

PUBLIC TRANSIT SEEN AS TOP PRIORITY IN THE GTHA

BIG BOLD CHANGES CAN FIX A SYSTEM OFTEN SEEN AS INCONVENIENT; MOST DOUBT GOVERNMENTS PUT THE NEEDS OF PEOPLE AHEAD OF POLITICS; MOST EXPECT PUBLIC TRANSIT WORKERS TO BE PART OF THE CONVERSATION

[Ottawa – June 27, 2016] EKOS Research Associates, on behalf of ATU Canada, has completed a scientific survey of n=2,045 adults in the GTHA to provide an essential benchmark on how the public views the current state of public transit in the region and what they expect in the years ahead.

Remarkably, public transit stands at the pinnacle of issues of public concern for residents of the GTHA, an unusual result that highlights the singular importance of the issue to the region. Over half (52%) mention public transit as a key issue for the provincial and municipal governments to focus on, outpacing other issues more typically seen as top priorities, including the economy and jobs (46%), health care (44%) and cost of living (44%).

Despite the salience attached to public transit, public satisfaction with it may best be characterized as “tepid,” rather than “awful.” Fewer than half of residents (46%) say they are satisfied with public transit in their area, with only 7% saying they are “very satisfied.” Meanwhile, one in three (32%) say they are dissatisfied with public transit in their area.

The study reveals profound regional disparities in satisfaction with public transit, ranging from a high of 54% in Toronto to a low of 27% in the Halton Region. This suggests that access to service largely depends on where one lives.

Among various aspects of the public transit system, GTHA residents express the highest levels of satisfaction with respect to comfort and safety (65% satisfied; 10% dissatisfied) and public transit workers (51% satisfied; 11% dissatisfied). Satisfaction is lower with respect to convenience (47% satisfied; 33% dissatisfied), reliability (48% satisfied; 24% dissatisfied), frequency (44% satisfied; 34% dissatisfied), and, cost (38% satisfied; 33% dissatisfied).

Dissatisfaction with transit is driven by perceptions of inconvenience and a lack of frequency. Those who are dissatisfied with public transit are most often dissatisfied with convenience (74% dissatisfied) and frequency (70% dissatisfied).

The public clearly opt for an approach to transit that is bold and transformative, with an overwhelming majority saying they prefer big changes to make the system work better in the long run (84%) rather than basic improvements to improve service in the short term (44%).

While the public appetite for big changes seems well suited to The Big Move, the province’s \$50 billion transportation infrastructure plan, awareness of the plan is fairly low. Just two in five (42%) say they’ve heard something about it, while 48% say they haven’t and an additional 10% don’t know enough to answer the question. Those aware of the Big Move are nearly twice as likely to say it’s heading in the right direction (54%) than to say it’s off on the wrong track (23%). However, even among those who have heard of the Big Move, 23% don’t know enough to have formed an opinion.

There is broad optimism that transit will improve, but this is tempered by significant skepticism about the extent to which transit issues have become a political football. GTHA residents are much more likely to say transit in the area is getting better (42%) than worse (18%). However, when asked whether public transit is getting better for “me and my family,” respondents are far less sanguine, with 29% agreeing it will get better and 32% saying it won’t. Few have faith that the people in government who are responsible for public transit will put the needs of ordinary people ahead of politics when it comes to making the system better (just 21% agree with this idea compared to 64% who disagree).

The public want all of the key players – from the Government of Ontario and municipal governments, to Metrolinx and the TTC – to make the bold vision for transit happen. As they do, the results suggest that public transit workers can play an important role in restoring public confidence that changes to the transit system will work for everyone. Nearly two in three (63%) agree that public transit workers should be included in conversations about the future of public transit, compared to 19% who disagree.

About ATU Canada:

Established in 2015, ATU Canada is the strong national voice for the Amalgamated Transit Union in Canada on all issues of Canadian interest including legislation, political, educational, health and safety, cultural and social welfare matters. For more information: <http://atucanada.ca>

About EKOS Research Associates:

Founded in 1980, EKOS Research Associates is Canada’s premier social and political opinion research firm. We conduct best-in-class quantitative and qualitative research on behalf of government, non-profit and private sector clients in Canada and internationally. For more information: <http://ekos.com>

Methodology:

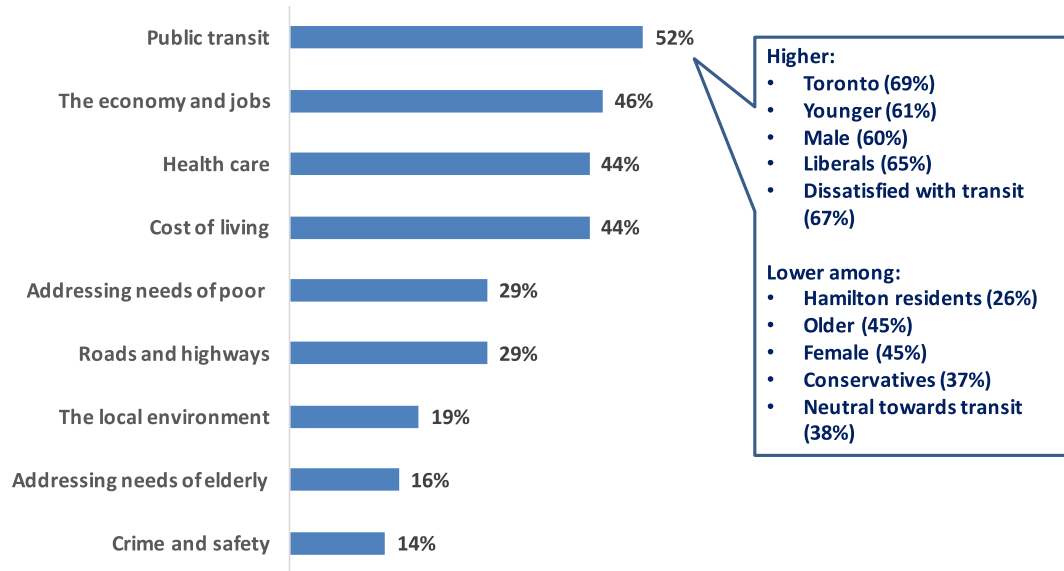
This survey was conducted among randomly selected panellists on the Probit panel, a probability panel whose membership are recruited via RDD telephone selection.

The field dates for this survey are May 26 – June 6, 2016. In total, a random sample of 2,045 Canadian adults aged 18 and over responded to the survey. The margin of error associated with the total sample is +/- 2.2 percentage points, 19 times out of 20.

Please note that the margin of error increases when the results are sub-divided (i.e., error margins for sub-groups such as region, sex, age, education). All the data have been statistically weighted by **age, gender, region, and educational attainment** to ensure the sample’s composition reflects that of the actual population of Canada according to Census data.

Top Issues Facing GTHA

Q. There are many issues facing the Greater Toronto/Hamilton Area (GTHA) that the provincial and municipal governments could focus on. From the list below, please identify the three most important issues to you personally.

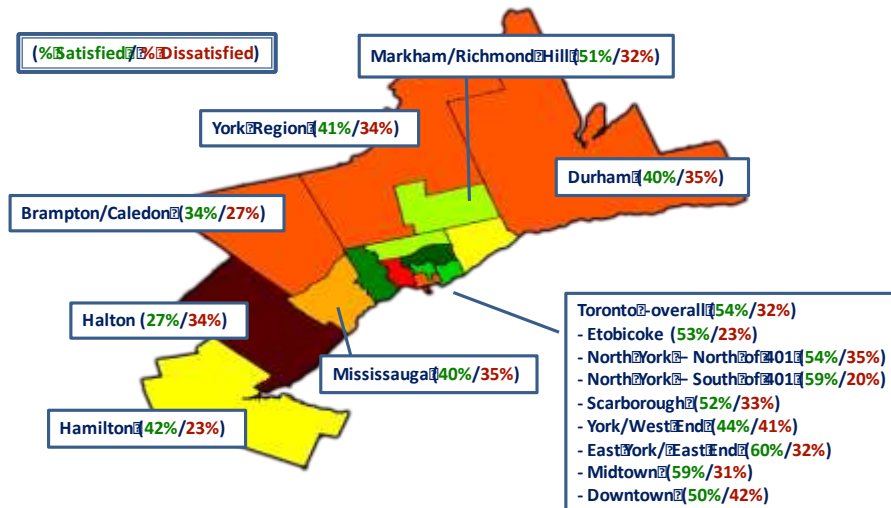
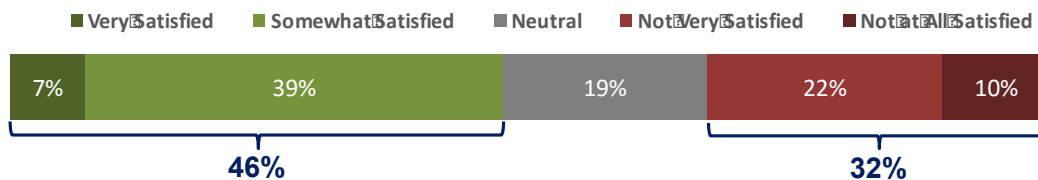


BASE: Adults in the GTHA (n=2045)

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Satisfaction with Public Transit

Q. How satisfied are you overall with public transit in your area?

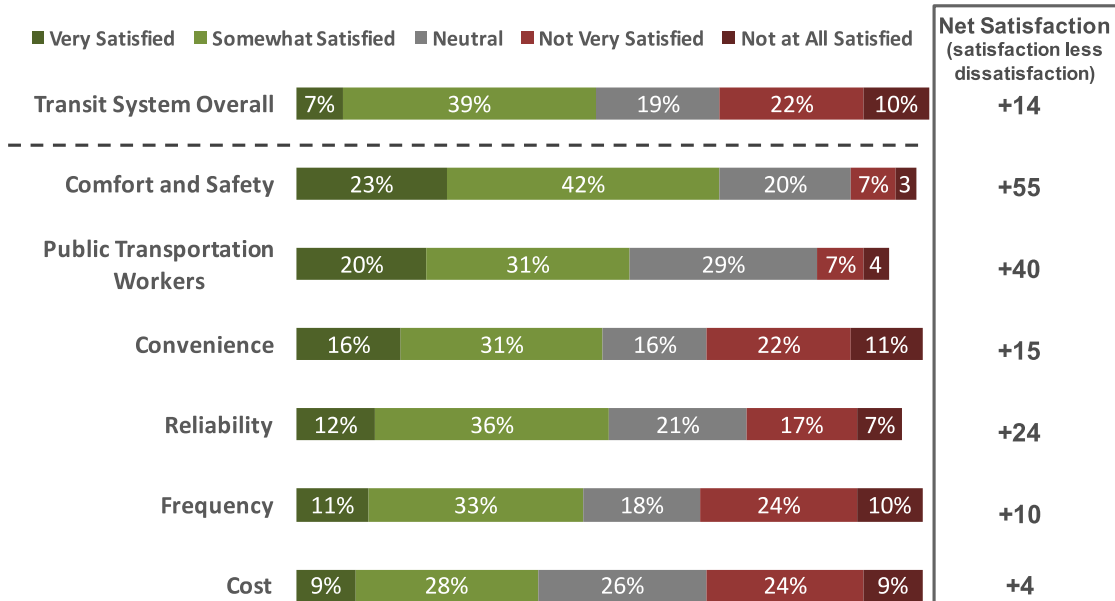


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Satisfaction with Aspects of Public Transit

Q. How satisfied are you with each of the following aspects of public transit in your area?

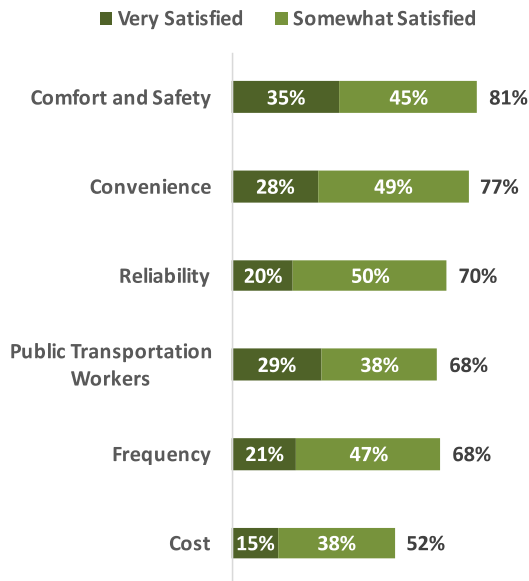


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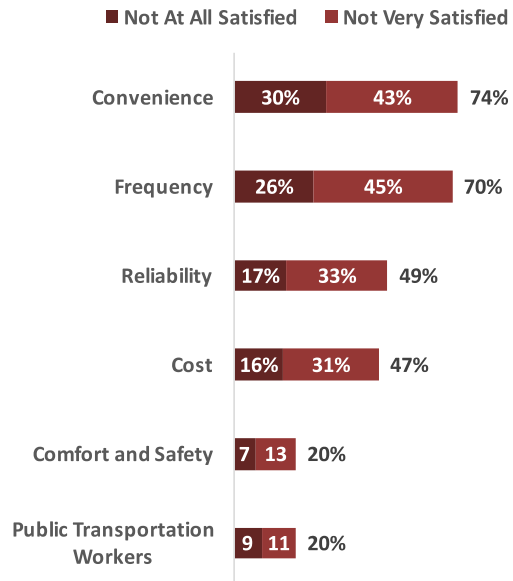
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What's Driving Satisfaction and Dissatisfaction with the System?

Those *satisfied* with public transit are particularly satisfied with comfort and safety, less with cost.



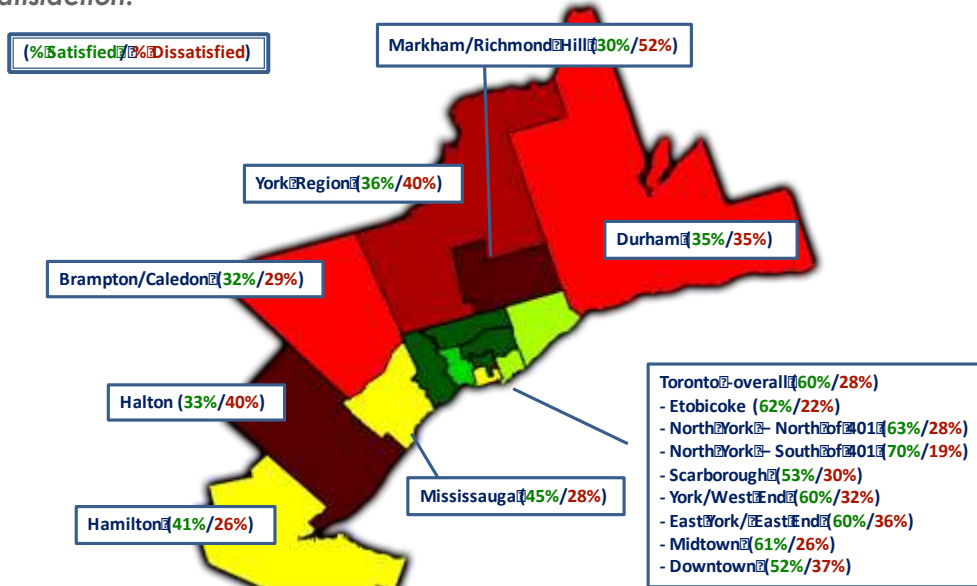
Those *dissatisfied* with public transit are particularly dissatisfied with convenience and frequency.



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Satisfaction with Convenience by Region

Chart shows satisfaction with the convenience of public transit by region. Areas from yellow to green indicate higher satisfaction, while the red indicates higher dissatisfaction.



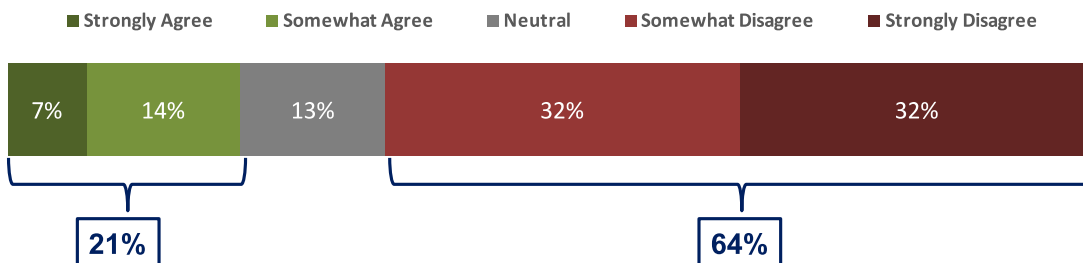
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Trust in Government to Put People Ahead of Politics

Q. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements...

I trust the people in government who are responsible for public transportation to put the needs of ordinary people ahead of politics when it comes to making public transportation better.

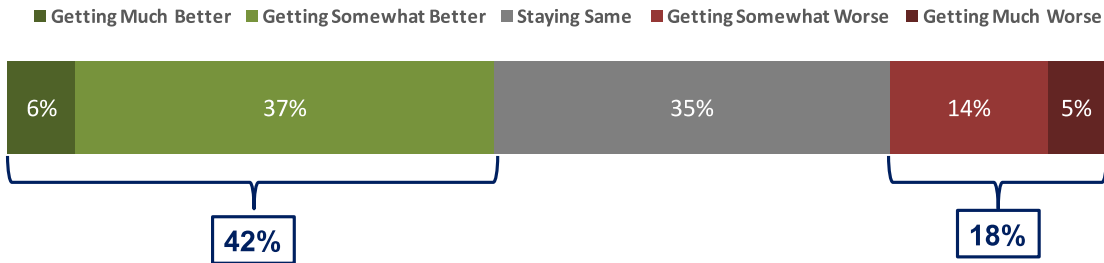


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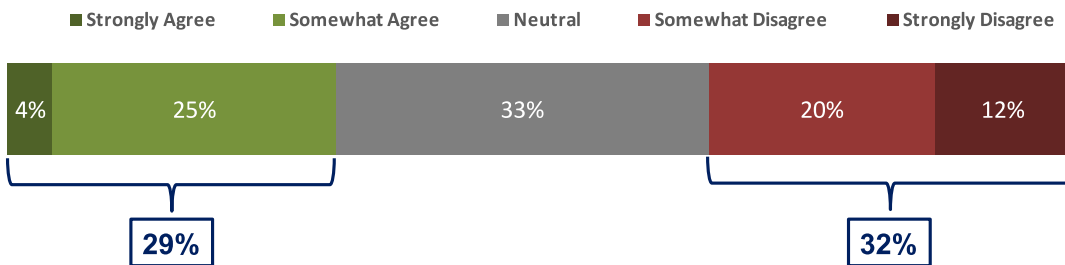
Fairly High Optimism that Transit Will Improve in the Area... But Not Necessarily for Individuals

Q. Looking to the future, do you think public transit in your area is...



Q. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements...

Public transit is getting better for me and my family.



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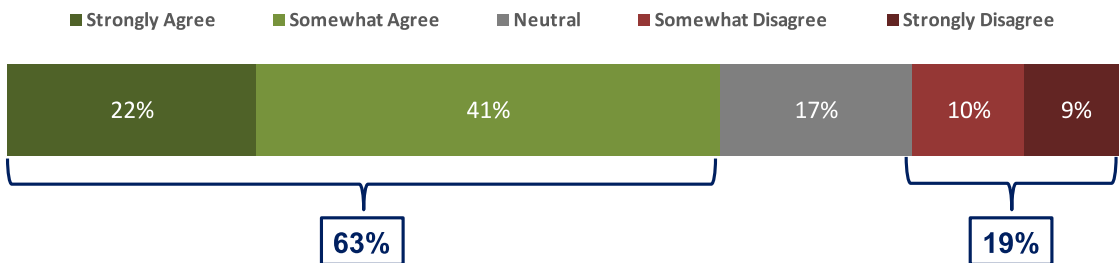
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Public Transit Workers Should Be Part of the Conversation

While the public are less likely to expect either ATU Canada or public transit workers to play a greater role, nearly two in three say public transit workers should be included in conversations about the future of public transit.

Q. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements...

Public transit workers should be included in conversations about the future of public transit.

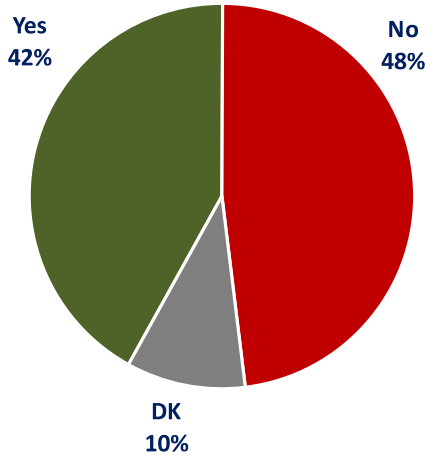


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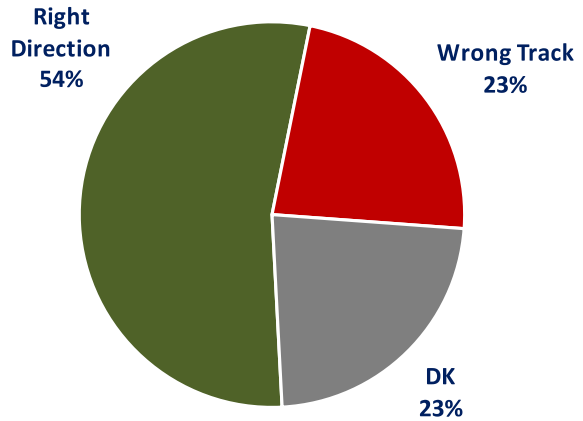
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Views on the Big Move

Q. Have you ever heard, seen or read anything about the Big Move?



Q. In your view, is the Big Move headed in the right direction or is it off on the wrong track?



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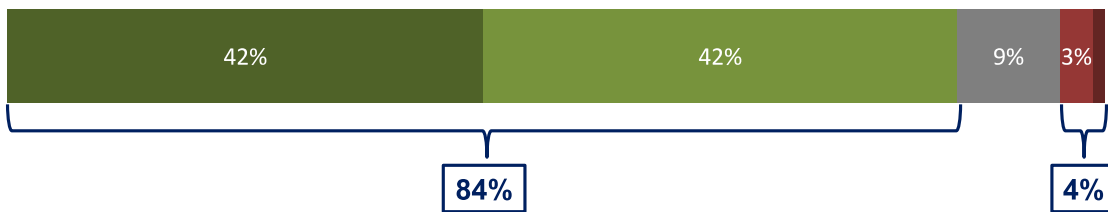
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Big Changes vs. Basic Improvements

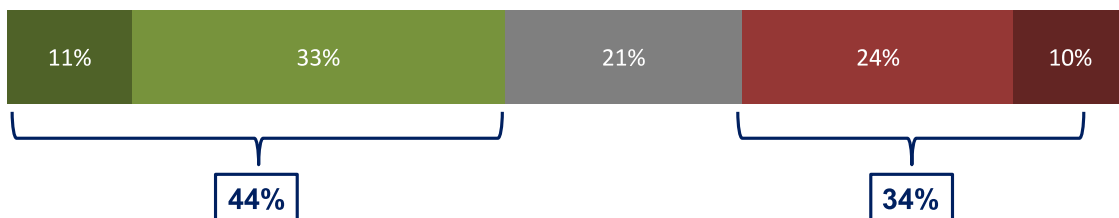
Q. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements...

Improvements to public transit in the GTHA should focus on **big changes** that can make the system work better down the road.

Strongly Agree Somewhat Agree Neutral Somewhat Disagree Strongly Disagree



Improvements to public transit in the GTHA should focus on **basic improvements** that can make the system work better in the short term.



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