

6. TRANSPORTATION

Ensure that accessible and affordable public transportation is available to all Manitobans.

Poverty reduction and social inclusion requires all people to have access to affordable transportation options. Without transportation, Manitobans may not be able to access education, training, employment, child care, and services such as health care and recreation. Public transportation can be one of the few means through which individuals are able to maintain the social relationships that contribute to their wellbeing. People living with low incomes and people with disabilities face barriers to using public transportation, which prevents them from participating fully in the economy and the community.

6-1. Provide municipalities with adequate and targeted funding to ensure public transportation is affordable and accessible to all citizens.

The province provides funding to municipalities to improve their public transportation systems. It should work closely with municipalities that operate public transit systems to increase affordability and accessibility for people with low incomes and persons with disabilities. Transportation could be made more easily accessible to all Manitobans if it adhered to the principles of Universal Design. The Province of Manitoba must develop strong accessibility standards with respect to transportation to prevent and remove barriers to participation for persons with disabilities.

While some EIA participants are eligible for bus tickets or passes for health, training, or job search purposes, the cost of public transportation is usually paid out of pocket. The Province of Manitoba worked with the City of Brandon to provide EIA participants with free transit passes for use during off-peak hours. However, the restrictions on usage made the program difficult to manage and created conflict between transit riders and bus operators. Furthermore, the municipality wanted to see the province contribute more towards the subsidy that was needed to provide the free passes. The inability to resolve these challenges led to the elimination of the program. The Province of Manitoba should work with and support municipalities that wish to provide subsidized transportation for EIA participants and other low-income Manitobans in order to reduce economic barriers to transportation.

It is important to acknowledge that some municipalities do not have a public transportation system. Manitobans in those communities often rely on shuttle companies or cab services to get around. However, these modes of transportation are not affordable for everyone. This creates challenges, in particular for families with young children who live further away from services and employment. The Province of Manitoba has developed a transportation fund that supports rural Manitoba communities to invest in transit infrastructure projects by providing 50 percent cost-shared funding for transportation projects, including new public transit systems where none currently exist.¹³⁶ Municipalities must do their part by making transportation a priority and taking advantage of the supports the province has made available. This might include undertaking a study to determine transportation related needs and opportunities in the community and to develop a strategy to ensure transportation is affordable and accessible to all citizens.

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