



SUMMARY

Seniors' mobility and transportation in Montreal:

addressing issues facing an aging population



Table de concertation
des aînés de l'île de Montréal



This report features a few of the highlights of the overview; the full version of the document (in French only) is available on the MSCS website (www.tcaim.org).

The issue of transportation has been a concern for the senior community for several years, given its significant impact on healthcare access, food security and social involvement. In September 2007, at the request of its members, the Montreal Steering Committee on Seniors (MSCS) opened regional dialogue to discuss the transportation and mobility of the senior population on the island of Montreal. The resulting study represents the first milestone in the concerted process to adapt the transportation offering to the needs of Montreal's senior population.

The issue

Physical condition, available transportation options, financial resources and perceived safety all represent factors that may influence the level of response to mobility needs (Suen & Mitchell, 2000).

On the island of Montreal:

- More than 101,000 seniors (40%) declare at least one disability that impacts the amount and type of activities they can engage in¹ (difficulty seeing, hearing, communicating, walking, bending down or other similar activities); slightly over 44,200 of them live with a disability so significant that they receive home-support services from healthcare network affiliated establishments².
- 28% of people aged 65 and over live under low-income cutoffs³, a reality that affects just over 80,000 seniors.
- 18% of people aged 65 and over live in carless households, a proportion that nears 50% among those aged 85 and over (Morency & Chapleau, 2007).
- Despite the availability of loved ones, many seniors limit their travels to the bare necessities, either out of the belief that asking for help confirms their state of dependence, or out of fear of being a bother (Bailey, 2004).
- Many seniors avoid using public transit and walking out of fear of falling or of being assaulted.

If, individually, the above variables are likely to influence the level of response to transportation needs, the combination of several of them significantly increases the risk of experiencing a transportation-related social isolation problem. For example, seniors who live alone, with disabilities, and with very low income are most at risk.

- **On the island of Montreal, over 25,300 seniors declare disabilities and live alone with income below the low-income cutoffs⁴.**

USE OF VARIOUS MODES OF TRANSPORTATION

The automobile is the preferred mode of transportation among Montreal seniors for their travel needs. Public transit comes in second place, followed by walking. The use of other modes of transportation remains marginal.

Automobile

- As with other age groups, Montreal seniors prefer the automobile for their transportation needs, whether as driver or as passenger.
- However, a tendency to avoid difficult driving conditions, such as driving at night, on slick roads, at rush hour or in high-traffic areas, means seniors drive less than other drivers.
- Many senior drivers dread the revocation of their driver's license, which they equate to the loss of their independence.
- On the island of Montreal, more than half of seniors (52%) do not drive.
- Seniors in this situation then depend on their loved ones or on alternate modes of transportation to meet their transportation needs.

Public transit

- Seniors who use public transportation prefer the bus.
- A large proportion of trips are made by day, outside of peak periods.
- These trips occur mainly within a neighbourhood. They often require several route transfers and potentially long waits at stops.
- The physical efforts required to use the metro (numerous stairs, long walking distances between station entrances and boarding platforms, etc.) and perceived safety represent obstacles to more regular metro use for a number of seniors.

Walking

- Many seniors have reported having difficulty in crossing intersections within the time allotted.
- Many also limit their trips in the wintertime because of snowy or icy sidewalks.

USE OF VARIOUS MODES OF TRANSPORTATION (continued)

Taxi

- For the senior population, it represents a comfortable, rapid and valued mode of transportation.
- However, for many seniors, the average cost of a taxi fare, estimated at \$16.78⁵, precludes its regular use.

Paratransit

- Just over 10,000 Montreal seniors are currently eligible for paratransit.
- Users aged 65 and over account for 57% of the paratransit clientele, with three quarters of them aged 75 and over⁶.
- The proportion of seniors eligible for paratransit has grown steadily over the past few years.
- Eligibility criteria, established by the *Ministère des Transports du Québec*, focus on the **level** and **persistence** of disability (MTQ, 1998: III and IV.)
- However, being a senior and living with certain disabilities does not guarantee service eligibility.

Volunteer transportation

- It is a service offering developed by community organizations to meet the transportation needs of people who are ineligible for paratransit service but who have difficulty traveling using what are considered “regular” modes of transportation.
- Some thirty community organizations offer volunteer transportation services on the island of Montreal, for socializing, assistance with errands or medically-motivated trips.
- This service rests mainly on volunteers aged between 65 and 74.
- Many concerns have been voiced concerning this service, including the lack of volunteer resources, the costs of managing and offering the services, and the very high demand for medically-motivated volunteer transportation.
- In this regard, the pressure felt by community organizations to meet demand for medically-motivated transportation is such that nearly one out of every two organizations has been forced, over the past few years, to favour medically-motivated volunteer transportation over the other types of volunteer transportation usually offered (assistance with errands, socializing, etc.)⁷.

CURRENT AND PROJECTED ACTIONS



In studying each mode of transportation, the MSCS also took the time to collect the various actions, whether planned or in progress, that could answer, in whole or in part, the concerns expressed by the Montreal senior population. The following is a non-exhaustive list of current and projected actions taken by the various participants involved:

- With regards to automobile use, the *Société de l'assurance automobile du Québec* (SAAQ) is currently developing a kit entitled “*Au volant de ma santé*”, to provide senior drivers with information on how to keep their driving privileges as long as possible and how to make healthy lifestyle choices to help preserve the abilities required for driving a motor vehicle.
- As for public transit, the *Société de transport de Montréal* (STM) has implemented *Navettes Or*, a shuttle bus service dedicated to seniors. This service offering aims to increase the mobility of seniors whose physical condition makes it difficult to use the regular public transit system. The STM continues to strive to improve the accessibility of the public transit service, notably by upgrading its entire fleet to low-floor buses (by 2012), as well as by renovating five metro stations on the orange line (by 2010) to equip them with elevators (all stations will be similarly renovated over a longer timeframe.)
- To answer concerns expressed by senior pedestrians, among others, the city of Montreal is gradually adjusting the time allotted for pedestrians to cross the street to a more conservative standard. This process aims to help people who walk at a slower pace to cross streets safely.
- The *Ministère des Transports du Québec* (MTQ) is implementing measures aimed at Montreal taxi drivers; a seven-hour training course on the transportation of

people with functional limitations will be made retro-active. This step will help ensure that all taxi drivers operating in the greater Montreal region have the necessary knowledge to meet the needs of people with functional limitations.

The challenges ahead

The Montreal senior population is a varied group, and its needs in terms of transportation are many. Consequently, the challenges in properly meeting its needs are several and complex.

Whether the issue is the automobile, public transit or walking, the functional and cognitive abilities required to use these various modes of transportation make it progressively more difficult for certain seniors to travel independently, particularly those living with disabilities.

In light of the diversity of needs and current and planned actions, the highest-priority challenges to be faced to meet the transportation needs of an aging population are:

- Increasing the mobility of seniors by developing public transit that meets their needs.
- Intensifying actions promoting active transportation use among the senior population.
- Promoting the principles of universal accessibility in every field of activity, but particularly in terms of transportation and urban planning.
- Implementing strategies aimed at developing a transportation offering to complement volunteer transportation services, in order to meet medically-motivated transportation needs requiring accompaniment.



ADVOCATED ACTIONS

Several actions should be taken in order to meet the described challenges. In the second phase of the process, the MSCS, in collaboration with its partnership committee, will work on actions identified in relation to the various challenges.

Actions to be taken to meet the transportation needs of an aging population

Increase the mobility of seniors by developing public transit that meets their needs

- **Work in cooperation with the STM to assess opportunities such as**
 - Increasing *Navettes Or* service to all weekdays and weekends.
 - Easing accessibility to the STM *Carte d'accompagnement*.
 - Expanding the *Entre-deux arrêts* service to all senior users.
 - Increasing the frequency of courtesy campaigns aboard buses and in the metro.
 - Improving customer information mechanisms.

Intensify actions promoting active transportation use among the senior population

- **Monitor the implementation and execution of directions expressed in the city of Montreal's *Plan de transport 2008* and *Charte du piéton*.**
- **Fuel local steering committees and senior community organizations in their representation work before local authorities.**

ADVOCATED ACTIONS (continued)

Promote the principles of universal accessibility in every field of activity, but particularly in terms of transportation and urban planning

- **Strengthen bonds between senior associations and those dedicated to the disabled in order to tackle common issues**
 - Ensure the active participation of a representative from the senior association field in the *Table de concertation en transport des personnes handicapées de Montréal*.
 - Continue common representations (senior association field and disabled association field).
 - Collaborate in the production of a guide for the application of universal accessibility principles in public transit, a tool developed for transit authorities by the *Table de concertation en transport des personnes handicapées de Montréal*.

Develop and consolidate service offerings, to meet medically-motivated transportation needs requiring accompaniment

- **Work in collaboration with the healthcare and social services network, the taxi industry and the community network offering volunteer transportation services for an in-depth discussion on sharing responsibilities, revising the offering and consolidating medically-motivated services, in order to ensure the transportation required by the most vulnerable seniors.**
- **Analyze in greater detail various initiatives aiming to meet medically-motivated transportation needs requiring accompaniment, particularly by assessing**
 - The feasibility of developing a social economy organization on the island of Montreal, similar to *Service d'accompagnement médical intensif (S.A.M.I.)* which is currently active in Longueuil.
 - The possibility of extending the type of partnership developed between *Hôpital Maisonneuve-Rosemont* and an intermediary for taxi service.
- **Develop, in collaboration with community organizations offering medically-motivated volunteer transportation services, support strategies as well as monitoring and data compilation tools.**
- **Better document transportation services and activities provided by the healthcare and social services network in the Montreal sociosanitary region.**



SUMMARY

Reference: *Les moyens de transport et la mobilité des aînés sur l'île de Montréal : Intervenir face au vieillissement de la population*. 2008. Montréal : TCAÎM.

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The implementation of viable solutions that meet the needs of the Montreal senior population will require sustained collaboration and dialogue between all concerned organizations and participants. The role of the MSCS will be to ensure the necessary representation before targeted authorities and to work in collaboration with them to fulfill its mission, that is, to contribute to improving the quality of life of the Montreal senior population.

Contributions

The members of the Seniors' transportation and mobility partnership committee:

- *le Bureau du taxi et du remorquage de Montréal (BTR)*, Louissette Després
- *la Coalition pour le maintien dans la communauté (COMACO)*, Serge Émond
- *la Conférence régionale des élus (CRÉ) de Montréal*, Suzanne Pion
- *le ministère de la Famille et des Aînés (MFA)*, Louise Comeau and Annie Mireault
- *le ministère des Transports du Québec (MTQ)*, Robert Bessette and Lyne Lacharité
- *l'Office des personnes handicapées du Québec (OPHQ)*, Johanne Fortin and Sébastien Paquin-Charbonneau
- *le Regroupement des usagers du transport adapté et accessible (RUTA) de Montréal*, Mathilde Le Bouëdec
- *la Société de transport de Montréal (STM)*, Jacinthe Clossey and Jacques Lussier
- *Montreal Steering Committee on Seniors (MSCS)*, Julie Bickerstaff and Stéphanie Paquin



- ¹ CMIS, ASSS de Montréal. Communication of Statistics Canada's 2001 census data.
- ² ASSS de Montréal. Rapport annuel de gestion 2006-2007, p. 45.
- ³ DSP. 2008. Vieillir à Montréal, un portrait des aînés, p. 8.
- ⁴ CMIS. ASSS de Montréal. Communication of Statistics Canada's 2001 census data.
- ⁵ BTR. Taxi, le journal. Summer 2007, 9, no.3, p. 1.
- ⁶ Data provided by the Centre de transport adapté de la STM. 2008.
- ⁷ MSCS survey, January 2008.

