



TRANSIT ACCESS AND SOCIAL EQUITY

Executive Summary

Background Paper to the
2041 Regional Transportation Plan

Prepared by Metrolinx
2018

Introduction

Low-income households are more likely than others to rely on transit to get to work, and meet their daily needs, as they are less likely to own a car. Further, low income people are more likely to hold precarious employment, work multiple jobs and work irregular hours, which can be particularly challenging for people who are dependent on transit.

This paper focuses on access to transit for low income households, while recognizing that the benefits of an equity-conscious approach to transportation planning, building and operations would be a benefit to all residents and employers in the region.

This background paper presents the findings of preliminary research into the how well public transit serves low income areas in the region and identifies opportunities to improve transit access for low-income groups.

Approach

This paper looks at the level of transit service currently available in low-income areas of the GTHA in order to identify areas that are in need of transit service improvements, using metrics that measure an area's *access to transit* (transit service available, taking into account the time it takes to walk to transit stops and frequency of transit), and *access to destinations* (total number of destinations that can be accessed using transit in a given time).

Factors affecting transit use in the GTHA

There are a number of factors that influence people's access to transit, including:

- **Income:** Low-income households are often more dependent on

transit than the general population because they have fewer transportation options, largely due to the high cost of car ownership.

- **Location of home and work:** The high and rising cost of housing in the region has contributed to a spatial pattern whereby lower-income groups are moving into areas that are less transit-accessible.
- **Regional structure and urban form:** Denser urban areas and regular, grid-like street patterns make it easier to walk or cycle to access transit. Low density suburban areas are more difficult to serve resulting in lower service levels (e.g. coverage, frequency).
- **Transit network and service characteristics:** The actual service provided to different areas of the city has a large impact on the ability of residents to use transit reliably and easily to not only get to work but for all of their daily needs.
- **Affordability:** In terms of overall accessibility, higher fares for express, regional or rapid transit services, or travel across municipal boundaries, may be a barrier for lower-income residents to access job opportunities in a reasonable travel time.

Identifying gaps in transit access

A gap analysis was conducted to identify areas in the GTHA that have both low median equivalent household incomes and poor access to transit, or poor access to jobs.

Access to transit

This metric is an important indicator of how easy it is for someone living in an area to get around by transit generally, and how many options they are likely to have.

For the purpose of this analysis, areas with “good” access to transit were considered to have a score of 6 or greater.

ES-1 shows low income traffic zones that also a low access to transit score (less than or equal to 6), revealing gaps in transit access from an equity perspective, or areas with poor transit that rely on transit most for their daily needs. Low income areas with poor access to transit are primarily located in the inner suburbs of Toronto, particularly in the northeast (Scarborough) and north-west (Etobicoke).

This analysis only looks at total transit service in an area, regardless of the quality of the transit service (speed, reliability, comfort, etc.).

Access to destinations

Access to jobs in particular is an important metric as it is an indicator of how many potential job opportunities are available to residents of an area, and is the focus of the analysis in this report.

The number of jobs accessible within 45 minutes by transit for low income zones is shown in ES-2. Most of the low income areas in Toronto have very good access to jobs by transit (350,000 + jobs). Parts of northern Etobicoke and central Scarborough do not have access to as many employment opportunities by transit. Low income areas with the fewest accessible jobs are in much of Hamilton outside of the downtown area, including Hamilton mountain, much of central and south Oshawa, as well as other low income areas scattered around the GTHA that are far from good transit service or employment opportunities.

Executive Summary

Discussion

From a regional transit network planning perspective, opportunities to address social equity with improved transit access include service improvements and targeted infrastructure improvements, including:

- Improving frequency and span of service
- improving reliability
- creation of a regional Frequent Rapid Transit Network
- Priority bus
- Improving first- and last-mile connections

Policy solutions include:

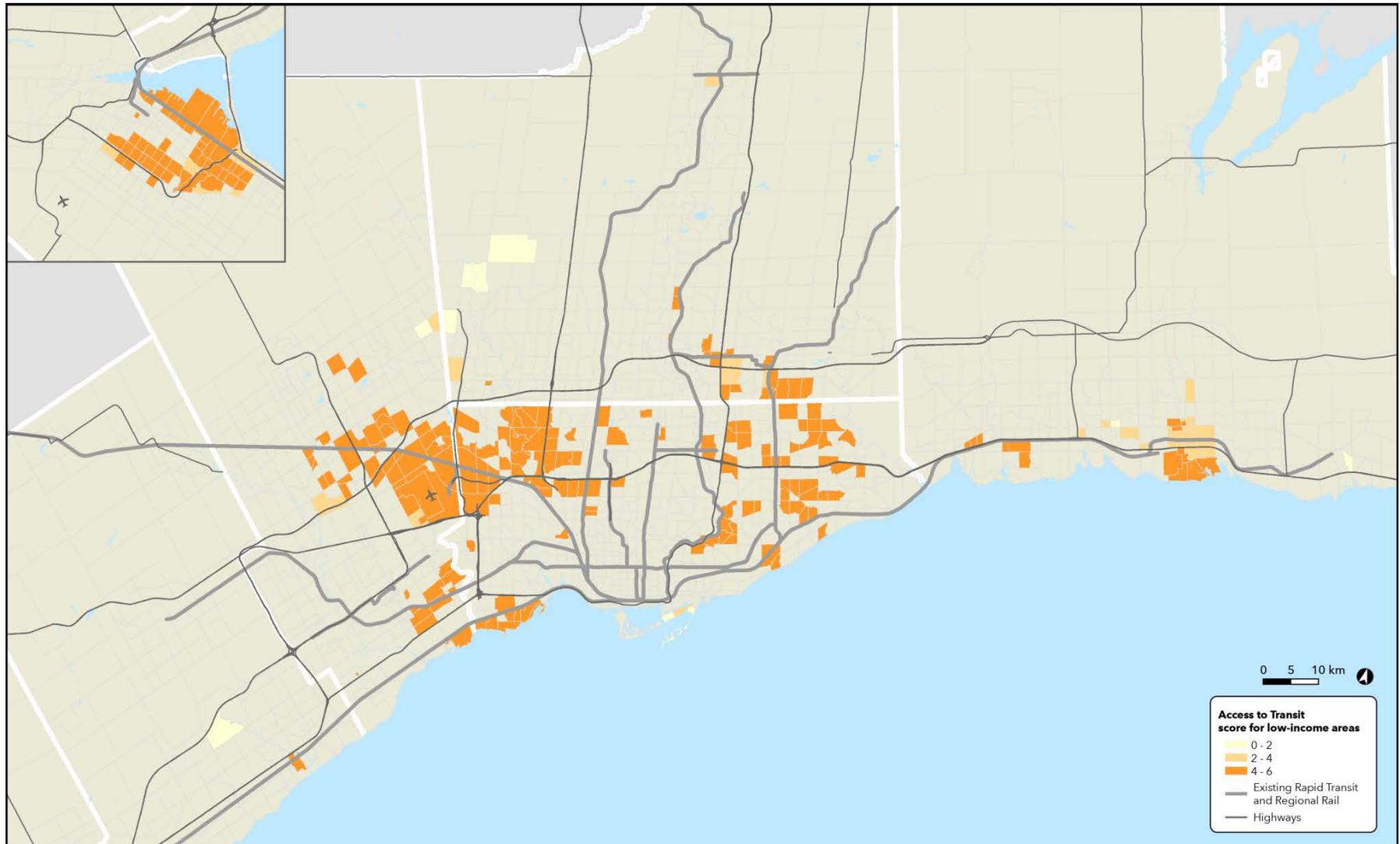
- Transit pricing and fare strategies
- Work with governments to improve solutions between mobility and affordability
- Land use policies for a transit-supportive environment

Conclusion

The analysis found several areas in the region where there are significant areas of need that are not well-served by transit; and many smaller pockets in particular parts of Toronto, Hamilton and the regional municipalities.

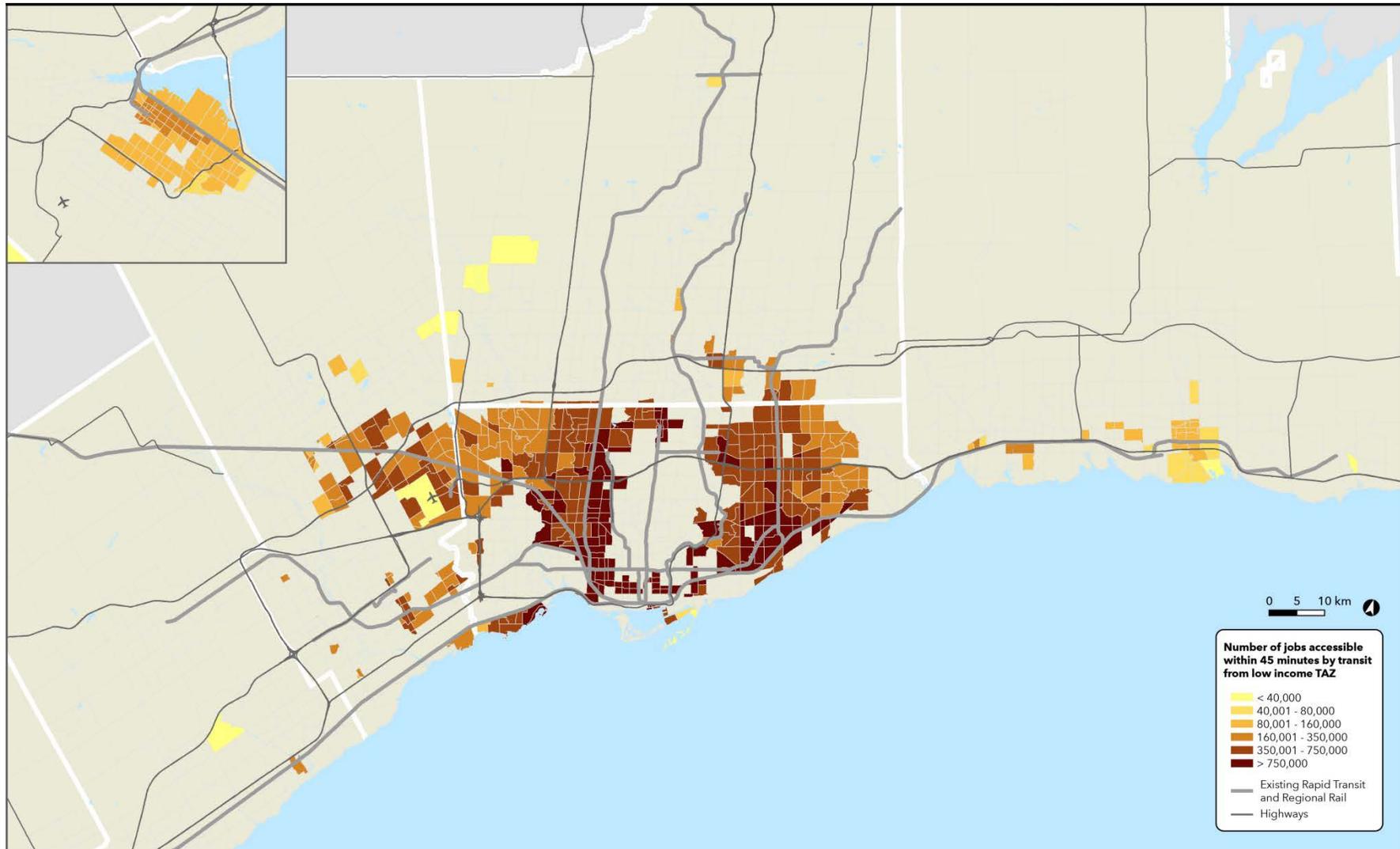
Further work would also benefit from greater integration with a regional population and employment trends analysis. Similarly, the delivery of rapid transit infrastructure projects across the region, and any introduction of fare integration provide opportunities to implement and develop measures that could advance transit’s contribution to greater social equity in the region.

ES-1: Low income areas with poor access to transit



Note: Data for Durham Transit were not available and transit scores in Durham Region reflect access to GO bus and rail only.

ES-2: Access to jobs for low income areas



Note: Data for Durham Transit were not available and transit scores in Durham Region reflect access to GO bus and rail only.