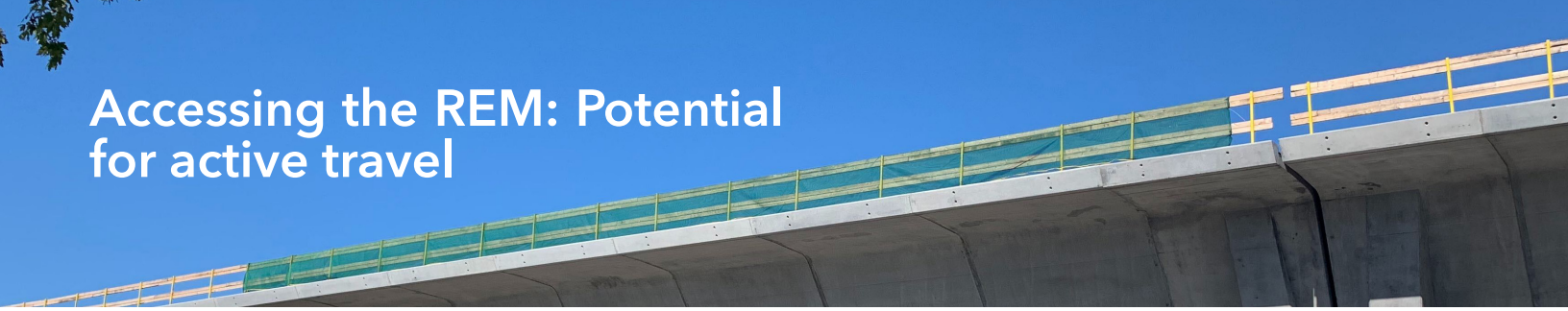


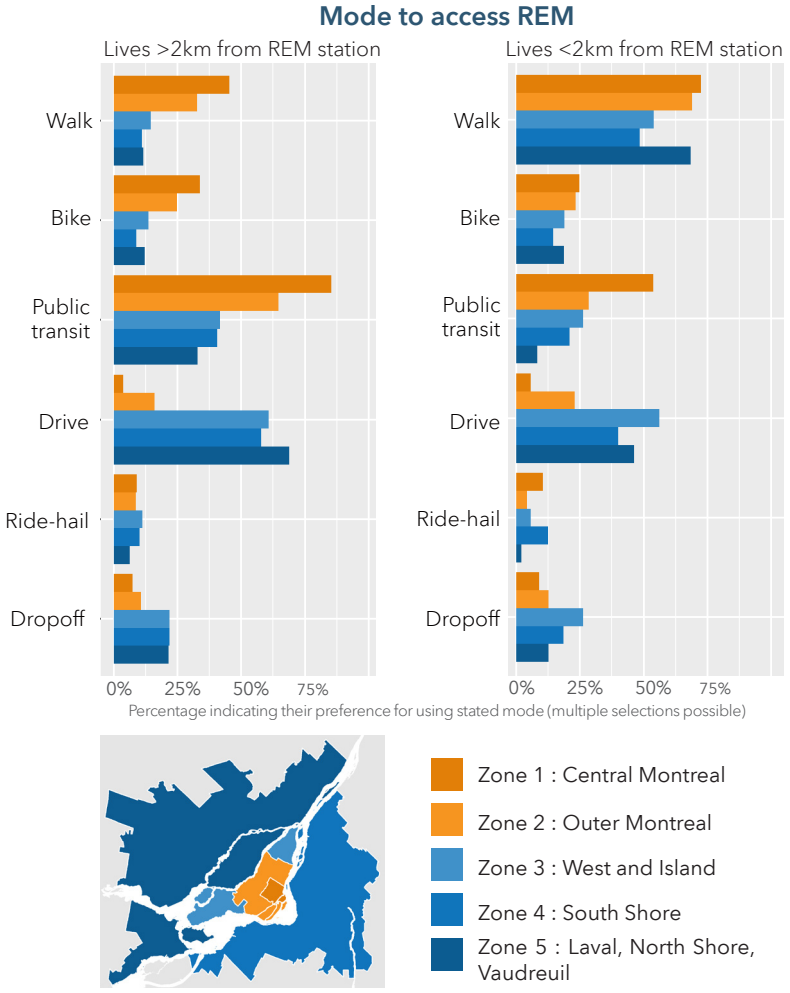
Accessing the REM: Potential for active travel

The Issue

The Réseau Express Métropolitain (REM) is a new rapid light-rail system under construction in Montreal, with operations planned to begin in 2021. This investment presents opportunities to promote active modes of transportation and their associated health benefits. To identify these opportunities throughout the region, we conducted an analysis of the results of a survey distributed in the Fall of 2019 about the REM and its impacts on travel behaviour and well-being.

Findings

- Across the REM network, walking is the dominant preferred mode for future REM users living within a 2km radius of a station.
- In suburban areas (Zones 3-5), driving is also a widely preferred mode for future REM users living within a 2km radius of a station.
- Future REM users living beyond 2km of a station in core urban areas (Zones 1-2) indicate that transit as their preferred mode, while those in suburban areas (Zones 3-5) prefer driving.
- Across the network,15-25% of those who live within 2km of a REM station intend to cycle. Cycling is most popular amongst those who live beyond 2km of a station in the core urban areas (Zones 1-2).
- Future REM users who do not currently walk or bike for travel purposes are almost twice as likely to intend to drive to the REM (59% vs 33%). (not shown)



Policy Recommendations

» **Prioritize active transport network enhancement in the vicinity of all new REM stations, including those in the suburbs.** Our results show that there is strong demand from suburban REM users living within 2km of a station to walk to the REM.

» **Prioritize public transit connectivity to the REM to encourage ridership,** especially for core urban stations.

» **Prioritize cycling network connectivity and infrastructure provision (e.g. bike parking),** especially for core urban stations.

SPHERELAB TRAM

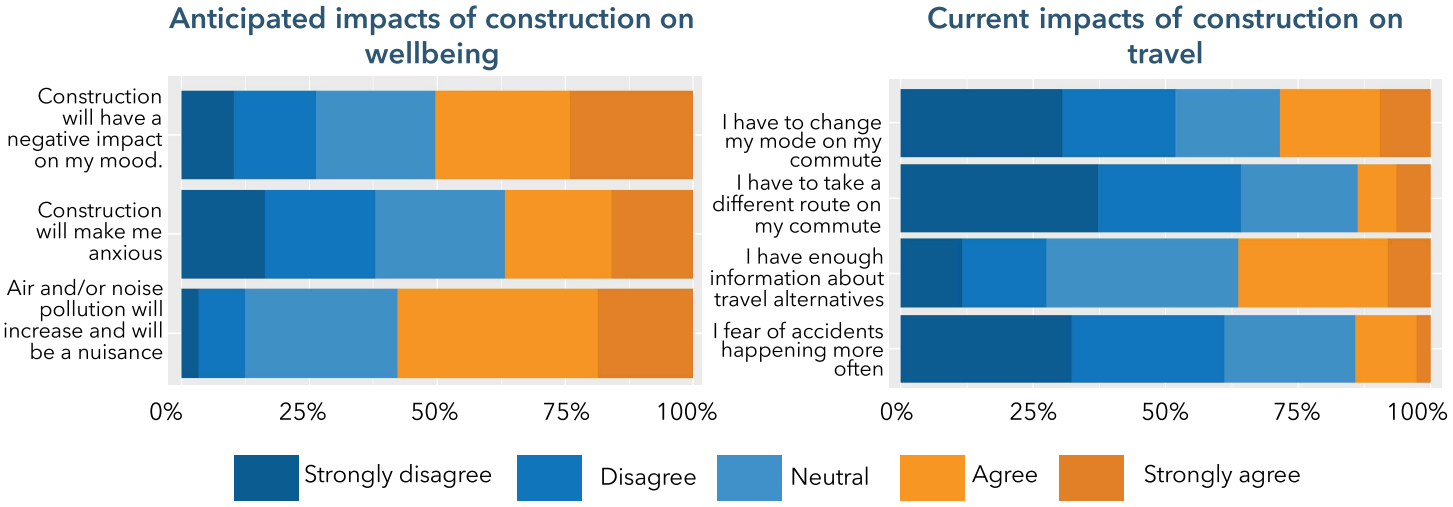
Impacts of REM construction sites

The Issue

While the REM is expected to benefit Montreal residents, there are potential disadvantages to living near REM stations while they are under construction. Construction sites affect local populations in their everyday life. For instance, commuting patterns may need to temporarily change, and air pollution and excessive noise may affect nearby residents' mood and wellbeing. A bilingual survey was conducted to examine the ongoing and anticipated impacts of the REM construction on the population living near current and future construction sites.

Findings

- More than half of respondents living close to a future REM construction site anticipate that noise and air pollution will increase due to construction and negatively affect their quality of life
- The construction's observed impact on wellbeing was less negative than anticipated, both in terms of general anxiety or stress related to forced changes in travel behavior
- REM construction activities were not particularly disruptive: most respondents did not change their route, and less than 30% of respondents indicated that they were forced to change their mode of transport because of REM construction within proximity to their homes
- Close to half the Deux-Montagne line users surveyed planned to keep using public transport despite the line suspension.



Policy Recommendations

» Given that air polution and excecive noise are the greatest causes of concern, **implement** measures and regulations to control for these negative consequensences caused by construction sites.

» **Design** realistic alternative routes for every mode affected by construction sites in order to minimize impacts on residents' commuting patterns.

» **Ensure proper communication** of these measures to nearby residents.

» **Listen** to resident's anticipated concerns and **react** accordingly.

» This survey was conducted before COVID. It would be interesting to analyse how travel patterns changes and teleworking habits impact the residents' perception of construction sites.

Intended REM use by gender

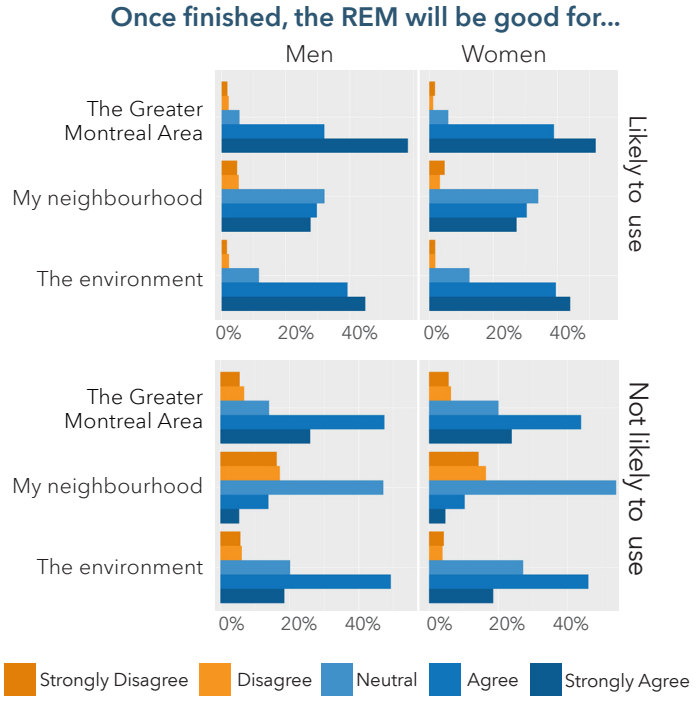
The Issue

The Réseau Express Métropolitain (REM) is a $6.3 billion project set to transform mobility in Montreal. As a generational investment in the regional transport system, it is critical to ensure that its benefits are distributed fairly across equity-seeking groups. To this end, we compared perceptions and intended use of the REM across genders by analyzing the results of a bilingual survey with 4,148 respondents.

Findings

- **17%** more men than women* stated they would use the REM
- **20%** more men than women* agreed that the REM will be good for the Greater Montreal Area
- All respondents were more pessimistic on the REM's effect on their neighborhood than on the Greater Montreal Area
- Perceptions of the REM's effect at the neighborhood level positively related to intended use
- Those who do not intend to use the REM were twice as likely* to be very pessimistic about its effect on their neighborhood

* Results statistically significant, chi² p<0.001



Policy Recommendations

» **Explore gender differences.** Women's different perceptions of the REM might be related to travel behavior or to concerns of the project's impact at the local level. These could also stem from differences in employment status or residential location. Unearthing what makes women less optimistic about future REM use and its impact will prevent unequal outcomes.

» **Engage at the neighborhood level.** A strong community-engagement strategy is needed to convey the benefits of the REM to the community, which will help (a) understand local needs (b) design appropriate interventions and (c) better integrate the project to the neighborhood.

Intended REM use by income

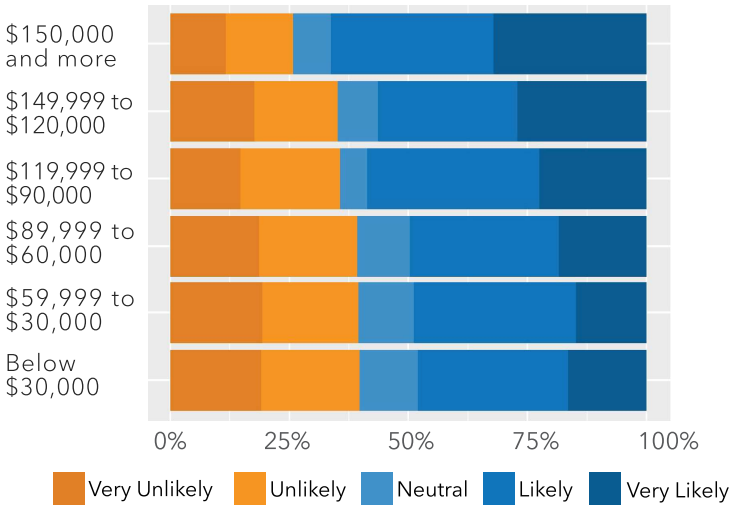
The Issue

The Réseau Express Métropolitain (REM) constitutes a significant investment in Montreal's transport system. As such, it holds strong potential in terms of social equity and income redistribution. However, whether equity-seeking groups will be at the center of the REM's benefits remains uncertain. A bilingual survey of 4,148 respondents was used to delve into income-related differences in the expected use of the REM.

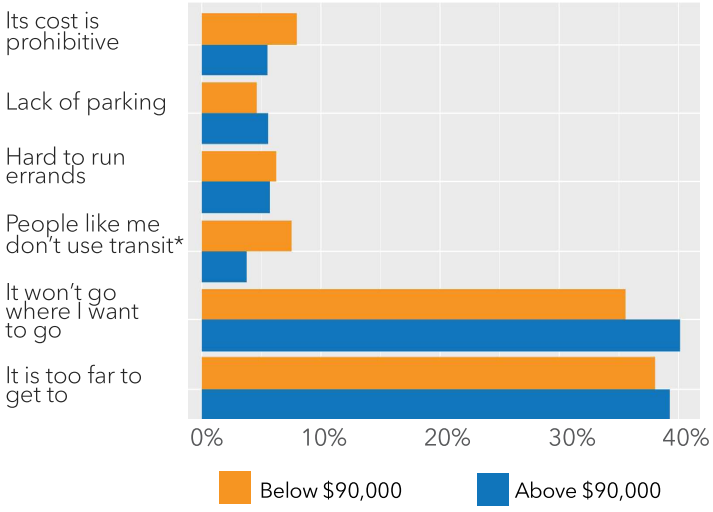
Findings

- Respondents living in households earning more than $90,000 are more likely to use the REM
- Anticipated use is highest amongst the wealthiest cohort: 66% are likely or very likely to use the REM
- Across all incomes, main reasons for not using the REM are "it won't go where I want it to go" and "it is out of my way or too far to get to"
- Respondents from households earning less than $90,000 are twice as likely* to say they will not use the REM because "people like me don't take the transit"
- Perceptions of the REM's expected impact on the neighborhood, the greater Montreal area and the environment do not significantly vary with income

Likelihood of using the REM



Reasons for not using the REM by income



* Statistically significant difference, chi² p<0.01

Policy Recommendations

» **Invest in improving connectivity to REM stations.** Regardless of income, the REM's distance from households was found to be one of the main barriers to adoption. Improving transit service to stations and parking at stations might change perceptions of distance and increase likelihood of use.

» **Explore identity-related barriers to using the REM.** It is essential to understand what characteristics are stopping some lower-income residents from using transit altogether.

» **Understand other dimensions influencing travel behavior.** The results shown in this brief do not account for differences in employment status, distance to stations, or other factors that could differently affect travel behavior of lower-income individuals.