost. Perhaps the language line could be its own separate number, apart from the English transit information, and the opening menu could just be a translated reading of all 20 of the languages offered in the automated service. This would be in line with a host of bilingual phone services offered by any government-affiliated organization, where one of the first lines a caller hears is "*Pour la service en français, appuyez sur le deux maintenant.*"

The TTC promises to talk to you in 70 languages on its subway posters and the website. Thanks to a contract with California company Language Line Services, they provide customer service in up to 170 languages and dialects, using a network of interpreters from across North America who work out of their homes (Gerstel 2007). Customers phone the language line listed above, and push 0 for a live operator. After a few words in a foreign language, the TTC operator initiates a three-way call with Language Line Services operators who are trained to recognise which language is being spoken. They have had a 100% success rate with finding the right interpreter. Unfortunately, nowhere on TTC advertising does it instruct callers to push 0 for their language, nor does it tell them to push 7 for automated multilingual service (see Appendix B). The website for the language line, while it

² This comment is only applicable to the Telephone Info page at <http://www.toronto.ca/ttc/phoneinfosystem.htm>

(inconsistently) mentions pushing 7 for service in another language, there is no mention of pushing 0 for a live operator. This lack of awareness may be why the usage of Language Line Services is quite low (60 calls a month) for an agency that moves an average of 1.4 million riders a day in a highly multicultural city (Gerstel 2007 and TTC 2005a).

5.2.3 Gendered TTC Policies

The TTC has several initiatives aimed at ensuring the safety and security of women riders (Bolton 2007, *pers. comm.*). The Request Stop program allows women riding the bus at night to ask the driver to let them off at the closest point to their destination, rather than waiting for a designated stop. In the subway stations, “designated waiting areas” are brightly lit and clearly visible to the mid-train TTC personnel when the subway comes to a halt.

As discussed in the literature review, women tend to have different travel patterns from men. Household and childcare responsibilities often mean multiple stops on the way to and from the final destination. The current fare structure of the TTC, a one-way, continuous-trip fare, is not conducive to this kind of trip-making pattern. In addition, users who are unfamiliar with the system may overshoot and pass their destination or transfer point, and the one-way fare system penalises this kind of user. In August 2005, the TTC began a pilot project with time-based transfers that allowed for unlimited boardings - stopovers or reverse direction - within a 2-hour period along the 512 St. Clair route (TTC 2005b). Due to track reconstruction, there is a temporary bus service along this route, and a time-based transfer is meant to compensate St. Clair riders and storeowners for the inconvenience. It is also expected to reduce driver-passenger conflicts over transfer validity. Using ridership data from the Transportation Tomorrow Survey, the TTC is expecting to lose about \$300,000 to \$500,000 over the duration of the construction as a result of this change. A key impediment to system-wide implementation of the time-based transfer is the prediction of significant revenue losses (TTC 2005b).

As discussed in my key findings, the uncertainty of whether women can bring their strollers onto the bus was a source of considerable frustration. According to TTC By-Law 17:

No person shall bring bicycles, skis, sleds, toboggans and other large objects likely to inconvenience or jeopardize the safety of other passengers onto any vehicle of the commission during the hours of 0630 hours to 0930 hours and 1530 hours to 1830 hours, Monday to Friday inclusive, during an emergency, or at any other time that vehicles are heavily loaded.

MAXIMUM PENALTY FOR ANY VIOLATION OF THE FOREGOING BY-LAW IS \$500.
Toronto Transit Commission By-Laws December 7, 1990

In a phone conversation, Marilyn Bolton from the TTC mentioned that there was an operations notice instructing drivers to give strollers priority, even during rush hour. However, despite the agreeable response to a verbal request and a follow-up email, I have not been able to view a copy of this operations notice. As it stands, the official TTC By-Laws and the experiences of women I interviewed indicate that caregivers still face difficulty in getting onto a bus with a child in a stroller

5.2.4 Customer Service

The TTC did a study many years ago on customer expectations and driver's opinions on what was expected from them (Bolton 2007, *pers. comm.*). They found that while customers expected courteous and polite service, drivers thought they were expected to get customers from point A to B safely. The difference was that customers assumed that safety was a given, while drivers did not think that customer safety could be so easily taken for granted, as driving conditions, particularly in the winter, can be quite treacherous. The job conditions for drivers can be quite challenging, and in the face of unreasonable or aggressive passengers, good customer service can quickly become a low priority.

Recognising that good service in public transit is a two-way street, a number of programs are designed to improve the quality and friendliness of the service that the TTC delivers. Employees who receive customer commendations for exceptional service are recognised in the "Awards of Excellence" program as a model to their peers (TTC 2003).

Another crucial initiative is operator empathy lessons during employee training and development. To be hired as a driver, applicants must complete an intensive 23-day course that includes both classroom training and time behind the wheel (Gray 2007). New recruits are now selected for their customer service experience over previous driving experience, and classroom training includes discussion on how to avoid confrontation when dealing with the public. Hypothetical situations involving religion, human rights, and multiculturalism are presented and discussed. The diversity of the ridership the TTC serves is reflected in the makeup of new hires: 65% of new operators hired in 2006 were either women or visible minorities, as compared to the existing composition of 38% women and minorities (Gray 2007). After initial hire training, there are no regular driver refresher trainings; an empathy refresher course is given to an individual driver if that driver receives a number of complaints in a short time frame (Bolton 2007, *pers. comm.*). The likelihood of a new immigrant issuing an official complaint is not very high. The rider must know the system well enough to feel they are being wronged, and they need enough confidence in English to register a complaint.

5.3 York Region Transit

While the majority of my interviewees used the TTC, which serves North York and Scarborough, two of the women were from Richmond Hill and Markham, and thus their journeys began on the separate York Region Transit (YRT) system. The needs of immigrant riders in the York Region suburbs are not well met by the existing system. Despite the inclusion of the very latest technologies in the YRT's Viva bus rapid transit network, launched in 2005, YRT/Viva do not yet offer multilingual services on its web page, phone line, or ticket purchasing terminals.

It does, however, have an official policy for strollers in its Customer Code of Conduct (YRT 2007):

10.1 Passengers are required to remove children from the strollers during crowded conditions, and the stroller must be folded if it will interfere with standing passengers or the safe movement of passengers within the bus. Refusal to remove the child or if the stroller cannot be folded, the operator shall have the right to advise

the customer that they will have to wait for the next bus that has room to accommodate the stroller.

The fare structure is also more accommodating on YRT/Viva, as they operate a two-hour transfer and a proof-of-payment system. A single fare enables customers to make stopovers or return trips for a two-hour period, provided that the travel is completed within that period. There are no fare boxes on Viva, meaning riders must hold on to their ticket in case a fare inspector asks for proof-of-payment. While this is useful for trips made entirely within York Region, if a rider needs to cross boundaries, as my interviewees do to attend the Working Women's Community Centre in the TTC jurisdiction, then they must purchase another fare that does not offer time-based transferring.

YRT's driver sensitivity training is limited to future implementation of customer service training, specifically pertaining to passengers with disabilities, which falls far short of the TTC's extensive training program for new hires (Ministry of Community and Social Services n.d.).

In terms of transit policies that benefit immigrant women, the TTC appears to be ahead of YRT despite the recent developments in transit technologies exemplified by Viva. The TTC could adopt a stroller policy similar to YRT's, and a time-based transfer that operates across different transit systems would greatly improve the provision of transit service in the GTA.

5.4 Best Practices in Inclusive Transit

I have chosen to look at the policies of Vancouver's TransLink and San Francisco's Muni systems for industry best practices. Both systems are regarded as leaders in progressive and visionary transit planning, and both cities have large populations of immigrants and have developed policies to cater to this segment of ridership. Vancouver has taken an inclusive approach to developing its *Access Transit Plan*, and has proposed policies and actions that will benefit as many people as possible, including those with "physical, cognitive, or other mobility difficulties" (Leicester 2005). This completed plan, which is currently stalled pending sufficient funding,

is perhaps the most comprehensive approach to accessibility in North America. However, to find inclusive transit policies currently in practice, I looked to San Francisco for examples.

As indicated in my key findings, the four areas I will be focussing on are fare structure, customer relations training, stroller policy, and outreach to new transit riders. Neither city individually addresses all of four of these issues; however, when looking at both systems I found that where one system was lacking a policy, the other system had one in place.

5.4.1 Vancouver

Fare Structure

Fares in Vancouver buy 90 minutes of travel time in any direction. There is no designated transfer point, and the fare may be used for stopovers or round trips, as long as the last bus, boat or train is boarded before the 1.5 hours period has ended.

Customer Relations Training

TransLink, like the TTC, offers driver empathy training as part of the initial new hire process. They also do not offer regular in-service training, but provide refresher courses for individual drivers following an incident. The company has just announced three days of mandatory update training for all of its operators (Sutherland 2007, *pers. comm.*).

Outreach to New Transit Riders

Since 2002, TransLink has had multilingual touch-screen ticket dispensers available at all of its SkyTrain and SeaBus stations (CUTA 2003, 3). Information is offered in English, French, Punjabi, Chinese, Japanese, German and Braille. While the SkyTrain and the SeaBus are important components of the Vancouver transportation system, the vast majority of trips are made on buses, where drivers are the first point of contact. Thus the utility of the multilingual ticket dispensers

is somewhat limited, as many riders will need to interact with an English-speaking driver.

To address this, TransLink offers one-hour public transit orientation workshops for new immigrants, which cover topics such as how fares and transfers work, where to purchase fares, which type of fare to purchase, tips for using the bus system, SkyTrain and SeaBus, public transit etiquette, where to get information on routes, and finally, employment with TransLink (See Appendix C). Community groups and settlement agencies arrange for these workshops to be held on a regular basis in an easily accessible location, and also provide translation. TransLink views these sessions as an integral part of the immigrant settlement process in Vancouver:

We believe that the time we devote to transit orientation workshops is well spent. Although it is difficult to quantify, we believe these sessions help reduce the number of conflicts our operators experience while trying to enforce fare policies. A significant amount of lost revenue relates to the lack of knowledge of fare policy among new immigrants. Many immigrants who could use public transit will drive to work because they are unfamiliar with public transit, and do not want to be embarrassed. Others pay insufficient fares because they are not aware of fare zones. They feel a great amount of shame if one of our fare enforcement teams finds them with the wrong ticket.

-John Timms, Corporate Communications, TransLink

TransLink also sets up mobile transit information booths at a number of new immigrant resources fairs held throughout the year (Timms 2007, *pers. comm.*). The booth is staffed with employees from the Transit Information Centre, and they are equipped with laptops with access to any information that a new immigrant may need.

In addition to these existing policies, a number of proposals in TransLink's stalled *Access Transit Plan* would improve the ability for newcomers to successfully navigate an unfamiliar system. The following excerpts from the workshop sessions were provided by an anonymous TransLink official:

Wayfinding and Signage

- Simplicity is key

- Signage should be consistent with international conventions; emphasis should be placed on icons as opposed to text
- Number bus stops to make them more identifiable
- At stations, directional signage should be two-sided
- Partner with municipalities to provide directional wayfinding signage to stations

Customer Training

- Instructional packages, such as videotapes or DVD's, could be prepared and made available to different non-governmental organizations, such as those serving new immigrants
- Language cards could have key phrases about transit, and be distributed to immigrant settlement agencies.

5.4.2 San Francisco

Fare Structure

Muni issues transfers valid for 90-120 minutes of travel, except on Cable Cars. Trips can include stopovers or round trips, as long as the travel is completed within that time period. Fares received after 8:30 p.m. are valid until 5:00 a.m. the next day.

Stroller Policy

The official policy is that the guardian must take the child out of the stroller and hold onto the child during transit. When the vehicle is packed during rush hour, Muni feels that the child will "be safer in the caregiver's arms, rather than in a stroller that could be crushed by falling people" (Osborne 2007, *pers. comm.*). One of my interviewees, F., a woman from North York living in Canada for 1 year, previously lived in Tokyo for a period. She said she always brought her child onto the packed subways by holding him close and folding up his stroller. When she attempted to do the same thing in Toronto, she was prevented from doing so as it was considered to be in violation of By-Law 17.

Outreach to New Transit Riders

Muni's website has an easy-to-read section for new riders, including information on trip planning, where and when Muni runs, how the fare structure works, how to make the bus/streetcar on time, how to recognise a bus/streetcar stop, how to

properly exit a vehicle, where to get a map, where to get more info on special needs, and commonly encountered problems (Muni 2007). However, this page is not available in any other languages.

The main immigrant outreach is through translations on signage and documents, which are translated into Chinese and Spanish (Osborne 2007, *pers. comm.*). The paratransit service is also translated into Russian and Vietnamese. There is a general information phone line, where it is possible to get a query answered in Chinese or Spanish, however this offer is not guaranteed. If there is no Spanish or Chinese phone operator available, contact info is recorded and the person will be called back whenever possible, "if they understand that much" (Osborne 2007, *pers. comm.*). Because the phone service translation is not a consistently offered service, there is no active marketing. The mandate of the Accessible Services division is to ensure that all paper documents are available in multiple languages.

6 Recommendations for the Toronto Transit Commission

Using recommendations suggested by my interviewees, and an analysis of current and proposed practices in the public transit industry, I set out to propose workable recommendations for the TTC in the following four areas:

- fare structure
- customer relations training
- stroller policy
- outreach to new transit riders

6.1 Fare Structure

The existing fare structure, with its one-way continuous-trip set up, is too restrictive. It penalises newcomers to the system who may overshoot their stop, get on a subway heading the wrong direction, or are simply unfamiliar with the most direct route to their destination. The one-way fare also makes the TTC prohibitively expensive for transit-dependent riders who need to travel to carry out their household or childcare responsibilities. It is economically set-up for commuting, and does not accommodate complex trip-making.

Recommendation 1:

Time-based transfers should be extended across the system to accommodate newcomers and captive riders with childcare and household responsibilities.

A time-based transfer would give riders unlimited boardings of any transit vehicle within a certain time period, usually 90 minutes. In addition, this would simplify the connection process, as riders can catch the connecting bus at any transit-stop, rather than only at major intersections. Time-based transfers, like those used across the YRT, TransLink, and Muni systems, are currently in a pilot phase along St. Clair in Toronto. This pilot project should be wrapping up as construction on the track has recently finished, and the TTC will have to review the ridership and revenue impacts of switching to this form of transfer. Of Canada's eight largest transit authorities, only the TTC and Halifax do not currently allow stopovers or returns on a transfer.

6.2 Customer Relations

The *Ridership Growth Strategy* discusses the need to "support, strengthen and accelerate" the commitment to friendly customer service on the TTC. To that end,

the rigorous training program should be extended beyond the initial hiring process. Currently, drivers receive further training only after incidents have already occurred. This may create resentment if operators feel they are being punished. It also puts the onus on drivers to defend themselves against customer complaints, no matter how irrational or fabricated.

Recommendation 2:

Empathy training updates should be given proactively, rather than as a reaction to a sufficient number of complaints.

While drivers do not currently receive regular in-service training, they do meet when there is a change in regulations or legislation. Empathy refreshers should be on the agenda at these meetings, and the training could be made more poignant by bringing in a guest to speak about challenges they face, or those encountered by the people they serve (i.e. a seniors' home worker, someone from an immigrant settlement agency, a person in a wheelchair, etc.).

6.3 Stroller Policy

Both YRT and Muni have official policies on baby strollers, and the TTC could do a better job at accommodating baby strollers with an amendment to By-Law 17.

Recommendation 3:

Riders with baby strollers should be given the same priority as wheelchair users, provided that the stroller is collapsed and the guardian holds the child during transit.

6.4 Outreach to New Transit Riders

The TTC should conduct a study on why the usage of its language line is so low (60 calls per month) for a multicultural city that moves 1.4 million riders a day. A revamping of the language line to make it more user friendly, as well as better strategies for immigrant outreach may be needed.

Recommendation 4:

Streamline the language line to make it easier for non-English speakers to find the right information. Make advertisements for the language line clearer and more explicit.

Some preliminary suggestions:

- Give the language line its own separate number, apart from the English information line.
- The opening menu of the automated service should be a translated reading of all 20 languages offered.
- Advertisements should include mention of pushing 0 to speak to a live operator who may be able to speak a language that is not listed.
- If the language line is not made into a separate number, advertisements and web pages should consistently mention pushing 7 to hear TTC information in different languages.

The TTC used to have a videotape aimed at new immigrant transit users, but the program was shelved due to funding cutbacks (Bolton 2007, *pers.comm.*). At the moment, the only orientation program it offers is for the users of Wheel-Trans. Following Vancouver's example, perhaps it is time to re-examine the potential for a new immigrant orientation workshop to reduce conflicts and improve the transit experience for both driver and rider.

***Recommendation 5:
Investigate the possibility of reviving the new immigrant public transit orientation sessions.***

An additional medium for translation could be a wallet-sized laminated card distributed to immigrant agencies or available at TTC stations. Commonly used phrases such as, "I would like a transfer, please" and "Can I please get off here?" or "Back door!" could be included. An alternative would be to make a list of commonly used transit phrases in other languages for a driver to use, on a voluntary basis. Perhaps drivers who frequently drive routes that go through predominantly ethnic areas could learn key phrases to make an otherwise frustrating situation more pleasant for all parties.

***Recommendation 6:
Provide a Translation Card of commonly used transit phrases in different languages.***

7 Conclusion

Canada's new immigrants are increasingly choosing to settle in the suburbs, rather than in the downtown core. These suburbs have diverse urban planning needs, due to variations in population densities, employment location, and types of services and amenities. We need to know much more about the immigrant settlement experience in the suburbs, and a key aspect of that is mobility.

At a 2002 strategic workshop on Immigrant Women Making Place in Canadian Cities, a workshop affiliated with the Metropolis Project, researchers concluded that more needs to be known about the geographic mobility of suburban immigrant women, including how it varies with social class and time, to plan for delivery of services geared towards immigrants (Rose *et. al* 2002). The workshop proceedings also posed the question, "*What can be done (apart from providing information in more languages) to make it easier for immigrant women to get around by public transit?*" This report explores this question for the Toronto context, and proposes six workable solutions that the TTC could implement. More awareness about the importance of public transit in the role of immigrant settlement is needed. An interviewee also stressed the importance of transit from her own experiences:

Being able to access services is key to feeling integrated and settled. When I got off the plane, I got information on finding a job, and finding a house, but nothing on transportation. In fact, that is as important as finding a house or job.

- *M.*, a woman from Richmond Hill living in Canada for 2 years
(this interview was conducted in the speaker's native language)

This report was intended to be an exploratory look at one aspect of immigrant women's experiences in the suburbs, and only begins to scratch the surface of many larger questions: Why do immigrant women opt to locate in low-density suburbs, even when this may offer poor access to schools, services, amenities, and desirable employment? Is it the allure of living with others of the same culture in an ethnic enclave, or perhaps in an area where women may be socially isolated but their children have more opportunities for rapid integration? Was the decision motivated by economics, desire to live on a single-family lot with a yard, or gendered power relations? How does their current living environment measure up

to how they envisioned their life to be before emigrating? For women who choose to drive a car, do they actively enjoy, or merely tolerate the driving lifestyle necessitated by suburban built form and service provisioning?

Planners need to know if new immigrants are locating in low-density, unsustainable suburbs for reasons of preference or because there is a lack of affordable, attractive options. Until these issues are addressed, the existing form of mobility for many of these immigrants, public transit, can be improved with the six practical recommendations that I have proposed here.

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Appendix A: Interview Questions

How long have you lived in Canada?

Have you lived in Toronto since you arrived here?

Does your family own a car?

YES: How many drivers/cars are in your family?

NO: Is this something you wish you had? Why?

What do you typically do during the day and how do you get there?

- a. Groceries (weekly food runs, special trips for ethnic specialties, 'one ingredient missing' scenarios, etc.)
- b. Kids (getting them to school, extra-curricular activities, etc.)
- c. Religious services
- d. Immigrant services (ESL classes, employment classes, etc.)
- e. Recreation

What is easy to get to? What's a problem to get to?

When you think about the things you need to do during the week, which of the following forms of transportation would you prefer?
(walking/cycling/transit/driving)

Can you talk about the challenges you experienced with getting around in Canada when you first arrived?
(For example, signage, figuring out routes, asking for directions, making it to destinations on time, cost, convenience, safety)

Can you share any stories or anecdotes about problems you've had on public transit?

How about problems you've witnessed other immigrants having?

Is there anything else you would like to tell me about the challenges you face in getting around?

Any recommendations for future policy change?

Appendix C: TransLink ESL Presentation Guide 2007

This transcript was taken by an ESL teacher present at a Vancouver public transit orientation session, and was generously provided by John Timms, Corporate Communications for TransLink.

Introduction

- Brief explanation that Translink is the regional government body that develops public transportation. TransLink plans the routes; Coast Mountain Bus Co. operates the buses.
- Bus Skytrain and SeaBus are all together....one system...one ticket.

Fares

- When you put money into a fare machine, you buy 90 minutes of time. You can travel in any direction for 1.5 hours. As long as there is time left on your transfer when you board the bus or SkyTrain, you may travel as far as you need to.
- Monday through Friday from 1st bus until 6:30 pm there are 3 fare zones. (explain the zones) There are no fare zones on Saturday, Sunday, and holidays.
- Your transfer will have printed information on the back and electronic information on the front. When you board a second bus within 90 minutes, put the transfer into the machines, it will come back to you. If the time is finished, the machine will keep the ticket, and the driver will ask you to pay more money.
- Ticket machines will give you change.
- You should not buy a used ticket from other passengers. The ticket may have been erased then re-stamped. You may have to go to court and could have a criminal record. This would be a problem when you apply for citizenship.
- Do not give your transfer to other passengers.

Fare Media

You can save money by buying pre-paid fares at Safeway, Save-on, London Drugs etc.

FareSaver tickets: When you buy a book of ten, you will only pay for eight. Yellow tickets are 1 Zone, red are 2 Zones, and green are 3 zones.

Monthly pass: You must select and scratch the right zone on both a one-zone and two-zone monthly pass. Adult monthly passes are yellow for 1-zone, red for 2-zones, and Green for 3-zones.

Since there are no zones on Saturday, Sundays, or Holidays, 1-zone monthly passes are valid system-wide on weekends.

An adult monthly pass will allow up to 2 adults, and 4 children (12 and under) to travel on Sundays & holidays.

Can be shared ie: husband works days, wife works evenings.

If you need to travel more than one zone, you can upgrade by paying extra on a bus or by purchasing ADDFARE tickets at a SkyTrain or SeaBus ticket machine.

The "Concession" monthly pass is valid in all zones at a cost of \$40 per month. You must be either a senior citizen (65+), under the age of 14, or a secondary school student with a valid Go Card (high-school identification)

Daypass: Valid system wide (3 zones), valid from 1st bus to last bus of the day. You must scratch the correct date! You buy them at London Drugs, and major grocery stores.

Annual Pass: You must be 65+ years old. Your income may not exceed \$18,000 per year, and you must qualify for the old age security program. Contact the Bus Pass Program @ 682-0391. You will be asked for your Social Security number. The cost is \$45 per year.

Using the bus system

- Be careful to look at both the route number and the destination. Many bus routes share one destination such as a transit loop. Sometimes one route number will have two different destinations while travelling in the same direction. ie: 340 Guildford/Cloverdale.
- In Vancouver, if the route number is more than 100, this is a suburban express bus and you are not allowed to get off of the bus in Vancouver. Routes 97, 98 & 99 are urban express lines. You can board and get off these buses wherever two bus routes cross.
- You should get transit information at 953-3333, or on the internet at translink.bc.ca before you start your trip. If you need to ask for information from a bus driver, make sure the bus is stopped.
- Bus drivers like new immigrants because new immigrants tend to be very respectful toward them.
- After 9:00pm you can request that you be let off between bus stops. As long as it is safe to do so, the driver will let you off.
- Move to the rear, exit by the rear doors if possible.
- Plan your trip, get to the bus stop 5 minutes early
- Bus schedules are free, and available at public libraries. Most times shown in bus schedules are estimates only. Be at the stop 5 minutes early.
- Most buses, with the exception of trolleys are now accessible. SkyTrain and SeaBus are also accessible.

Using the SkyTrain

- You must validate your FareSaver tickets before going to the platform area. If the ticket is not validated, the fine will be \$173.
- Transfers from buses do not need to be validated. Check to make sure you still have time left.

- Hold your children's hands on escalators, stand behind the yellow line on the platform. Some trains will pass through the station without stopping.
- There are no drivers on SkyTrain. Computers operate the trains. If you need assistance, please use the emergency telephones on the platforms or on the trains. (explain the emergency equipment using the large display photos).
- If someone falls into the track area, there is an alarm system that will stop the movement of the trains. There is also a red stop button located above the telephone in the emergency cabinet (show picture).
- You will notice there are cameras everywhere in the station. These are for passenger security. The pictures are held for 2 hours, and then they are erased. If you experience any problem while using SkyTrain, report the problem right away.
- The yellow line along the windows of SkyTrain is a silent alarm system. If you touch it, an attendant will enter your car at the next station. You may have to wait 2 stations. This system is for reporting any problem other than a real emergency.
- The red emergency telephone button next to the door is for emergencies. This is the same as calling 911.
- If you are uncomfortable in one car of a train, you can simply transfer to another car at the next station.
- There are two SkyTrain lines, the Expo Line and the Millennium Line. Although you can transfer between the two lines at the Broadway Station / Commercial Stations, they do not directly connect. You can also transfer between the two lines at Columbia Station. Check the L.E.D. signs and listen for an announcement to ensure you are on the right train.

Discover Vancouver on Transit

- Vancouver is one of the most beautiful cities in the world. You will be able to visit almost every park, beach, or shopping area by using the bus. You can even go skiing using public transit.
- You could use public transit and the BC Ferries to travel to Victoria. A Victoria transit bus will meet your ferry at Swartz Bay. TransLink transit passes are not valid in Victoria.

Employment with TransLink

- Many people ask about jobs at TransLink. We are always hiring bus drivers and skilled trades people, as well as office staff. You can check for jobs online at www.translink.bc.ca. Translink offers excellent career opportunities. I would especially encourage you to talk to your children about careers in the Trades. Jobs in the skilled trades offer very high pay, security, and, you are paid while you are learning. High school students can begin training in grades 10, 11, and 12. Adult training programs are available at BCIT, Vancouver Community College, and Kwantlen College. Many immigrants move to Canada to provide good futures for their children. They often work two or even three jobs to pay for a university education, and never see their children. With the high demand for skilled trades people, your children can have excellent careers without having to go to university.