



**Employment
Sector Council**
London-Middlesex



Research Brief: Accessibility of London Transit Services

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Executive Summary

Public transit is essential to a strong economy. With record ridership in 2013, it is clear that Londoners are increasingly relying on the London Transit Commission (LTC) for their day-to-day activities. However, alongside this growth, there have been unprecedented complaints in service delivery.² At the same time, there is little current research on the increasing public transit needs of the population. In 2012 and 2013, research was conducted by the Employment Sector Council London-Middlesex's Job Developers Network (JDN) to better understand how their agencies client's access transit services provided by the LTC.

This report sheds light on an underreported issue in our community that affects a significant portion of London's population: that accessibility to public transit is an important factor in employability. Our research found that the majority of employment services clients missed job opportunities because their worksite was not on a bus route. At present, public transit serves only a fraction of all industrial sites in London. The majority of respondents also experienced scheduling issues that prevented them from arriving to work on time. In general, the majority of respondents also felt that the bus service did not meet their accessibility needs (primarily due to its scheduling and frequency) and felt they were not able to get home safely with the current bus schedule.

In order to better support employment, transit access should be increased to ensure that all Londoners can pursue job opportunities in their city. Research should be done to ascertain the impact of these changes, and the LTC should consider expanding service to the remaining un- and under-serviced industrial sites. This is not solely the responsibility of the LTC and the City, and employers should also be incentivized to provide support for their employees to use public transit. The primary recommendation from this research is the need for investment in enhanced service delivery, not only for the downtown core, but for less accessible work sites. While the proposed Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) platform will greatly enhance service efficiency in London's core, due diligence should be given to how residents will also be connected to new and existing industrial areas.

Investing in transit is not only economically responsible, but of strategic importance for social development in our City.³ Greater investment in public transit will help provide more efficient service to places of employment and greater accessibility to peripheral and industrial areas. This is critical to ensuring that transportation is not a barrier to employment.

² "Draft 2013 Annual Report," *London Transit Commission*, 5.

³ "2015-2018 Business Plan—Driving Change: Investing in the Future of London's Mobility," *London Transit Commission*, 7-9, <http://www.ltconline.ca/Pubs/2015-2018BusinessPlan.pdf/>

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I. Introduction

In 2012 and 2013, research was conducted by the Job Developers Network (JDN) in London, Ontario to better understand how their agencies client's access transit services provided by the London Transit Commission (LTC). This research is the result of a common challenge for service providers' clients: transportation is a barrier to employment and/or job placements. This short paper highlights the results of the survey, which indicate that there are significant gaps in transit accessibility. Currently public transit serves only a fraction of all industrial sites in the City. This impacts job seekers as it may limit their ability to access employment opportunities in London if they rely on public transit.

Public transit is essential to a strong economy. With record ridership in 2013, it is clear that Londoner's are increasingly relying on the LTC for their day-to-day activities. However, alongside this growth, there have been unprecedented complaints in service delivery. Greater investment in public transit will help provide more efficient service to places of employment and greater accessibility to peripheral and industrial areas. This is critical to ensuring that transportation is not a barrier to employment.

i. About the JDN

The City of London's Prosperity Funding has allowed ESCLM to establish the Job Developers Network (JDN) to provide additional coordinated service delivery across employment agencies, in order to better connect London area employers with local job seekers. Established in 2011, the JDN is made up of 17 member-agencies which work collaborative to improve service delivery for job seeker and employers in London-Middlesex. The JDN member agencies include non-profit and public employment service delivery agencies, employers, trainers, educators and representatives from all three levels of government.

The JDN is a working group of the [Employment Sector Council London-Middlesex](#), a network of over 45 organizations service clients in the employment and training sector in the City of London and Middlesex Count. For more than two decades, ESCLM members have worked together to provide strategic solutions for job seekers, employers, and our community.

II. Background and Methodology

This survey was the result of the observation by job developers and employment counsellors that job-ready clients were having difficulty accessing employment opportunities because of barriers to transportation. As a response, the JDN met with an LTC senior advisor to better understand the scope of the LTC's services in 2012, particularly their industrial service strategy. Through this meeting, it was determined that a survey to the JDN member agencies' clients would provide a useful supplement to existing data on transit use as conducted by the LTC and the City of London.

In 2012 and 2013 the LTC conducted a survey to employers on the number of employees requiring transit in industrial areas, the total number of employees, and shift times. Since then, the LTC has launched its "Let's Talk Transit," survey in October 2014 to address service quality issues and guide the long term development of transit services. This is a meaningful step to better understand the needs of its clients, however, more can and must be done in order to realize the full potential of our city's public transit system.

The City of London has also invested in research on transportation. As part of the Smart Moves initiative, a household travel survey was conducted, and approximately 16,000 homes in London (including 1,700 outside the City's limits) were contacted by telephone. An on-line survey was also available and was completed by more than 600 London residents.⁴ The results (analyzed by AECOM) were released in November 2010.⁵ While the household survey provided public attitudes on transportation by asking about travel choices in general, it did not focus on LTC services. Since 2010, there have been significant changes in the City and thus more timely research is needed on the perspective of Londoners's access to transit. While there were significant consultations through ReThink London on the direction of the City, more demographic research is needed to clarify how residents access public transit.

With this in mind, the JDN was able to access a population that had not been able to share their experience with London's transit services. The purpose of the survey was to better understand how access to transit services affects a client's (also known as a job seeker) job hunt and opportunities for employment.

Clients were asked to participate in the survey voluntarily at their employment service agency while meeting with an employment counsellor. These organizations are both non-profit and public employment service delivery agencies (see Appendix 1 for the complete list of member agencies where the survey was distributed). Respondents were asked questions

⁴ AECOM, "Smart Moves 2013: Transportation Plan," November 2010, <https://www.london.ca/residents/Roads-Transportation/Transportation-Planning/Pages/Smart-Moves-2030-Transportation-Plan.aspx>.

⁵ AECOM. "Working Paper: Household Travel Survey, 2030 Transportation Master Plan: SmartMoves," *City of London*, November 2010, https://www.london.ca/residents/Roads-Transportation/Transportation-Planning/Documents/London_Travel_Survey_Report_November_2010.pdf.

regarding public transportation and access to their place of work in a short survey consisting of eight questions (see Appendix 2 for the survey).

There were 244 completed survey responses which were entered into MS Access for analysis. This is a representative and significant sample size given that over 15 months in 2013 and 2014, the JDN has served 7,000 local job seekers, representing a significant portion of London's population. Of these, nearly 70 percent have been hired to date, with the majority finding full-time, permanent positions.⁶

⁶ Carol Stewart, "City of London Prosperity Funding Employment Network Support Project, Employment Sector Council London-Middlesex (ESCLM) Job Developers Network, 15 Month Summary Report, 2015," *Employment Sector Council London-Middlesex*, 2015.

III. Findings and Analysis

i. Overview

Resoundingly, 99.6 percent of respondents rely on the LTC for day-to-day activities.

60 percent of respondents live in East London, downtown, South or North-East London (see Figure 1). There was a fairly even distribution of residents in these four areas. The fewest respondents lived in West and South East London.

39 percent of respondents reported that they are currently working and 61 percent were unemployed. Of the respondents that were employed, 43 percent were working full-time, 39 percent part-time, and 18 percent were working on a casual basis. Although the survey did not define each type of work, full-time is generally considered to be 30 hours or more each week, and part-time is less than 30 hours.⁷ While Statistics Canada does not define casual workers, these employees may work either part time or full time during peak periods and are hired for short term, irregular periods.

When asked where clients work, responses were fairly equally distributed across the regions in London. The exception was the downtown core where there was a clear concentration of employment—40 percent of respondents work downtown. 15 percent of respondents were



Figure 2



Figure 1

⁷ “Classification of Full-time and Part-Time Work Hours,” *Statistics Canada*, June 21, 2010, <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/concepts/definitions/labour-travail-class03b-eng.htm>.

working in South London at the time of the survey and 10 percent in Northeast London (see Figure 2), with the fewest respondents in West and South East London.

ii. Accessibility of Services

The survey asked four questions about the accessibility of transit:

1. If you currently take the bus to work, does the schedule permit you to get to work on time?
2. If you take the bus to work, can you get home safely with the current bus schedule?
3. Have you missed out on jobs because the worksite was not on a bus route?
4. Does the bus service meet your accessibility needs?

The results identified that approximately two thirds of respondents responded *in the negative* to the first three questions. On a more positive note, 57 percent of respondents said that the bus met their accessibility needs. However, the term accessibility was not defined and there may have been confusion between physical accessibility and overall access. The comments provided in response to each question provide a more fulsome explanation of the types of barriers experienced by clients, explored below:

- 154 respondents or 63 percent said that the bus **does not** permit them to get to work on time. When asked to comment on their answer, respondents cited the bus not appearing on time (13 comments) or scheduling issues (13 comments) as the two primary reasons. Scheduling issues included things like the bus not running frequently or late enough, particularly during weekends. See Figure 3 for a visual representation of the comments.
- 147 respondents or 60 percent said that they **were not** able to get home safely with the current bus schedule. The large majority of comments on this question centered on the bus schedule not accommodating their work schedule (either arriving too early or too late).
- 150 respondents or 62 percent reported **missing out** on a job opportunity because the worksite was not on a bus route. The majority of comments (21 of 32) cited their work (or potential work) location not being on a bus route, and industrial areas being of particular concern. A further seven comments also cited issues with scheduling and the frequency of bus routes.
- 139 respondents or 57 percent said that the current bus service **does meet** their accessibility needs. Of the 23 comments on this question, 15 pertained to scheduling and frequency concerns or the bus route not reaching a client's workplace.



Figure 3: A word cloud representing comments on whether the bus schedule permits clients to get to work on time (the words “bus” and “buses” have been omitted).

But what does this data tell us about improving service delivery? 140 respondents said that the bus was accessible (the majority of whom were working) and 104 respondents said the bus was not accessible (the majority of whom were not working). While we cannot infer causation, one might take from this correlation that accessibility of transit is a barrier to employment. The majority of people who said the bus was not accessible lived downtown. This makes sense given the population concentration in London’s core, and that transportation is required to support passengers’ access to other areas of the City. This was reflected in the survey as the majority of people who were late to work lived downtown and their work was in “other” area not accessed by transit. It is thus reasonable to suggest that access to transportation is a factor and potentially a barrier to job seekers, particularly those working in peripheral areas.

iii. What does this mean for the LTC?

Transit needs service improvements, something that has been recognized by the LTC for at least the last four years. The LTC’s 2012 Annual Report indicated the LTC the highest ridership at 23.7 million rides which increased to 23.8 million in 2013. Although transit ridership has been steadily growing since 2002, these figures were short of its ridership goal. More concerning is that 2010 and 2013 there was a 54 percent increase in service quality complaints, which were primarily related to schedule adherence, transfer connections, and

overcrowding.⁸ The most significant complaint has been schedule adherence (late) which matched the funding of the service. While the year 2012 saw progress on a number of significant initiatives, none of which included improving service delivery to underserved regions or how to directly enhance the quality of service provision—two key concerns identified by our research participants. Perhaps of greatest concern was the 2013 grade for safe and effective service, which is one of five strategic outcomes for LTC services. It was considered “significantly deficient” in the draft report and “needs significant improvement” in the final version. This is because both conventional and specialized services⁹ missed their growth targets, and because of “significant service quality/availability issues.”¹⁰ Two specific performance requirements were also ranked significantly deficient and reveal more context for the overall state of service delivery: (i) “continuously reviewing and developing the transit service (service design, routing, frequency, and accessibility) to ensure that service meets the needs of a growing, competing and changing market,” and (ii) “continuously progressing in the development and delivery of integrated accessible public transit services.”¹¹ This requires serious attention to address and rectify. If not, ridership will continue to slow and eventually decline—as the LTC predicted in 2013—because of service design and delivery which no longer meets the needs and expectations of its patrons.¹² The City of London is predicted to grow in population by 1-2 percent a year which represents a significant market of new patrons.¹³

Sustainable infrastructure supports a strong economy, which is in line with the City’s Strategic Plan. A consistent theme in the annual report (2012 and 2013) is increased investment needed to support higher service delivery outcomes, primarily due to the struggle to keep up with ridership growth, as determined by the ratio-to-service hour growth. This takes place against the transition to the Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) platform, as outlined in the 2013 Transportation Master Plan (TMP) for implementation by 2030.¹⁴ The TMP is a strategic plan of road network improvements designed to actively manage demand for sustainable and accessible transit.

⁸ “Draft 2013 Annual Report,” *London Transit Commission*, 5.

⁹ Specialized services are designed to meet the needs of citizens who cannot use fixed route transit service. For a description of each service see “Specialized Transit,” *London Transit Commission*, <http://www.ltconline.ca/Specialized.htm>.

¹⁰ “Draft 2013 Annual Report,” *London Transit Commission*, May 28, 2014. <http://www.ltconline.ca/agendas/052814vii5.pdf>.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 4.

¹² *Ibid.*, 10.

¹³ AECOM, “New Mobility Transportation Master Plan for London—2030 Transportation Master Plan: SmartMoves, Final Report: Volume 1,” *City of London*, January 2013, <http://www.london.ca/residents/Roads-Transportation/Transportation-Planning/Documents/TMP-2030-SmartMoves-Volume-1-Executive-Summary-Final.pdf>.

¹⁴ AECOM, “A New Mobility Transportation Master Plan for London—2030 Transportation Master Plan: SmartMoves, Final Report: Volume 2” *City of London*, May 2013, <https://www.london.ca/city-hall/master-plans-reports/master-plans/Documents/Transportation%20Master%20Plan.pdf>.

The BRT routes along two higher-order transit corridors that run both north/south (on Richmond/Wellington corridors) and the east/west (on the Oxford/Dundas corridors),¹⁵ would certainly help improve how public transit is delivered. Our research does not provide enough information on how the intensification would affect our agency's clients but we hope greater research and consultation will shed insight on potential impacts and benefits of service delivery for all residents. It should be emphasize that commiserate transit service improvements must take place alongside the BRT such as more frequent service on all main routes and re-structured routes to feed the BRT (and pre-BRT) services.¹⁶ We emphasize pre-BRT services here given the phased implementation of the project over the next fifteen years.

iv. Underserviced Regions

In 2012, existing industrial transit service consisted of three routes: Route 30 Newbold, 36 Airport Industrial, and 37 Sovereign Road. Additional routes that serve employment areas are integrated into the urban transit network such as Route 22 Trafalgar and Route 17 Oxford West.¹⁷ However, this serves a fraction of industrial sites in London, and in 2012 the LTC identified four general study areas where transit is needed: (i) Forest City Industrial/ Wilton Grove east of Highbury Avenue, (ii) Innovation Park/ VMP & Bradley, (iii) Gateway Industrial/Robin's Hill Road, and (iv) White Oak Industrial/ Exeter Road. These roughly align with annual requests for services to areas not serviced by the LTC.¹⁸ Service in these areas would increase total ridership in industrial areas by one third.¹⁹ Our research supports this need, and the clients served by our member-agencies are frequently placed with employers in the eastern parts of the City (Veterans Memorial Parkway to Hamilton Road and the 401).

While there has been a clear need for routes that extend beyond those currently provided by LTC, determining how this is best done is beyond the scope of this research. It is our concern that there has been a lack of due diligence to these underserviced regions by the LTC and in the City of London's BRT process. The elimination of 11 service routes (four full-service, five late-evening, and three Saturday service) in 2013 has heightened this urgency.²⁰

As indicated in the 2013 request to the City by London Transit, servicing industrial areas continues to be a complex and challenging issue. This is affected by a number of factors that pose challenges to cost effectiveness and rescheduling, for example, the remote location of

¹⁵ "2013 Annual Report," *London Transit Commission*, 2014, 14.
<http://www.ltconline.ca/Pubs/2013%20Annual%20Report.pdf>.

¹⁶ AECOM, "Final Report: Volume 1—Executive Summary," 10.

¹⁷ "Industry Service Strategy—2012 Annual Service Plan," presentation to the JDN by the *London Transit Commission (LTC)*, 2012.

¹⁸ "Update Industrial Service Plan," memo to all Commissioners, Staff Report #1, May 28, 2013,
<http://www.ltconline.ca/agendas/052813vii1.pdf>.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ "Service Elimination Map," *LTC*, 2013.

industrial sites, 24/7 multiple shifts, and economic and zoning policies.²¹ As industrial routes often do not reach capacity, and have a combined revenue cost recovery of 54 percent, this is an issue of municipal operating investment. London has the lowest municipal operating investment per ride in seven peer transit service systems in Ontario consulted by the LTC.²² Given these barriers, it is important to first understand the needs of stakeholders. The LTC did this, in part, in its second survey to 973 employers of new and existing industrial areas in 2013. Using this data, the LTC predicted that there are 13,201 employees in current industrial areas and 8,000 employees in new industrial areas, for a combined ridership of 730. These estimates are based on the survey data only (which had a response rate of 72 percent), and does not represent the total opportunity for ridership. The LTC's research found that the average revenue recovery was 18 percent, much lower than the current standard. However, increasing services should increase ridership and cost recovery.

Since the LTC's employer survey, there have been some positive developments and the industrial service strategy was tabled in May 2013. The Commission agreed to include an assessment of industrial service changes and/or expansion in the annual service plan review process, which will ensure better research on service in these areas.²³ The following year the Commission approved the 2014 Conventional Transit Service Plan which added 17,446 annual hours of service to the system on routes including: the Route 90 Express (from downtown to White Oaks Mall); Route 14 Highbury; Route 17 Oxford West; Route 2C Dundas; Route 10B Wonderland; Route 27 Fanshawe; Route 38 Stoney Creek/Fanshawe West; and Route 30 Newbold.²⁴ While this will increase access for the majority of transit users, however, only one—Route 30—will increase access to the industrial area (by extending to the Brose/Commerce industrial area near White Oaks and Wilton Grove). While this addresses one of the core research areas, research should be conducted to understand the impact of these changes, and the LTC should consider expanding service to the remaining un- and under-served industrial sites.

²¹ The 2012 Industrial Service Strategy presentation to ESCLM's JDN included identified several barriers to service delivery to industrial areas: (i) large parcels of land on the periphery; (ii) buildings set back from roadways; (iii) limited pedestrian infrastructure; (iv) low employee per hectare ratio; nature of shift work (i.e. unconventional start/end times); (v) limited road connections and/or turnaround areas; (vi) scheduling connections to terminals and other routes; (vii) general operating hours for transit; and (viii) higher vehicle speed on roadways. Also see "Update Industrial Service Plan."

²² *Ibid.*, 6.

²³ "Minutes of the London Transit Commission," Meeting #5, May 28, 2013, <http://www.ltconline.ca/Agendas/052813Mins.pdf>.

²⁴ "Minutes of the London Transit Commission," Meeting #4, May 28, 2014, <http://www.ltconline.ca/Agendas/052813Mins.pdf>.

IV. Conclusion and Recommendations

Access to public transit is intimately connected to the success of our city. In order for the LTC to be “the valued and trusted mobility choice for Londoners,”²⁵ it must transform with the service delivery needs of its clients. Transportation has been a staple in the 2009 London Strengthening Neighborhoods Strategy Resident Task Force—Five Year Strategy and Implementation Plan.²⁶ Increasing the connectivity of bus routes between neighborhoods and regions of London is needed to address gaps in service provision. This report sheds light on an underreported issue in our community that affects a significant portion of London’s population, that accessibility to public transit is an important factor in employability. In order to best support our community, transit access should be increased to ensure that all Londoners can pursue job opportunities in their city.

The ESCLM’s JDN thus offers the following recommendations:

1. Invest in research that targets groups with barriers to accessing their place of employment and/or who rely on public transit for employment. This will identify gaps in service delivery, such as those identified by the clients of JDN member agencies.
2. Invest in enhanced service delivery. The BRT should have routes around the outskirts of London to connect them to the key corridors, and service is needed to new industrial areas to keep up with demand.
3. Incentivize employers to provide support for their employees to use public transit. At present, employers who are not on a bus route do not need to pay a tax for that service. Thus there is little incentive for employers to understand how their employees access transportation. This can be rectified by incentivizing employers to meet minimum revenue recovery targets. Innovative solution such as employer sponsored services, third party contracts, chartering services by employers or other alternatives (ride shares etc.) can also increase accessibility to transit.²⁷

We realize the difficulties in providing transit service which cause low rates of return for the cost of operating transit service.²⁸ However, we are confident that the energy behind a focus on sustainable infrastructure and transportation will achieve the vision set in the London Plan in rethinking investment in our city and ensuring growing public transit needs are met now and in the future.²⁹

Significant investment by City Council and serious consideration on how to improve London Transit now and in the future is needed to attract and retain talent and build resilient

²⁵ “2015-2018 Business Plan—Driving Change: Investing in the Future of London’s Mobility,” *London Transit Commission*, <http://www.ltconline.ca/Pubs/2015-2018BusinessPlan.pdf>.

²⁶ https://www.london.ca/city-hall/master-plans-reports/reports/Documents/London_Initiatives_Jan2010.pdf

²⁷ “Update Industrial Service Plan,” 8.

²⁸ “Industry Service Strategy—2012 Annual Service Plan,” LTC.

²⁹ The City of London, *The London Plan*, May 22, 2014, <http://thelondonplan.ca/full.php>.

communities. We look forward to continued partnership with the City of London and its stakeholder consultation on the BRT to enhance service delivery for all residents.

V. Appendix

Appendix 1: ESCLM Job Developers Network Membership, 2013-2014

ATN Access Inc.
Collège Boréal
Community Employment Choices—Fanshawe College
Community Living London
Goodwill Industries, Ontario Great Lakes
Hutton House Association for Adults with Disabilities
LEADS Employment Services London Inc.
London Employment Help Centre
London Training Centre
Ontario March of Dimes
NoKee Kwe Occupational Skills Development Inc.
Pathways Skill Development and Placement Centre
WIL Employment Connections
WOTCH Community Mental Health Services
Youth Opportunities Unlimited

Appendix 2: Survey



Bus Services Survey

This volunteer survey is being conducted by the **Job Developers Network** in London, Ontario. The Job Developers Network is a working group of the Employment Sector Council (www.esclm.ca).

Currently public bus routes are not covering all industrial sites in the city. This may impact you as it may limit your ability to access many of the major work sites in London if you rely on public transit.

Please respond to the following questions regarding public transportation and your access to work:

1. What area of town do you live in?

- | | | |
|---|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> South (White Oaks) | <input type="checkbox"/> Old North (Oxford) | <input type="checkbox"/> East (Argyle Mall) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Old South (Adelaide) | <input type="checkbox"/> North East (Huron) | <input type="checkbox"/> West (Oakridge) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> South West (Westmount) | <input type="checkbox"/> North West (Masonville) | <input type="checkbox"/> Downtown |

Other: _____

2. What is your postal code: _____

3. Do you generally rely on bus service in your day-to-day activities? YES NO

4. a) Are you currently working? YES NO

b) If yes, are you working Full Time Part Time Casual

c) If yes, what area of town do you work in?

- | | | |
|---|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> South (White Oaks) | <input type="checkbox"/> Old North (Oxford) | <input type="checkbox"/> East (Argyle Mall) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Old South (Adelaide) | <input type="checkbox"/> North East (Huron) | <input type="checkbox"/> West (Oakridge) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> South West (Westmount) | <input type="checkbox"/> North West (Masonville) | <input type="checkbox"/> Downtown |

Other: _____

5. If you currently take the bus to work, does the schedule permit you to get to work on time?

YES

Comment: _____

6. If you take the bus to work, can you get home safely with the current bus schedule?

YES

Comment: _____

7. Have you missed out on jobs because the worksite was not on a bus route? YES NO

Comment: _____

8. Does the current bus service meet your accessibility needs?

YES NO

Comment: _____
