Assessing generational differences in public transit use among seniors in Montreal, Canada

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WHEN I’M 64:

Context

The growth rate of adults aged 65 years and older in Canada is increasing more rapidly than the population as a whole. This is reflective of the aging baby boomer population. This aging population is known to have a strong attachment to automobiles, which might be reflected in their travel behavior as they move towards different stages in their older life.

Purpose:
To contribute to the understanding of the travel behavior, mainly public transit usage, of Canada’s older population. This aging population is known to have a strong attachment to automobiles, which might be reflected in their travel behavior as they are moving towards different stages in their older life.

Results:
Older generations used public transit more than younger generations did at the same age. Additionally, the most recent survey year shows a stagnation of transit use across all age groups.

These findings add to the growing body of work that suggests the nature of transportation behavior in seniors is changing.

Analysis

Mode Share Over a Lifecycle

Travel behavior is changing in regards to public transit use
Generational differences are observed

Mode Share by Age Group and Survey Year

For all survey years and all age groups, automobile is the most common mode
Transit use increases with age - However, there appears to be a stagnation of transit use in the most recent survey year

Transit Mode Share of Six Cohorts

Transit use is below average pre-retirement age
Transit mode share is above average post-retirement
Older generations level off at a higher rate than younger generations
Older cohorts used transit more in their senior years than younger cohorts did
In other words, at the same ages, Gordie Howe used transit more than Clint Eastwood did. Mary Tyler Moore used transit even less.

Transit Mode Share of Six Cohorts by Gender

Females use transit more than males but mode share is more similar to males in 2013
Transit use is below average pre-retirement age
Gender gap in transit share is less dramatic in younger generations

Generational Differences

The oldest cohorts used transit at a higher rate in their older senior years than the younger cohorts did
Baby boomer cohorts, who are now reaching retirement, appear to be resistant to adapting alternatives to the automobile
Older seniors are increasingly using alternative forms of transportation to maintain their mobility

Recommendations

Carefully consider how to adapt transit for seniors and improve on-demand services
Actively encourage seniors to experience public transit before the cessation of driving to foster a level of familiarity and comfort with the service

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