

User Fee Review – Current State Report

City of Hamilton

March 2026

Contents

	Page
/ Executive Summary	3
/ Assessment Against Guiding Principles	8
/ Recreation Current State	12
/ Recreation Peer Approaches	25
/ Recreation Survey Findings	36
/ Transit Current State	51
/ Transit Peer Approaches	64
/ Transit Survey Findings	71
/ Next Steps	82
/ Appendices	85

/ EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report explores user fees at Recreation and Transit services

Situation

Departments within the City of Hamilton (the City or Hamilton) review and set user fees on an annual basis, generally with adjustments for inflation.

The City provides qualified residents with programs to reduce fees and improve access to services, such as the Recreation Assistance Program and Fare Assist.

There are no current formal pricing policies or user fee frameworks to coordinate and justify changes to user fees at a corporate level.

Objectives

The objective of this project is to establish a user fee framework for the City's Recreation and Transit Services.

This report documents the current state of user fees at these business areas to inform the development of an equitable, transparent and financially sustainable fee framework.

Future activities include:

- ▶ Developing preliminary fees and user fee framework
- ▶ Creating an accessibility and equity analysis
- ▶ Developing a reporting and monitoring structure
- ▶ Providing a final report and implementation plan

Approach

- ▶ Blackline reviewed policies, plans and data provided by Recreation and Transit.
- ▶ We conducted interviews with representatives from each department and conducted a working session to discuss and confirm the working guiding principles for the user fee framework.
- ▶ We conducted a comparison of user fee policies and frameworks with peer Ontario municipalities for both departments.
- ▶ Finally, Blackline and the City launched a resident survey to collect detailed impressions regarding user fees for Recreation and Transit.

Recreation's user fees meet principles with high resident satisfaction

Recreation user fees largely align with the City's proposed guiding principles

Recreation user fees, including the Recreation Assistance Program (RAP) and targeted subsidies, largely support the City's proposed guiding principles of affordability, equity, accessibility and community benefit. Cost recovery targets further reflect the City's guiding principles, but the fee structure itself is complex.

While participation in programs and facilities are still rebounding from the pandemic, Recreation recovered 34% of its operating expenses in 2023, though a small number of facilities generate most of the revenue. But data limitations prevent calculating some detailed cost recovery.

Municipal peers have similar principles to guide their recreation user fee approaches. Peers set their user fees using different approaches, but all consider community benefits. A service pricing comparison shows that Hamilton's pricing strategy is strongly aligned to community benefit. Most peers measure cost recovery and have roughly similar results and those who set targets are meeting them.

Program availability, not cost, is the most frequently mentioned barrier by survey respondents

However, lower-income households are more likely to encounter cost barriers.

- ▶ Community Recreation Centres show the highest regular usage rates, followed by parks with playgrounds and courts (which do not have fees associated with their use).
- ▶ Drop-in fees and participation passes are both the most frequently used fee types and receive the highest fee satisfaction ratings.
- ▶ Almost all respondents rate recreation services as good value for money and agree recreation provides important community benefits. But lower-income respondents are less likely to find fees affordable.
- ▶ More than half are unaware of RAP, though among those aware or who have used the program, perceptions are positive.
- ▶ Respondents with disabilities have more accessibility issues with services.
- ▶ Overall, respondents prefer a tiered pricing approach and say discounts should go to low-income households and seniors. Maintaining existing facilities is the most common top-3 priority, over keeping fees low.
- ▶ Respondents prefer partnerships and sponsorships over increasing user fees to address funding shortfalls.

Transit fares support accessibility and few residents say cost is a barrier

HSR fare policies, particularly Fare Assist, supports the City's proposed guiding principles

In the past ten years, HSR has created different policies to guide transit fares. There are six major fare categories, with the recent Fare Assist program offering significant discounts to provide greater equity and accessibility.

Cost recovery for fares broadly aligns with community benefit principles, with Adult and Cash fares seeing high cost recovery and making up a majority of revenue.

Peers have similar guiding principles to inform fare pricing decisions, while using different practices and a mix of pricing models. All have various fare equity mechanisms in place, with HSR having the most-comprehensive equity-based fares. Overall cost recovery among peers varies in a range of between 28% and 58% of operating expenses.

Service coverage and frequency are the most cited barriers to transit services, not fare cost

- ▶ However, cost barriers are more common in lower-income households. Respondents value keeping fares as low as possible and fare satisfaction dominates perceptions of value for money.
- ▶ Nonetheless, most survey respondents are satisfied with current fares and say they get good value for money.
- ▶ Support for fee assistance is consistent across income levels. Two thirds are aware of Fare Assist and among those aware, most using it say the program is effective. Fare Assist users are more likely to say fares should be based on ability to pay.
- ▶ Almost all say transit provides important community benefits, but only half say it is accessible to all income levels.

However, there are challenges to address in a new user fee framework

Fee assistance programs exist but aren't reaching most eligible residents

Awareness of RAP and Transit's Fare Assist program has room to improve. As there is no corporate user fee policy or framework, this may add difficulties to public communications about how departments set and change user fees.

Cost recovery is the proportion of revenue from user fee or service charges against operating expenses. While the City sets single-year departmental cost recovery targets, there are not other metrics or key performance indicators relating to awareness or use of fee assistance programs or addressing barriers to service use.

As well, limitations of the City's financial systems add barriers and difficulty to making evidence-based user fee pricing decisions, particularly considering the number of facilities and separate user fees for Recreation.

Addressing this limitation will require investment in corporate systems.

Metric	Target	Recreation	Transit
Overall cost recovery	▶ Single-year goal	▶ Achieved 34% in 2023 ▶ Different user fee groups have different targets	▶ Achieved 33% in 2023 ▶ Target rising to 48.9% by 2032
Number of user fees	▶ No policy	▶ 307 across five user fee groups	▶ 6 fare categories
Fee assistance program	▶ Developed from departmental policies	▶ Recreation Assistance Program (50-90% discounts)	▶ Fare Assist (50% discount)
Awareness of fee assistance	▶ No target	▶ 43% aware	▶ 68% aware
Top participation barrier	▶ --	▶ Program capacity (24%)	▶ Service coverage and frequency (15% each)
Resident value perception	▶ No target	▶ 86% good/very good	▶ 70% good/very good

/ ASSESSMENT AGAINST GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Guiding principles will establish the foundation of future user fee policy

The City identified four guiding principles for user fee policy

In a cross-departmental workshop, representatives from Transit, Recreation and Finance supported these principles and found them to be applicable to City services.

Participants emphasized that there are trade-offs between cost-recovery goals and broader community benefits when setting user fees. These trade-offs are particularly acute for services with environmental, health and social benefits.





Staff noted that while principles are intuitive and applied in practice, they are not consistently formalized or set across service areas.

Participants indicated agreement that these four principles that should guide user fees framework development, while noting that some flexibility on application is desirable on how they are weighted, depending on service type and individual need.

Hamilton is also currently developing a Community Benefits Framework (CBF), which would guide the application of user fees from Transit and Recreation services to collective wellbeing

The CBF focuses on generating additional social, economic and environmental benefits from public and private infrastructure investments.

The City also structures its user fees to reflect how much each service contributes to collective wellbeing.

Principle	Definition
Community Benefit 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ The value created when City services contribute to collective wellbeing
Accessibility 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Multiple pathways exist for residents to access services
Equity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Pricing accounts for systemic barriers faced by different groups
Affordability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Fees consider real-world financial constraints, not just income thresholds

Recreation user fees are largely aligned with guiding principles

Community benefit and accessibility features are evident within Recreation user fees

The user fee structure differentiates between services that deliver broad community-wide benefit and those that provide more individualized benefit, resulting in lower recovery for highly accessible services such as admissions, programs and rentals. Multiple payment options and a wide geographic distribution of facilities further support participation across diverse groups.

However, alignment is less consistent for equity and affordability

While RAP provides equity and additional pathways to using recreation services, awareness is limited. Affordability pressures also persist for lower-income households, who report higher cost barriers despite overall fee levels remaining affordable for most residents.

Principle	Performance	Evidence	Considerations
Community Benefit	●	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Golf (100% recovery) vs. Admissions (35%) reflects individual/community spectrum ▶ Pricing 48% below peers for admissions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Classify user fees to document pricing rationales
Accessibility	●	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Multiple payment options (daily, monthly, annual, clip cards) ▶ 300+ fee types across 240+ facilities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Simplify user fee structure to reduce complexity
Equity	●	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ RAP provides 50-90% discounts ▶ Subsidized rates for youth groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Low awareness (43%) indicates more outreach needed
Affordability	◐	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ 80% find fees affordable ▶ Steeper subsidies than peers (33% vs. 22% for admissions) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ 27-point affordability gap between income groups ▶ Lower-income households 2x more likely to cite cost as barrier

Legend: Strong ●, Moderate ◐, Low ○

Similarly, Transit fares are well-aligned

Current transit fares support ridership growth while balancing affordability and cost recovery

Fare pricing decisions are made alongside service expansion and investment, recognizing that ridership growth must precede higher recovery expectations.

Currently, HSR's approach reflects transit's position as service and a community benefit. Operating expenses are met with revenue from riders, taxpayers and government funding.

HSR has several programs to support access to transit services and promote equity, particularly Fare Assist. While users of the program are broadly satisfied, there are still opportunities to improve awareness.

Principle	Performance	Evidence	Considerations
Community Benefit	●	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fare split recognizes community-wide benefits (environment, congestion, health) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Framework should formalize yearly target cost recovery by fare type
Accessibility	●	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> myRide On-Demand DARTS Support Person program Accessible fleet Free rides for children under 12 and seniors 80+ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continued investment as ridership grows
Equity	●	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fare Assist expanded to 50% discount (Jan 2026); includes refugees, newcomers, household members 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitor uptake and awareness efforts
Affordability	◐	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Youth/Senior discounts (~46%); frequent rider cap (11 rides/week) 72% of survey respondents say transit fares are affordable 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Elasticity may present limits to fare increases

Legend: Strong ●, Moderate ◐, Low ○

/ RECREATION CURRENT STATE

Recreation services align with Hamilton strategic priorities

Through accessible facilities, inclusive programming and shared community spaces, recreation services contribute to resident wellbeing

These services support everyday physical activity, provide safe and welcoming gathering places and foster participation across ages, nationalities and access levels. Recreation’s role aligns closely with the mission and many of the priorities from [The City of Hamilton’s 2016–2025 Strategic Plan](#), as displayed below.



The strategic direction emphasizes equity, access and community benefit

Recreation service delivery emphasizes access, choice and quality

[Hamilton's Recreation Master Plan](#) establishes a set of guiding principles that shape what the department considers when designing and delivering services. As illustrated to the right, these principles position recreation as a public service that focuses on enhancing the quality of life for residents and are intended to align with the upcoming Community Benefits Framework. The following examples reflect how the Master Plan's principles translate into specific strategic directions for recreation services:

- ▶ **Equity and Inclusion:** implement intentional approaches that define what the City will do to include under-represented populations in the design and delivery of recreation services.
- ▶ **A Spectrum of Recreation Service Choices:** support and promote unstructured and structured experiences that encourage physical activity, learning, creativity, self-proficiency, community building, healthy aging fun.
- ▶ **High Quality Facilities and Services:** foster recreation places, spaces and programs that are welcoming, safe and promote a sense of belonging for all residents.
- ▶ **Partnerships and Collective Impact:** work with others to share information, explore new opportunities and address identified community issues.
- ▶ **Financial Sustainability:** bolster long-term financial accountability through the cost-effective and efficient management of available resources.

Guiding principles from Hamilton's 2022 Recreation Master Plan:



Equity and Inclusion

The provision of responsive recreation services is based on the needs of residents and servers all age groups and areas of Hamilton.



A Spectrum of Recreation Service Choices

There is a wide range of affordable and accessible opportunities for active, creative, sports and general interest recreational experiences.



High Quality Facilities and Services

Our recreation system offers high quality, accessible and sustainable facilities and services that enhance the health and wellbeing of residents.



Partnerships and Collective Impact

All relevant community partners are engaged in addressing community issues where recreation and sport can be of added value.



Financial Sustainability

We demonstrate leadership and accountability through responsible fiscal management and the pursuit of creative funding approaches.

The Recreation Assistance Program and targeted subsidies support equity and accessibility

Hamilton intentionally uses subsidies, waivers and fee assistance to reduce financial barriers to participation across its recreation service mix

Hamilton administers the Recreation Assistance Program (RAP), which provides equitable access to recreation services for low-income residents, as summarized right.

Other targeted subsidies encourage participation and support equity objectives.

- ▶ Several rentals receive subsidized rates of up to 50%, such as youth groups accessing baseball diamonds.
- ▶ Golf fees also vary meaningfully by time of use, with non-peak fees 40% lower.
- ▶ Similarly subsidized ice user groups receive 43% off arena bookings. Pricing differentials appear across Hamilton's fee schedule, where children, youth and seniors pay reduced rates relative to standard adult fees.

Beyond fee-level subsidies, the City also has a Corporate Fee Waiver/Reduction Policy, which enables eligible community groups and nonprofit organizations to request reduced or waived fees for facility rentals and recreation services that deliver community benefit.

Recreation Assistance Program Summary



For Families (with children under 18)

Benefits valid from 12 months from approval date:

- ▶ Free Family Participation Pass (valid for City wide drop-in recreation programs with no instructor)
- ▶ Free Family Skate Pass (valid for City wide drop-in public skates)
- ▶ 90% discount off registered programs (up to \$150 per child)
- ▶ 50% discount off Affiliated Minor Sport league registration fees (up to a maximum of \$100 on baseball, soccer, lacrosse or \$150 on aquatics, hockey, skating, ringette)
- ▶ 65% discount off year-round Camp Kidaca programs



Adults/Seniors (no children at address)

Benefits valid from 12 months from approval date.

Adults/senior can choose one of the following:

- ▶ 75% off an Annual Participation Pass
- ▶ 75% off an Annual Skating Pass
- ▶ 50% off an Annual Waterfit Pass
- ▶ 50% off a Monthly Waterfit Passes

Recreation delivers community benefits through a diverse service mix

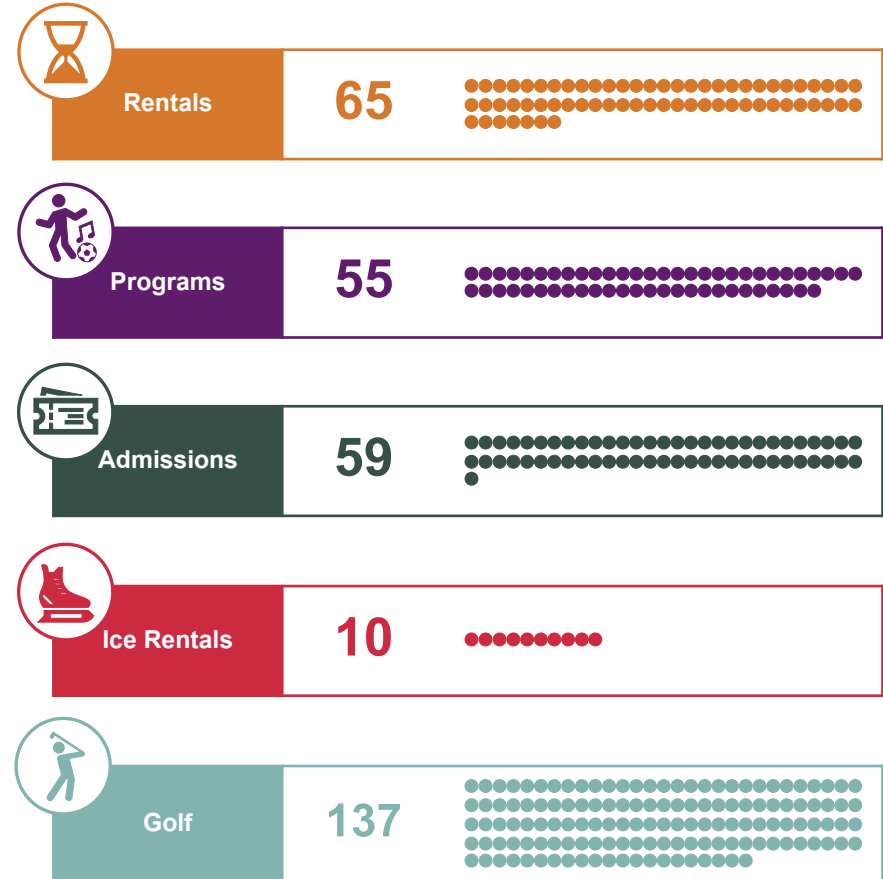
The City offers a wide range of recreation services that cater towards community needs, usage patterns and ability to pay

As of 2025, there are over 300 user fees for services or activities provided at over 240 facilities or locations (including parks and other public spaces).

- ▶ Rentals support community organizations, leagues and private users through access to gyms, halls, sports fields and event spaces. This supports community benefit through organized community use and shared access to public recreation spaces.
- ▶ Programs include registered offerings such as camps, aquatics, fitness, sport and instructional programs. This provides access to skill development, structured participation and engagement across different age groups.
- ▶ Admissions provide access to recreation centres, pools, skating, shinny and waterfit. This supports access to services and facilities across the community.
- ▶ Ice Rentals includes user fees related to access to arena ice time for organized hockey supporting leagues, clubs and other structured ice-based recreation. This enables sustained access to organized sport.
- ▶ Golf includes user fees related to access to municipal golf courses, including green fees, tournaments and memberships. This promotes both casual play and regular participation.

The graphic to the right illustrates the extent of Hamilton's recreation service mix and the range of user fees that support it.

User Fees by Recreation Service Areas








Cost recovery targets further reflect the City’s guiding principles

The City applies informal cost recovery targets across its user fee groups

These informal cost recovery targets align with the direction outlined in the Recreation Master Plan for pricing policies and have been applied consistently in past years. The table below summarizes 2025 targets by service area.

- ▶ Rentals, programs and admissions share a 35% target, reflecting their role in providing a greater degree of community benefit.
- ▶ Ice services carry a higher 50% target because they apply to organized user groups that reserve dedicated ice time. Drop-in skating and hockey fall under the ‘Programs’ grouping instead and align with the City’s 35% target to support broad community access.
- ▶ Golf carries a 100% target because it serves a narrower user group and operates as a more individualized, premium activity. This enables the City to prioritize lower targets for its services that see greater participation from diverse resident groups.

Groups	Example Fees	Target
 Rentals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Sports fields ▶ Community rooms ▶ Gyms ▶ Pools ▶ Halls 	35%
 Programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Aquatic lessons (group, private and semi-private*) ▶ Aquatic leadership ▶ Dance ▶ Art ▶ Music ▶ Camps 	35%
 Admissions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Recreation centre ▶ Pools and arenas single admit ▶ 10 visit clip ▶ Monthly ▶ 3 monthly ▶ Yearly 	35%
 Ice Rentals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Regular ice season rentals ▶ Tournaments ▶ Shooter pads 	50%
 Golf	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Green fees ▶ League ▶ Tournament ▶ Disc golf ▶ Membership 	100%

*Private and semi-private swimming lessons have a higher target of 50% compared to group classes.

But the fee structure is complex

For 2025, the City maintains over 300 distinct recreation user fees across five service areas, with dozens of additional sub-groups

The City further differentiates fees based on space quality (tiered into different categories), subsidized pricing, commercial/non-resident use and peak versus non-peak hours.

The example to the right shows the pricing complexity of hall rentals, where a single sub-group branches contains nine different fees (three room categories with three different fees depending on user group).

Other services have prime-time pricing, such as user group ice rates or golf green fees.

Recreation User Fee Example
User Fee Service Area: Recreation Rentals
Sub-Group: Hall Rentals
Categories: <ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ Category A – Premium Community Rooms/Auditorium/Lobby▶ Category B – Standard Community Rooms▶ Category C – Basic Community Rooms
User Fees: <ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ Hourly Rate – Standard▶ Hourly Rate – Subsidized – 50% Discount from Standard▶ Hourly Rate – Commercial/Non-Resident

Recreation sets and revises user fees using different policy approaches

Hamilton's recreation user fees align with policy-based approaches

The graphic on the right illustrates recreation services operating under each following policy constraint:

- ▶ **Market maximum constraint:** fees that align with what residents can reasonably bear.
- ▶ **Market comparable constraint:** fees reflect alignment with peer municipalities or similar service providers.
- ▶ **Full cost recovery:** fees aim to recover the complete cost of service delivery.

The City resumed annual fee updates after a pause in user fee adjustments during the pandemic. Rising participation rates and ongoing inflation resulted in operating costs increases, requiring fee adjustments to maintain service levels.

For 2025, most user fees increased by 4%. Recreation applied greater select adjustments where costs or market conditions warranted, including:

- ▶ Gym rentals for Category A gyms (6,000 Sq Ft+) increased by 29.2%.
- ▶ Gym rentals for Category C gyms (3,000 – 3,499 Sq Ft) increased by 11%.
- ▶ Camp specialty and trip add-on fees increased by 10%.
- ▶ Private swim lessons (including bi and tri-private) increased by 7%.



*Some fees pertaining to aquatic leadership programs are instead set according to the market maximum constraint

Recreation recovered 34% of its operating expenses in 2023

Hamilton calculates recreation cost recovery by comparing user fee revenue against operating expenses

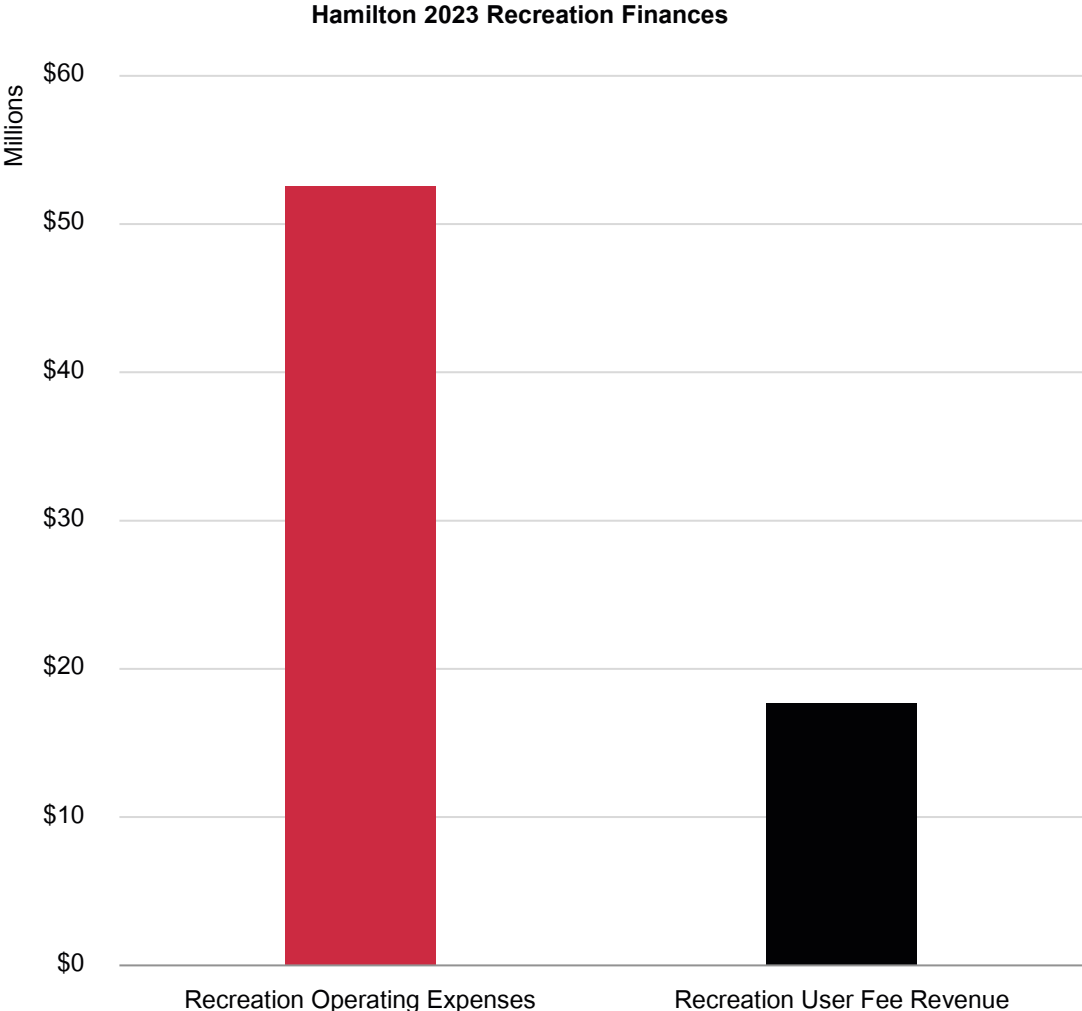
This entails omitting non-user fee driven revenue and revenue generated from Food Services.

Recreation recovered just over a third of its expenditures in 2023

As illustrated to the right, total recreation operating expenses were approximately \$52.6 million in 2023, while user fee driven revenue totaled closed to \$17.7 million.

The gap between revenue and expenditure is indicative of the typical municipal recreation funding model in Canada, which generally prioritizes community benefit and equitable access for residents instead of cost recovery.

[Appendix B](#) contains further financial insights relevant to Recreation at Hamilton.



A small number of facilities generate half of Recreation’s user fee revenue

Despite 65 different facilities recording user fee revenue in 2023, the facilities on the right represent Recreation’s largest revenue sources

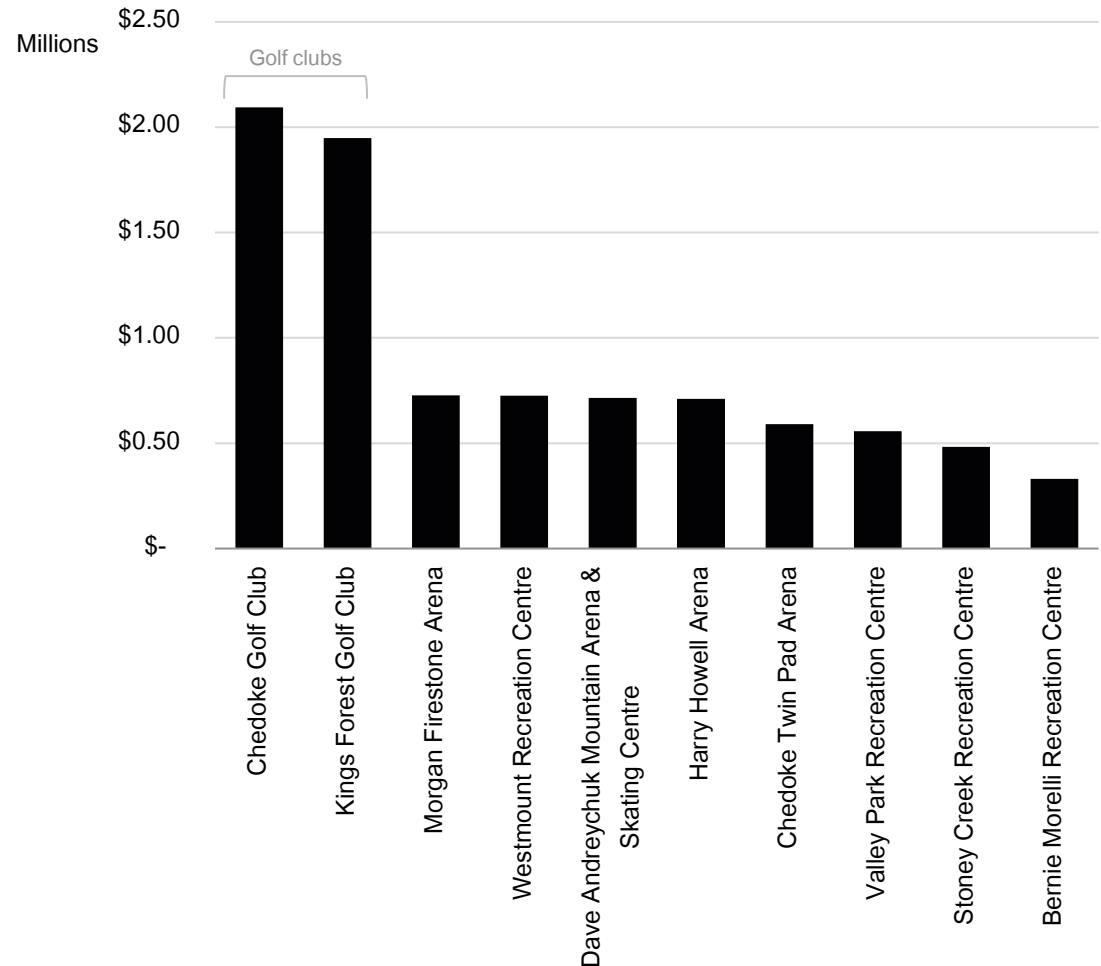
- ▶ The two municipal golf clubs alone produced nearly a quarter (23%) of Hamilton’s total 2023 recreation user fee revenue.
- ▶ The eight other arenas and recreation centres on the chart cumulatively contributed to a significant portion (27%) of the total 2023 recreation user fee revenue.

The concentration of user fee revenue across a limited number of facilities highlights the City’s reliance on a small subset of services to bolster overall recovery.

We excluded some facilities from the main body of this analysis:

- ▶ The LIUNA 4 Ice Centre has a unique operating model, which we introduce on the next page.
- ▶ Major Park Facilities contributed to a sizeable portion of revenue. However, it includes revenues from all parks. It is not a single location but an umbrella category.

2023 Revenue Distribution by Facility



Some recreation facilities and services have different operating models

While the City generally directly collects user fees for several services, some facilities and services have different approaches

The approaches used for Seniors Clubs, Seniors Centres, Halls and the LIUNA 4 Ice Centre are detailed at right.

Grant Funded

Due to the community benefit senior clubs provide, usage does not have any associated user fees. Instead, senior clubs rely on grant funding.



Board Involvement

Senior centres receive grants but are operated by non-profit boards. Hamilton only recognizes a portion of membership revenue. The boards realize the remainder of user fees.



Third Party Contracts

Nustadia Recreation operates the LIUNA 4 Ice Centre. The City receives a set amount of hours each year to allocate to user groups, realizing contract revenue instead of user fee revenue.



User Group Agreements

The City has agreements with user groups in some Halls to generate increased utilization and community benefit. These groups may access these spaces at a subsidized rate.



... which leads to varying degrees of cost recovery attained across Recreation's services and programs

The table to the right shows 2023's cost recovery metrics across Recreation's portfolio

- ▶ Golf achieves the highest cost recovery since it is an activity with higher individual benefit and more specialized use.
- ▶ Due to the third-party contractual revenue for Liuna 4 Ice Centre, the Quad Arena category has a unique recovery position.
- ▶ Community Arenas slightly exceed the 50% target for ice rentals.
- ▶ Senior Clubs recover just under half of their costs, but through grants instead of user fees.
- ▶ As a result of the agreements for Halls, cost recovery is lower at 29%.
- ▶ Recreation Facilities provide a high degree of community benefit and prioritize accessibility instead of cost recovery maximization.
- ▶ Since Senior Centres only collect a portion of user fee revenue, cost recovery is lower.
- ▶ Outdoor pools have a short operating season to recover operations and also prioritize accessibility as opposed to cost recovery maximization.
- ▶ While Aquatic Leadership has strong cost recovery, not all expenses (e.g. maintenance or building staffing) are coded back to the program.
- ▶ Camps recover close to half of their costs but face the same coding challenges as the Aquatic Leadership program.

We analyzed the cost recovery of programs and services by facility

The City's financial data supports this level of analysis for most locations and services where underlying records align. [Appendix C](#) contains cost recovery analysis of specific services. We excluded outdoor sports fields as the City records associated revenues within Recreation while related expenditures sit with the Parks division in the Public Works department.

Recreation Services	2023 Revenue	2023 Expenditure	2023 Cost Recovery
Golf	\$4,147,628	\$3,981,367	104%
Quad Arena	\$3,933,809	\$3,997,618	98%
Community Arenas	\$5,845,819	\$11,376,179	51%
Senior Clubs	\$299,761	\$636,668	47%
Halls	\$91,661	\$310,924	29%
Recreation Facilities*	\$4,723,199	\$18,039,380	26%
Senior Centres	\$322,706	\$1,331,765	24%
Outdoor Pools	\$78,488	\$1,134,286	7%

*Includes recreation centres and indoor pools

Recreation Programs	2023 Revenue	2023 Expenditure	2023 Cost Recovery
Aquatic Leadership	\$145,439	\$88,902	164%
Camps	\$495,393	\$1,031,567	48%

But data limitations prevent calculating cost recovery at the user fee group level

Recreation's user fee data does not follow the same grouping as its financial data

Recreation structures user fees into the groupings of rentals, programs, admissions, ice and golf (which inform targets). The associated general ledger codes capture revenue only when mapped into the financial dataset. This means that cost recovery cannot be calculated consistently at the user fee grouping level.

Instead, financial data aligns to the recreation sub-sections listed to the right. This groups multiple activities together within broader location- or function-based categories.

To ensure consistency between revenues and expenditures, we rely on financial sub-sections to calculate and analyze cost recovery, rather than the user fee groupings.

This limits the City's ability to analyze recreation financial data as per their cost recovery target grouping

Enabling this level of analysis will require data infrastructure investment.

Hamilton Financials Recreation Sub-Sections

- ▶ Arenas – CS
- ▶ Arenas – Quad
- ▶ Camps
- ▶ CW – Operations & Administration
- ▶ Div. Operations & Administration
- ▶ Food Services
- ▶ Golf
- ▶ Halls – CS
- ▶ Indoor Pools
- ▶ Other Services
- ▶ Outdoor Pools – CS
- ▶ Recreation Operations & Administration
- ▶ Recreation Facilities – CS
- ▶ Senior Centres
- ▶ Senior Clubs
- ▶ Sports Facilities
- ▶ Sub Committees

/ RECREATION PEER APPROACHES

Blackline surveyed Hamilton’s peers for a comparator study

Blackline surveyed Hamilton’s peers to understand their recreation user fee policies, cost recovery practices and equity considerations

We uncovered the methodologies, principles and approaches different municipalities use to balance accessibility, equity and financial sustainability in setting recreation user fees.

Particularly, we inquired about:

 User fee frameworks
 Guiding principles
 Pricing models
 Discounts, subsidies and waivers
 Cost recovery targets

Four peer municipalities participated in this study

Hamilton confirmed the selection of municipalities to participate based on characteristics that align closely with the City, population, demographics and similarity in recreational service offerings. Of the eight municipalities that fit the criteria and were contacted, the four municipalities that participated in the comparison are:

- ▶ Burlington
- ▶ London
- ▶ Oakville
- ▶ Windsor

Municipal peers have similar themes to guide their recreation user fee approaches

The themes illustrated below represent some of the factors that influence how peers design and deliver recreation user fees



Societal Benefit

- ▶ Peers recognize recreation services as contributing to overall community wellbeing



Financial Sustainability

- ▶ Peers aim to ensure recreation services support long-term corporate goals



Equity and Inclusion

- ▶ Peers emphasize fairness, ensuring services remain accessible for all residents



Participation and Retention

- ▶ Peers prioritize long-term engagement and strive for recurring resident visits






Peers set their user fees using different pricing techniques

Peers referenced a mix of approaches when describing pricing models

While terminology and application vary, most combine multiple pricing techniques to balance cost recovery, equity and market competitiveness.

Peers also take into consideration council-approved financial parameters and annual budgeting cycles when setting or updating fees.

The table at right categorizes the predominant techniques mentioned by peers.

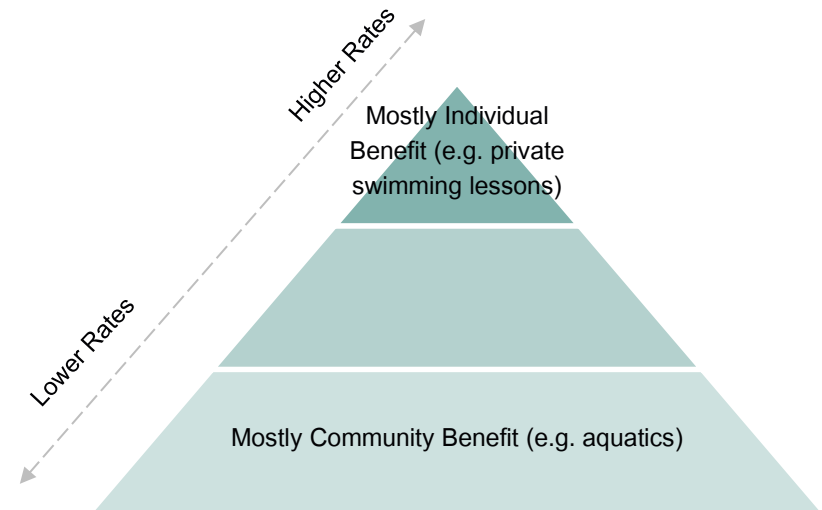
<p>Comparative</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Peers reference using comparable municipalities and market rates to validate or benchmark recreation fees, ensuring alignment with regional affordability expectations.
<p>Cost-Based</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Peers consider the full or partial recovery of direct and indirect service costs when establishing fees, balancing fiscal accountability with accessibility goals.
<p>Differential</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Peers vary fees based on user characteristics such as age, residency and facility type, recognizing differences in benefit, ability to pay and demand.
<p>Traditional</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Peers use historical data to inform fee adjustments, referencing past rates and inflation trends to guide decisions.
<p>Modelling</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Hamilton mentioned running different cost recovery models based on the level of expenses to be included in cost recovery analysis. For example, using expenses associated strictly with direct program delivery; adding to that incorporating the expenses associated with maintaining the building where the program was delivered; and finally, all costs within Recreation. ▶ Windsor in particular uses scenario modelling to assess how fee changes might affect participation among vulnerable groups. Hamilton intends to implement the same once there is a more holistic understanding of costs.

All peers consider community benefits to set user fees

In alignment with incorporating accessibility and inclusion, most peers consider perceived benefits when setting recreation user fees

Peer municipalities generally keep rates lower for programs that deliver broader community benefit, as shown at right. The examples below outline how peers differentiate fees based that principle:

- ▶ During the pandemic, Hamilton paused recreation user fee increases to preserve access to services with collective community benefit, prioritizing participation and equity over short-term cost recovery.
- ▶ London recently expanded subsidies for Indigenous groups from the City and surrounding areas to increase participation in programs and the utilization of facilities. The City is considering a more comprehensive user fee policy to further consider community benefit.
- ▶ Windsor has a 'Not Yet 3 - You Are Free' policy for admission into its water park. The City also assesses which recreation facilities serve the greater number of people and provides subsidies accordingly.
- ▶ Burlington offers an 'Active5 Pass' which gives Grade 5 students free access to drop-in recreation activities. The City is also finalizing a departmental master plan for release that will refresh its user fee strategy to strengthen community impact and value.
- ▶ Oakville groups recreation programs into categories (e.g. Aquatics A–K, Fitness A–E) based on specialization level and staggers the user fees accordingly.



Hamilton’s pricing strategy is strongly aligned to community benefit

We benchmarked peer municipalities 2024 recreation pricing using a consistent, like-for-like approach






- ▶ Our review focused on standard resident rates, excluding youth, senior, non-resident, commercial or other discounted categories to ensure simplicity.
- ▶ For fee types with multiple tiers or room sizes (e.g. small, medium, large community rooms), we selected the mid-point rate.

This resulted in a dataset of about 30 representative fees across major service areas, providing a balanced basis for comparing pricing levels with peers. [Appendix D](#) lists all the fees we assessed.

Hamilton’s average rates are higher for Rentals, Parks and Golf, but sit below the peer average for programs and admissions

This keeps broadly used services affordable while charging more for individualized or premium offerings. Specifically:

- ▶ Prime-time ice rental rates sit 28% higher than peers. Exclusive park use sits 48% higher as well. These are services that primarily provide individual benefit.
- ▶ Widely used services remain more affordable. Yearly admissions for recreation centre access are 66% lower. Dance and fitness programs are 54% cheaper. These are services that enable greater community participation.

Recreation Service Area		Hamilton versus Peers	
	Rentals	↑	19% higher
	Parks	↑	35% higher
	Programs	↓	16% lower
	Admissions	↓	48% lower
	Golf	↑	34% higher

The peers in the table below measure cost recovery

Peers have different approaches to setting cost recovery targets

All peers who track cost recovery review their targets annually, but as displayed to the right, not all have multi-year targets.

While Oakville does not have multi-year targets, the Town has two levels of cost recovery targets:

- ▶ Program: Higher cost recovery target for programs with individual benefits
- ▶ User group: Cost recovery targets group (e.g. youth, adult, commercial) within each program

Windsor's Parks & Recreation User Fee and Pricing Policy supports modelling scenarios where fees are adjusted to meet varying cost recovery thresholds (e.g. 100% of direct costs vs. partial recovery for public-benefit programs).

Burlington has not set cost recovery targets but is considering doing so in their upcoming masterplan.

The table to the right summarizes peer approaches to target setting.

Municipality	Multi-Year Targets	Target Exclusions	Target Inclusions
Hamilton	No	--	▶ Operating expenses
London	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Corporate overhead costs from support services (ITS, finance) ▶ Capital renewal costs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Management, union and casual staff personnel costs ▶ Direct operating costs of each service
Windsor	Yes	--	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Staffing ▶ Facility rentals (rooms) ▶ Program supplies & utilities
Oakville	No	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Costs for capital and building replacement (e.g. equipment, turf, lighting, etc.) 	--

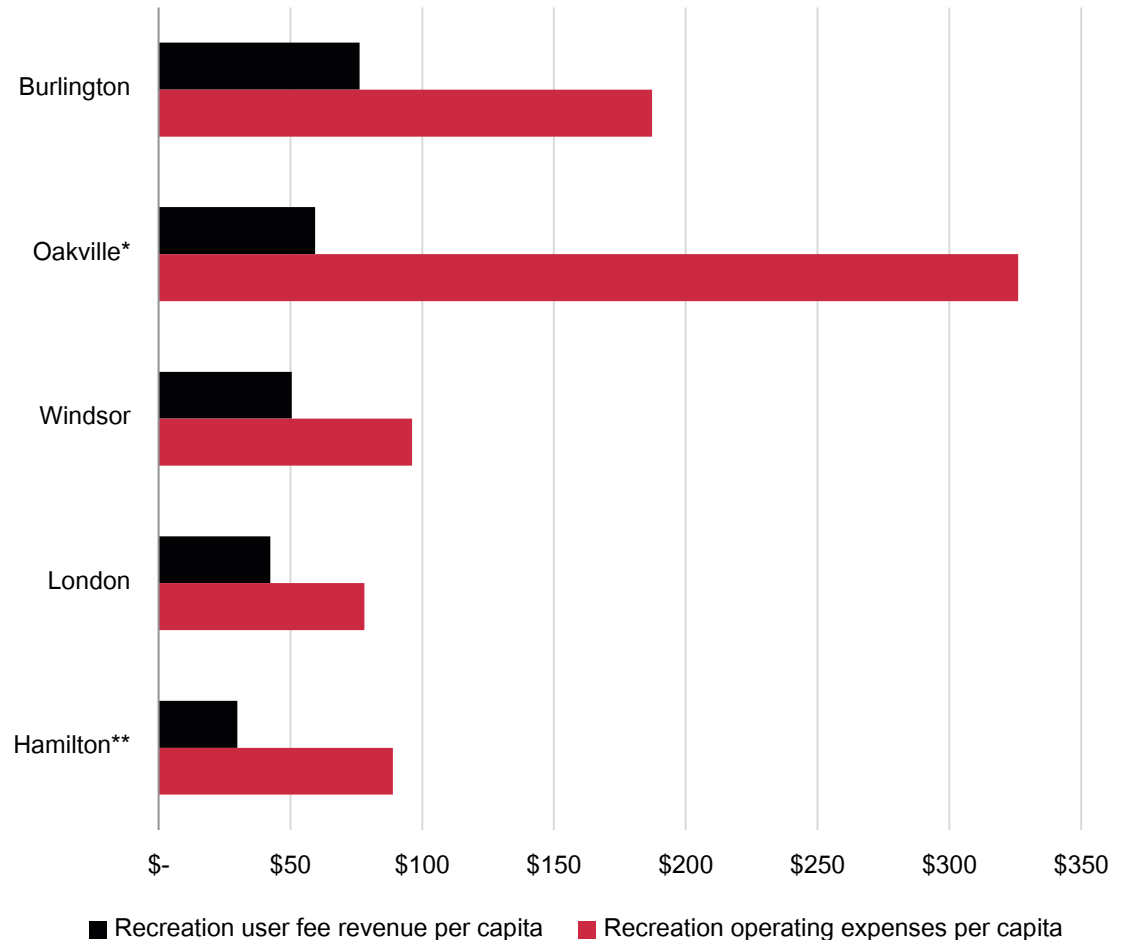
No municipality is fully recovering their costs...

We compared the City's per capita recreation user fee revenue and operating expenditure against its peers

We used peer-provided data and Ontario's Financial Information Return (FIR). Every municipality spends more per capita on recreation than it recovers through user fees.

Results should be interpreted with caution as not all municipalities provided complete data. As detailed in [Appendix E](#), municipalities maintain comparable indoor recreation space per capita but operate with materially different staffing levels, which directly influences operating costs and further warrants caution when interpreting per-capita cost recovery comparisons.

2024 Recreation User Fee Revenue and Operating Expenses per Capita



*Oakville data from 2024 FIR







**Hamilton data from 2023

...but most of those who set targets are meeting them

Most peers report achieving set annual cost recovery targets

- ▶ London reports meeting its annual target cost recovery level. The City applies an average 63% target across Recreation & Sports services, based on operating expenses. This excludes certain corporate allocations (e.g. life-cycle renewal and utilities, repairs and maintenance).
- ▶ Windsor also reports meeting its cost recovery expectations. User fees generally recover at least 100% of direct costs for programs and services. The 2024 overall cost recovery level for the Recreation & Culture department is 45%.

While we don't have data on Oakville's attained recovery, the City publicizes its user group target recovery ratios for the services in the table at right. However, Hamilton sits below its yearly cost recovery targets.

Oakville Service Area	Oakville User Group Target Recovery Ratio
 Ice rentals	50% for youth, 100% for adult/community, 125% for commercial
 Pool rentals	50% for youth, 100% for adult/community, 125% for commercial
 Community rooms	25% to 50% for not-for-profit groups, 75% to 100% for commercial
 Recreation memberships	64% weighted for all user groups
 Programming	25% to 50% for children/youth, 75% to 100% for adult/community
 Camps	50% for children, 75% for specialty programs

Peers have different approaches to increase recreation use

All peers follow at least some common practices that help balance financial sustainability with equity and accessibility

Typical examples include demographic discounts, family/group rates, increased non-resident fees, corporate sponsorships and time-based pricing.

Municipality	Equity and Inclusion Tactics
Hamilton	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ The Recreation Assistance Program (RAP) – provides subsidized access to recreation programs, passes and camps for low-income residents, with discounts ranging from 50–90% depending on age group and program type. ▶ Corporate Fee Waiver/Reduction Policy – allows eligible community groups and nonprofits to request reduced or waived fees for facility rentals and recreation services to support community-benefit activities.
London	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Request Waive or Reduce Facility Rental Fees (WORF) Policy – enables nonprofits and community-focused organizations to apply for reduced or waived facility rental fees when programs align with London’s community development priorities. ▶ Play Your Way Fund – provides program subsidies for low-income and priority-population residents (e.g., Indigenous residents, Ontario Works clients), reducing financial barriers to participating in recreation programs.
Windsor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Pathway to Potential (P2P) – offers significant program-fee subsidies for individuals and families receiving Ontario Works or ODSP, with eligible participants paying only 15% of listed fees. ▶ Seniors receive a 10% discount on most recreation programs and services.
Burlington	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Halton Region Subsidies – grants financial support for low-income residents across the region, enabling participation in municipal recreation programs. ▶ City Fee Assistance Program – offers reduced rates for Burlington residents who meet income-eligibility criteria to improve access to recreation programs and services. ▶ Fee Waiver Program – enables community groups to request waived facility fees when launching new recreation or community-benefit programs.
Oakville	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Recreation Connection Subsidy – offers eligible low-income residents an annual credit (typically \$400 per person) to reduce the cost of recreation programs, memberships and passes.

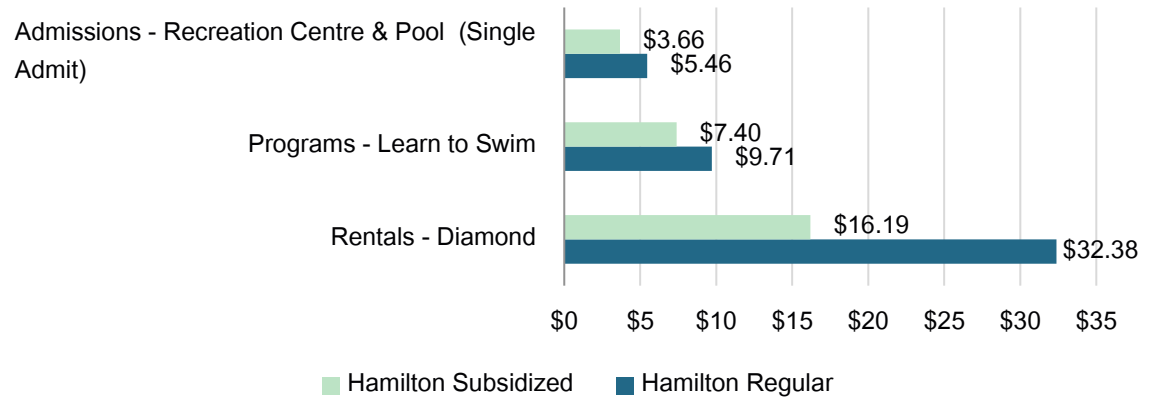
Hamilton provides more access through subsidies than peers

We compared three services across major service areas to understand how Hamilton structures its subsidies

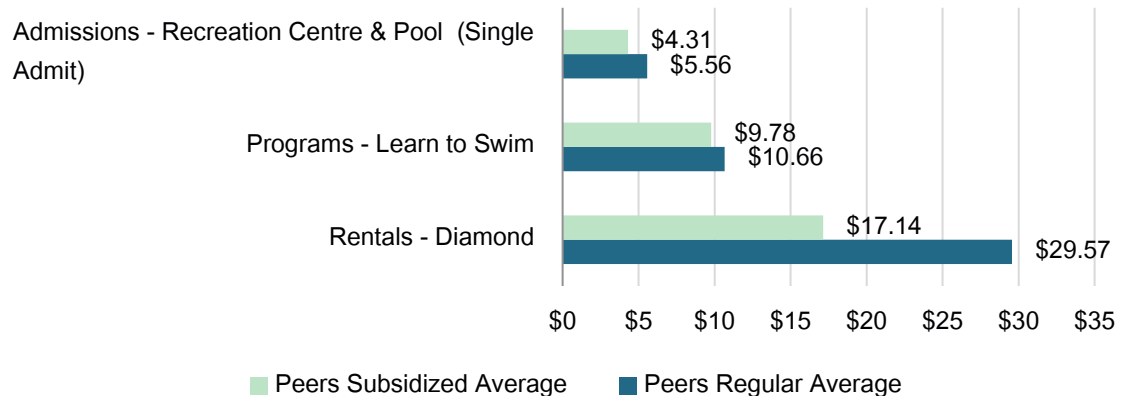
To contextualize Hamilton's subsidy approach, we reviewed one representative fee from admissions, programs and rentals and compared the regular and subsidized prices against peer averages.

- ▶ Hamilton reduces the price by 33% for a single-admission fee, compared to peers who reduce the fee by only 22% on average.
- ▶ Programs follow a similar pattern. Hamilton discounts learn-to-swim classes by 24%, while peers discount them by only an average of 9%.
- ▶ Rentals show the most pronounced gap. Hamilton discounts diamonds and other rentals by 50%, versus a 42% discount among peers.

Hamilton Subsidy Price Comparisons



Peers Subsidy Average Price Comparisons



/ RECREATION SURVEY FINDINGS

This section presents findings from the Recreation User Fees Survey

A total of 1,658 respondents provided feedback

The online, non-probability survey covered recreation fees, fee assistance programs and priorities for service delivery.

Key Findings

- ▶ Strong perceived value: 86% of respondents rate recreation services as good or very good value for money.
- ▶ Affordability varies by income: 80% find current fees affordable, but this masks a 27-percentage-point gap between lower-income (62%) and higher-income households (89%).
- ▶ Support for ability-to-pay pricing: 68% support fees based on ability to pay.
- ▶ Low fee assistance awareness: 57% of respondents are unaware of the Recreation Assistance Program.
- ▶ Capacity, not cost, is the top barrier: 24% cite programs being full as their primary barrier, compared to 10% citing cost.

Overall satisfaction is high but not universal

- While almost all rate positively, the 14% who perceive poor value are concentrated among lower-income households.

Capacity constraints outweigh cost barriers

- Program availability (24%) surpasses cost (10%) as the primary barrier.

Fee assistance awareness is insufficient

- With 57% unaware of the program, significant potential exists to improve access.

Three distinct constituencies exist

- Quality-Minded Moderates, Equal-Fee Supporters and Affordability Advocates have different priorities and will respond differently to policy changes.

Partnerships are the preferred funding solution

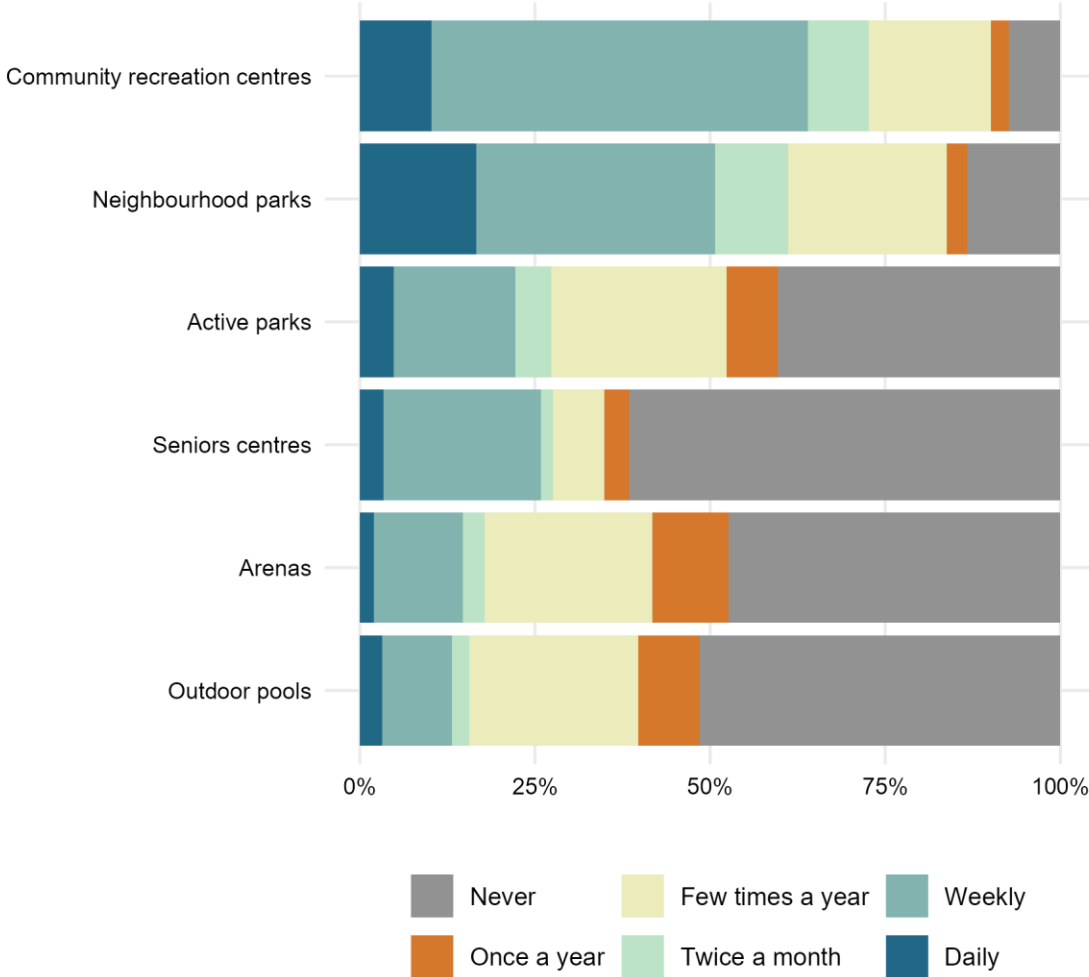
- The strong preference for partnerships (43%) over fee increases (13%) suggests residents want to maintain accessibility through alternative revenue.

Community recreation centres are the most frequently used paid recreation facility

Community recreation centres show the highest regular usage rates, followed by parks with playgrounds and courts which don't have associated fees

Specialized facilities like arenas, seniors' centres and golf courses have lower overall usage but serve dedicated user populations.

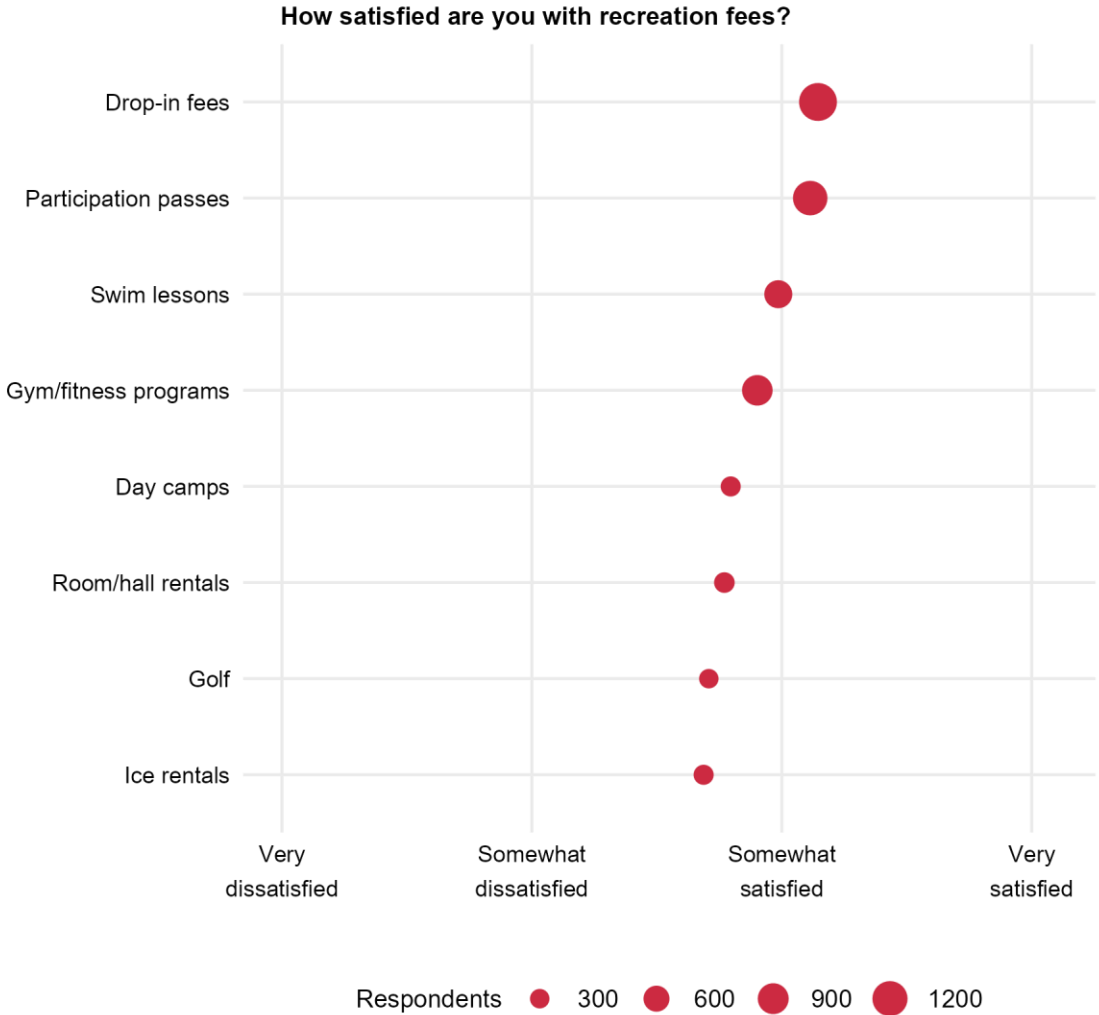
How often do you use City recreation facilities?



Drop-in fees and participation passes receive the highest user fee satisfaction ratings

The most-used fee types (drop-in fees, participation passes and swim lessons) have the highest satisfaction ratings

Respondents provide the lowest satisfaction ratings with fees for ice rentals and golf. This aligns with community benefit guiding principles for user fees.



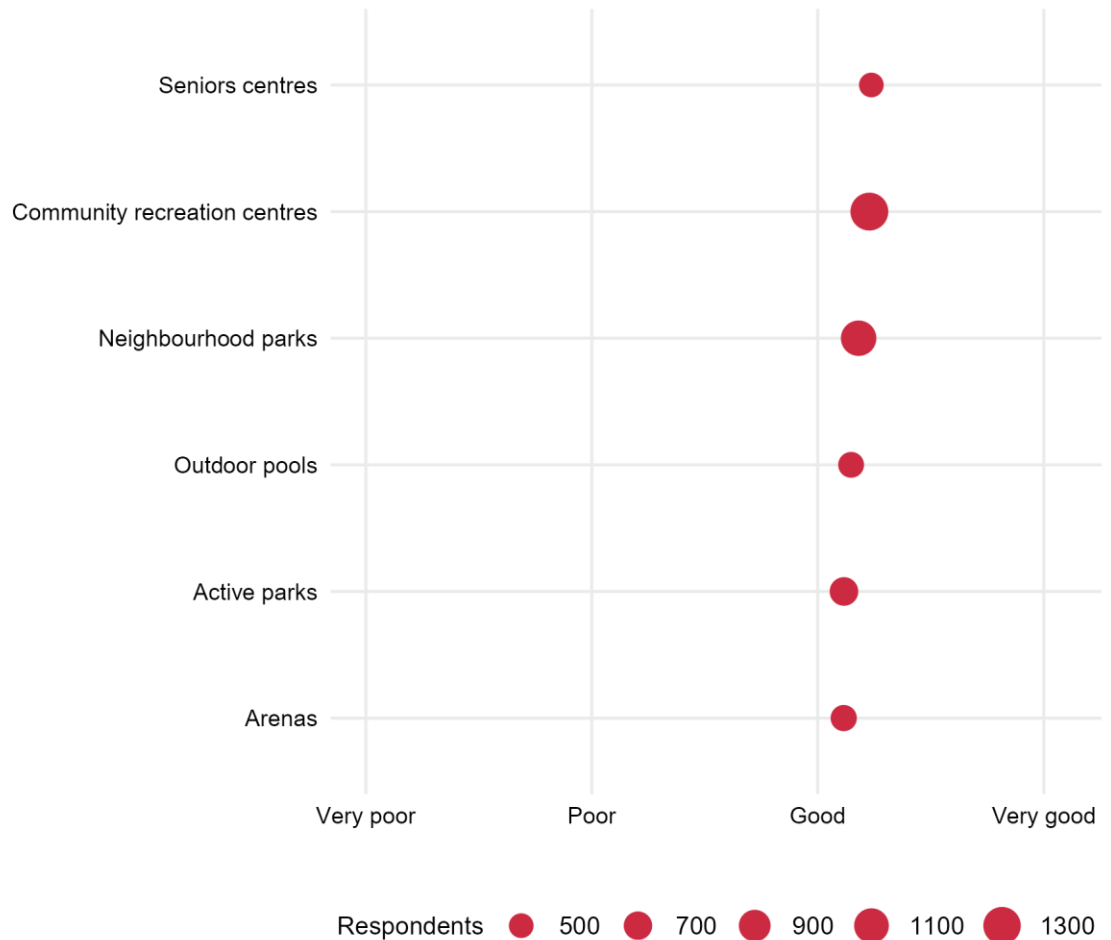
Almost all rate recreation services as good value for money

Value perceptions are consistent across facility types

Almost all value as “good” or “very good.” Only 3% rate the value as “very poor.”

Users of different facility types report similar value-for-money assessments, suggesting the positive value perception is broad-based rather than driven by specific services.

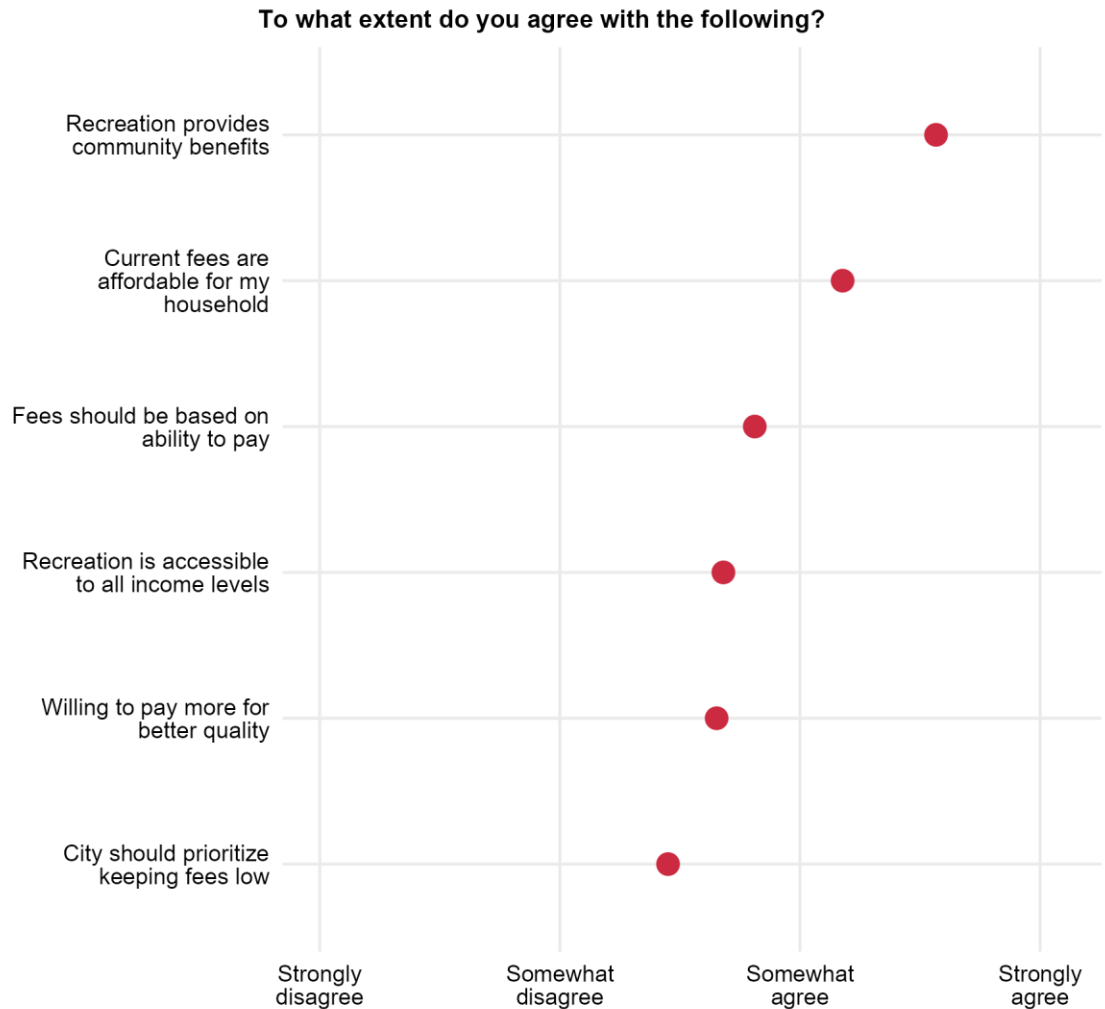
Value for money by facility type used
Among respondents who use each facility at least a few times per year



And almost all agree recreation provides important community benefits

But only 60% believe services are accessible to all income levels

- ▶ This 33-percentage-point gap between recognizing public value and perceiving equitable access represents a key tension in the data.
- ▶ Agreement that current fees are affordable (80%) exceeds agreement that services are accessible to all incomes (60%), suggesting respondents recognize their own affordability while acknowledging others may face barriers.
- ▶ Agreement is lowest that the City should prioritize keeping fees low.



But lower-income respondents are less likely to find fees affordable

62% of those in households with income under \$70K find fees affordable

However, nine in ten respondents in households earning \$100K+ agree that fees are affordable.

Almost all respondents agree that recreation provides community benefits.

Lower-income respondents also show equity concerns through stronger support for ability-to-pay pricing and keeping fees low (overall agreement is lower for this item).



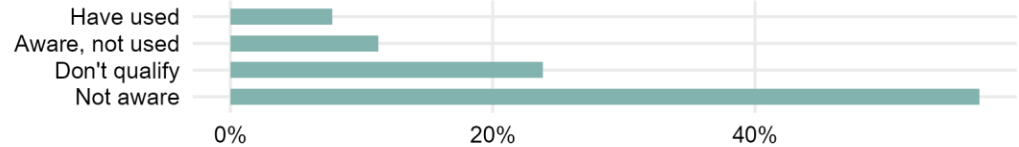
More than half of respondents are unaware of RAP

Fee assistance awareness does not differ substantially by income level

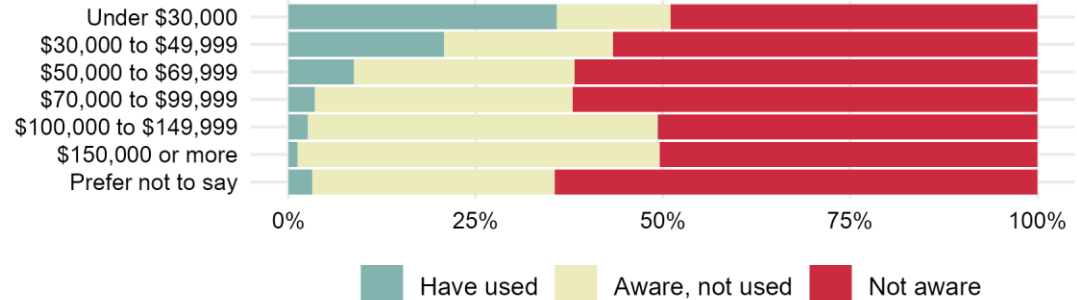
- ▶ Of those who are aware of the program, 24% don't meet program requirements, 11% haven't used it and only 8% have actually used the program. This suggests significant untapped potential for the program to reach eligible residents.
- ▶ Lower-income residents, who would benefit most from the program, show similar overall awareness rates to higher-income residents. This represents a missed opportunity for targeted outreach. However, larger proportions of lower-income respondents have used the program.
- ▶ More than half of those who use the program say it is very effective. However, perceptions of effectiveness are much lower among people who are aware of, but have not used, it. This is a potential area to improve perceptions of the program with an aim to drive use among eligible residents.

Recreation Fee Assistance Program

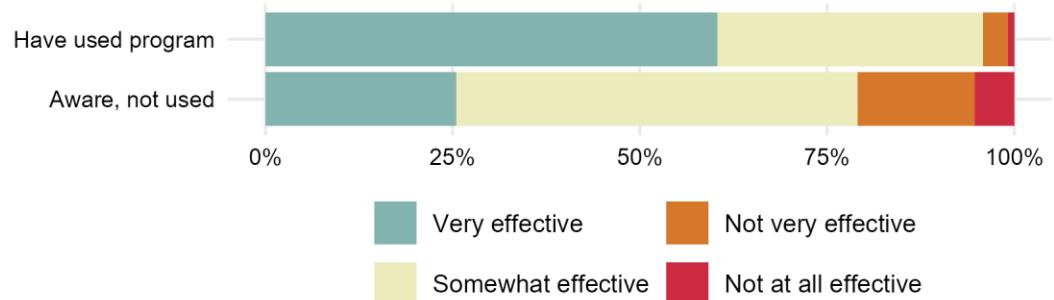
Are you aware of the Recreation Assistance Program?



Awareness by household income



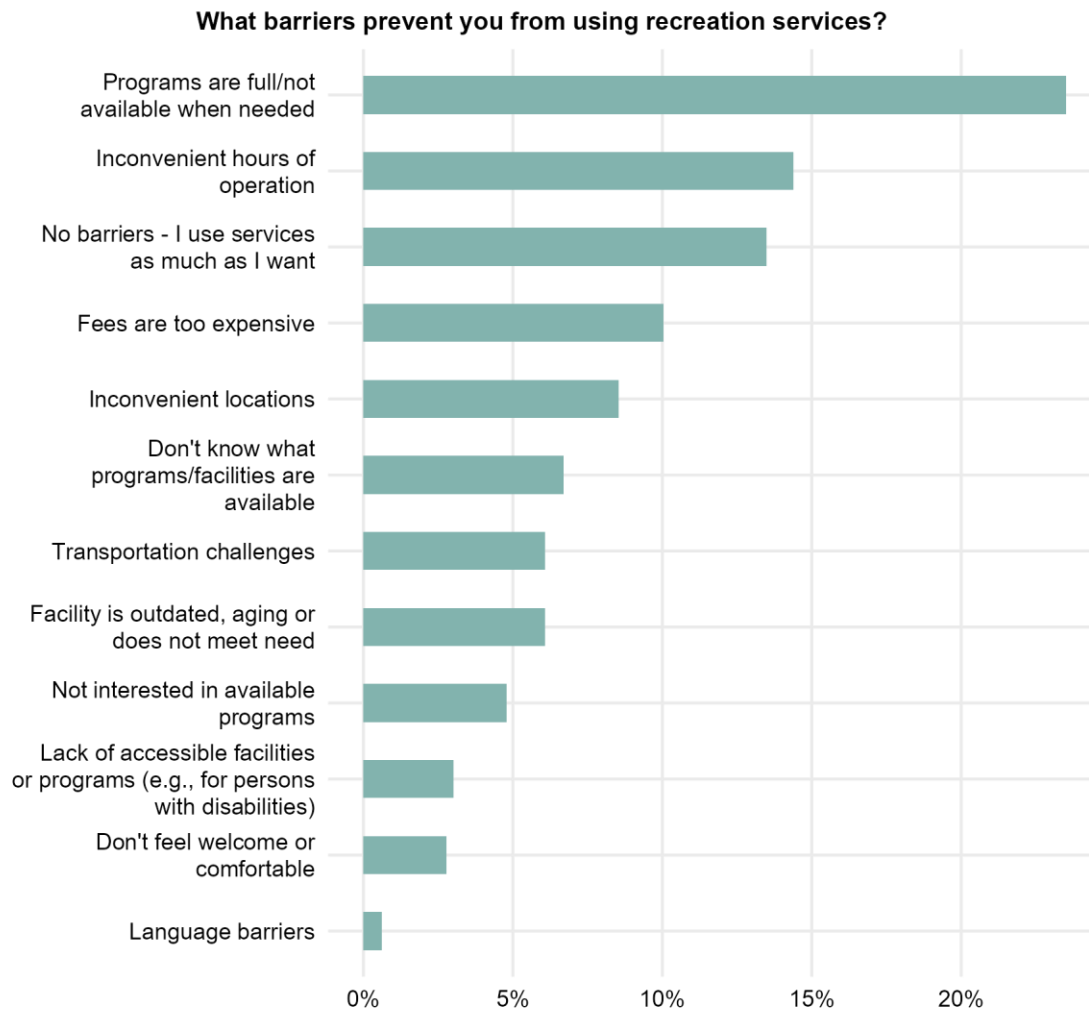
How effective is the Fee Assistance Program?



Program availability, not cost, is the most frequently mentioned barrier

Accessibility issues, such as available programs and hours of operation, are the most mentioned barriers

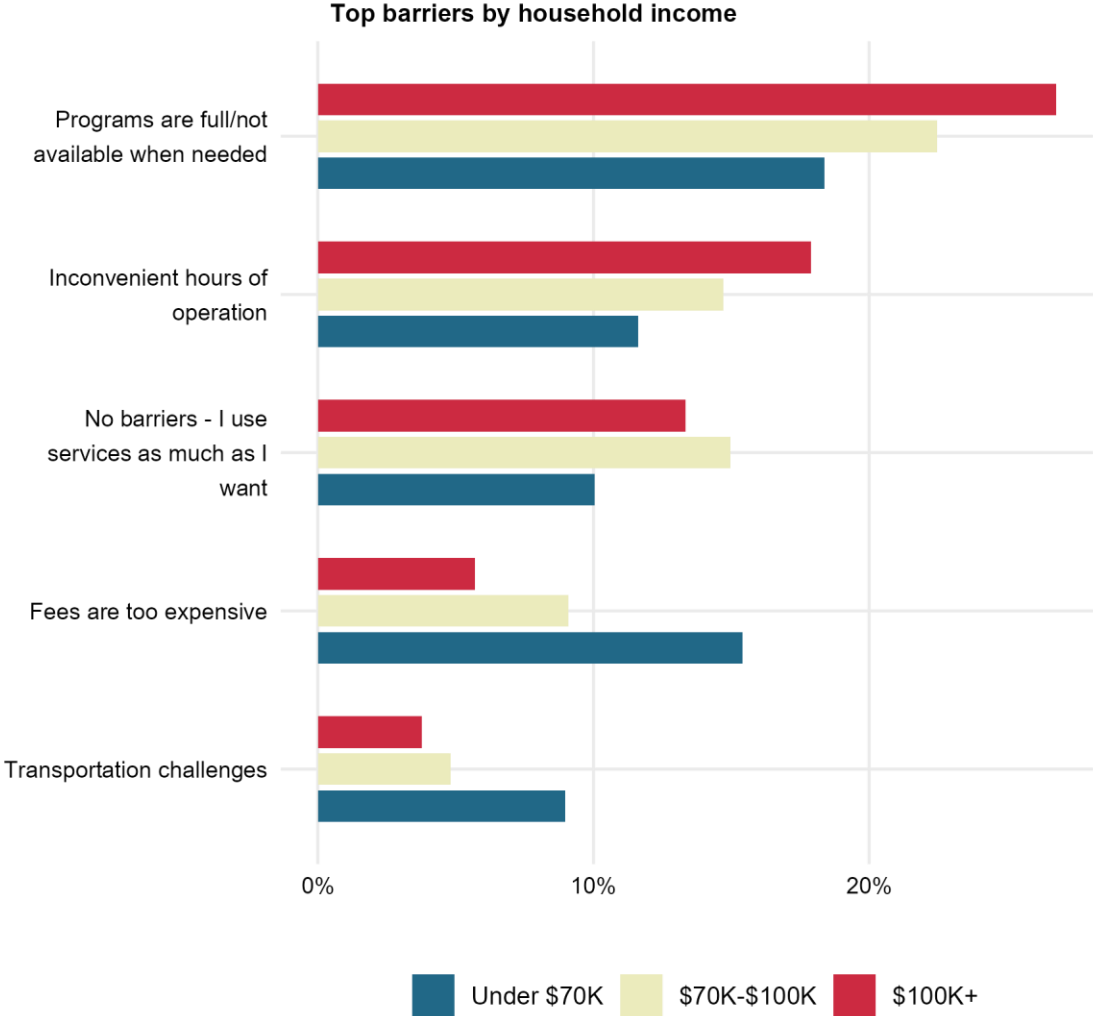
- ▶ 24% of respondents cite “programs are full or not available when needed” as a barrier, followed by inconvenient hours (14%).
- ▶ Cost barriers (10%) rank fourth, below capacity and scheduling issues.
- ▶ 13% report no barriers at all.



Lower income households are more likely to encounter cost barriers

Lower-income households are approximately twice as likely to cite fees as a barrier compared to higher-income households

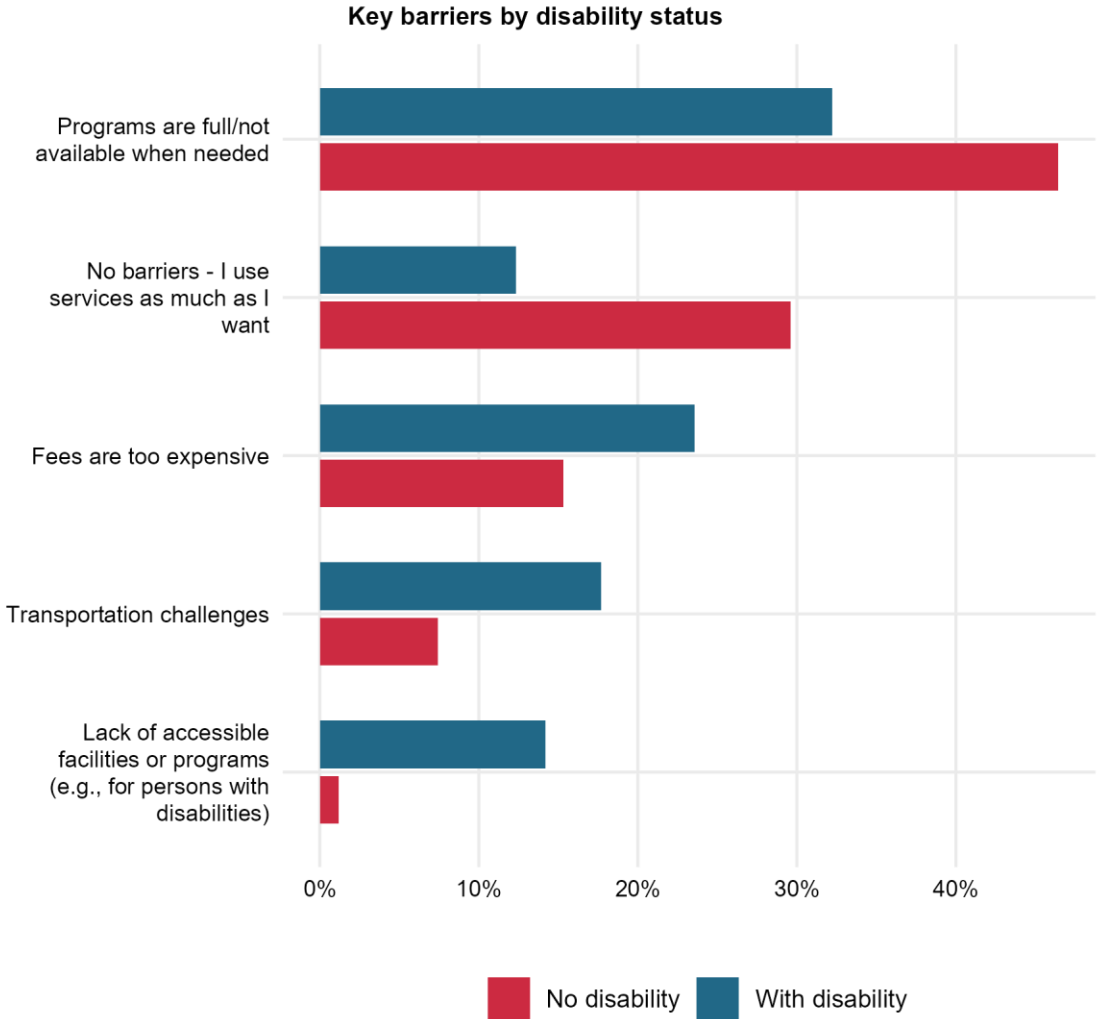
Meanwhile, higher-income households more often cite capacity issues, suggesting they participate more frequently and encounter accessibility issues.



Respondents with disabilities have more accessibility issues with services

Respondents who are disabled are more likely to encounter accessibility-specific barriers and transportation challenges

Respondents without disabilities are more likely to say they encounter no barriers to accessing services.



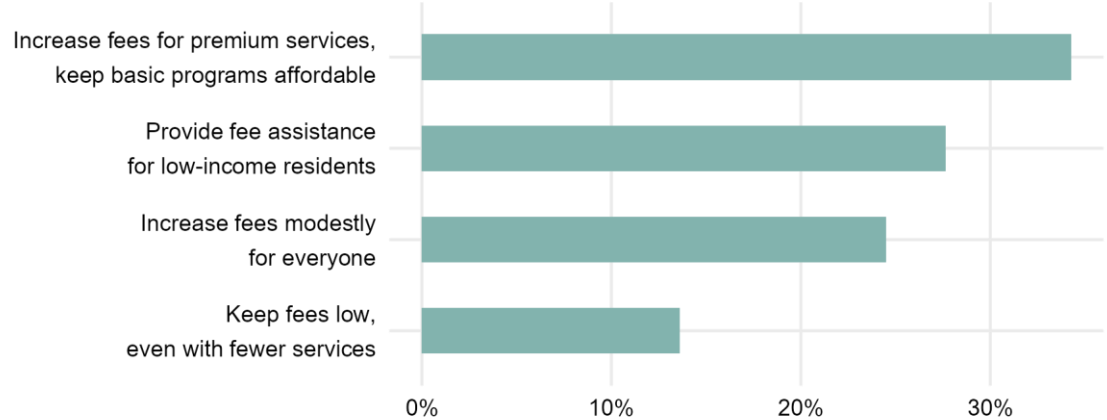
Respondents are most likely to prefer a tiered pricing approach

34% prefer increasing fees for premium services while keeping basic programs affordable

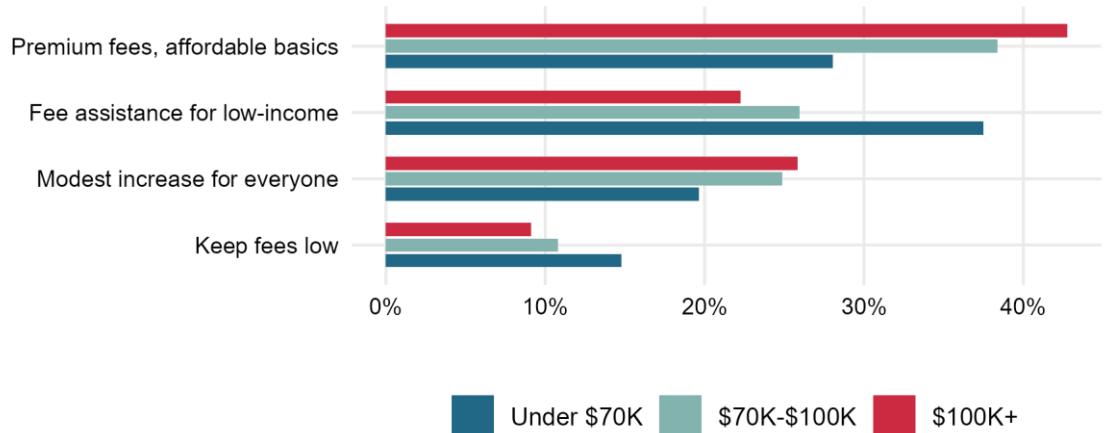
Fee assistance for low-income residents (28%) and modest increases for everyone (24%) follow. Only 14% prefer keeping fees low even with reduced services.

Higher-income respondents are more accepting of fee increases. They show greater preference for modest universal increases, while lower-income respondents more strongly favour fee assistance approaches. This divergence reflects different stakes in fee policy outcomes.

If the City needed to adjust fees, which approach would you prefer?



Fee adjustment preference by household income

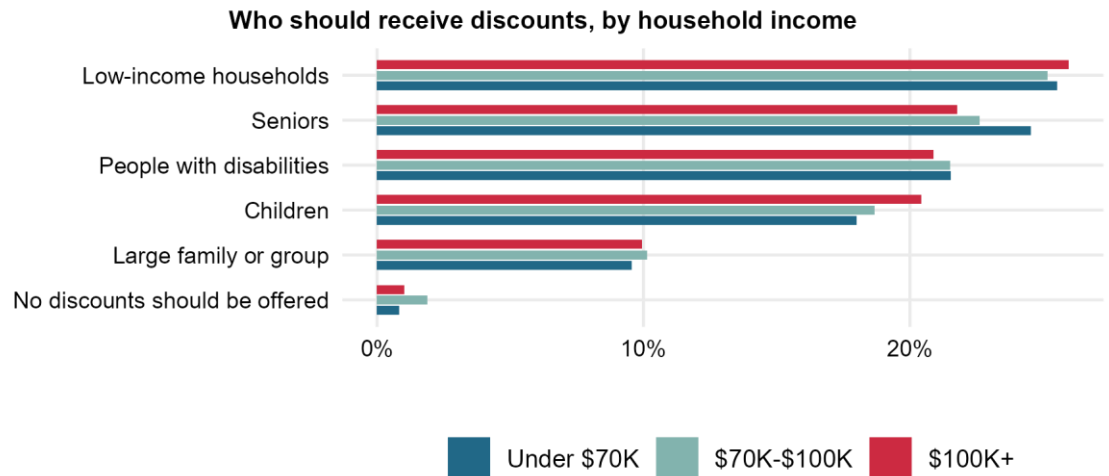
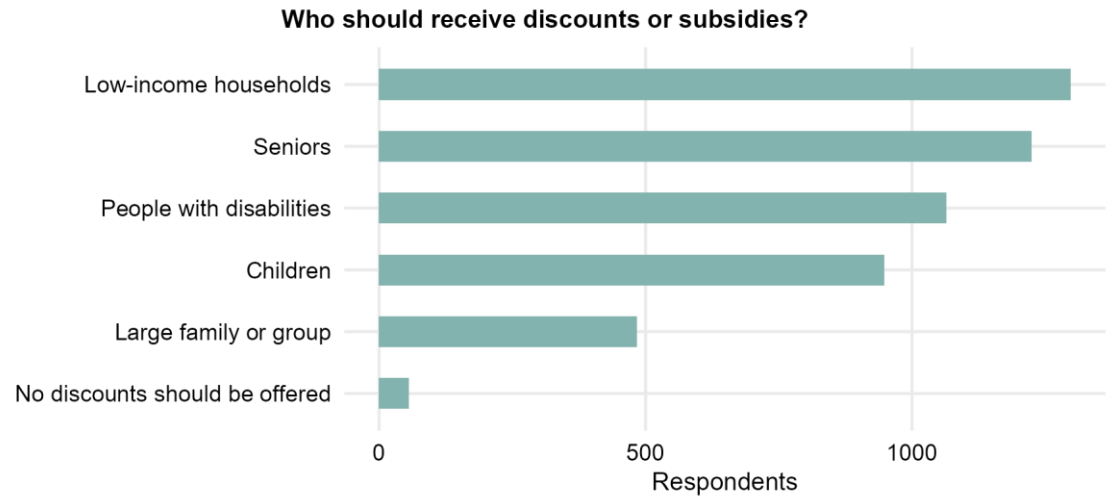


Respondents are most likely to say discounts should go to low-income households and seniors

Only 1% believe no discounts should be offered, indicating broad support for some form of targeted assistance

26% of mentions favour low-income household discounts, 24% favour seniors and 21% favour people with disabilities.

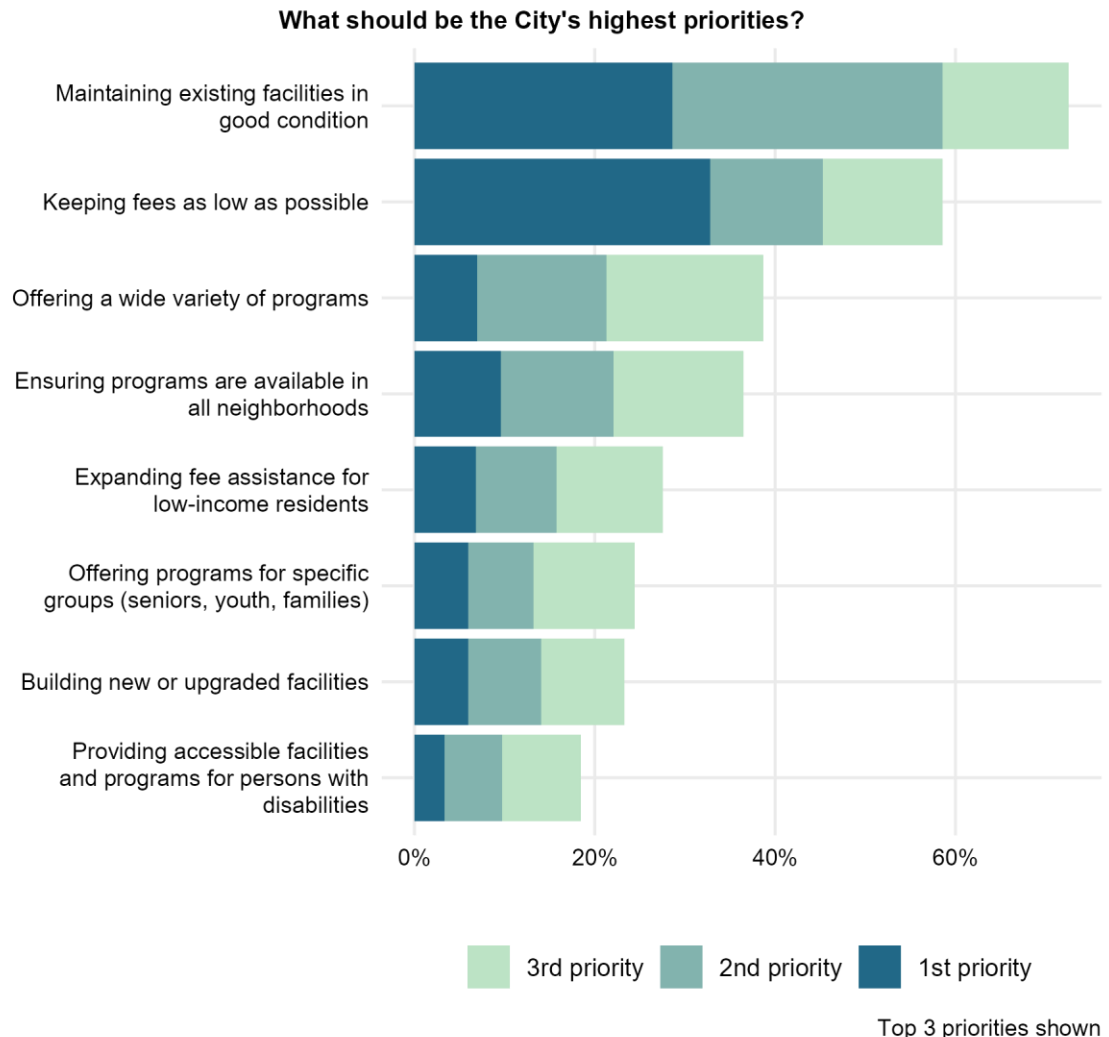
There is cross-income consensus on discount priorities. Both lower and higher-income respondents prioritize similar groups for discounts.



Maintaining existing facilities is the most common high priority, over keeping fees low

The most frequently mentioned top priority is keeping fares as low as possible, followed by maintaining existing facilities

- ▶ 70% of respondents say facility maintenance is a top 3 priority, followed by keeping fees low (57%). Offering a wide variety of programs (37%) and ensuring programs are available in all neighbourhoods (35%) have a similar number of mentions.
- ▶ Expanding fee assistance is a top 3 priority for 27% of respondents, with many prioritizing current infrastructure and low fees.



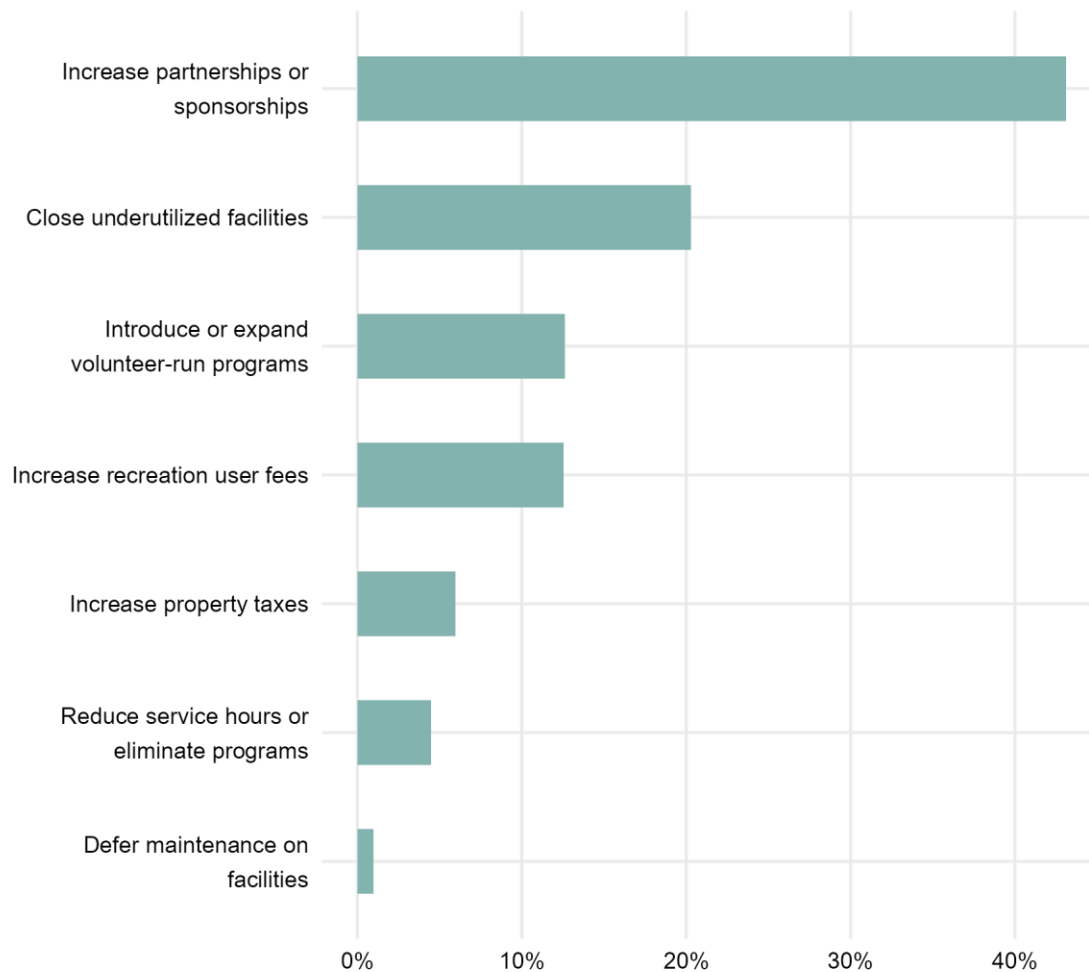
Respondents prefer partnerships and sponsorships over increasing user fees to address funding shortfalls

More than four in ten prefer partnerships to address funding shortfalls

This is much more frequent than closing underutilized facilities (20%) or increasing user fees (13%)

This suggests residents want to protect both service levels and affordability through alternative revenue sources.

If there are funding shortfalls, which option would you prefer?



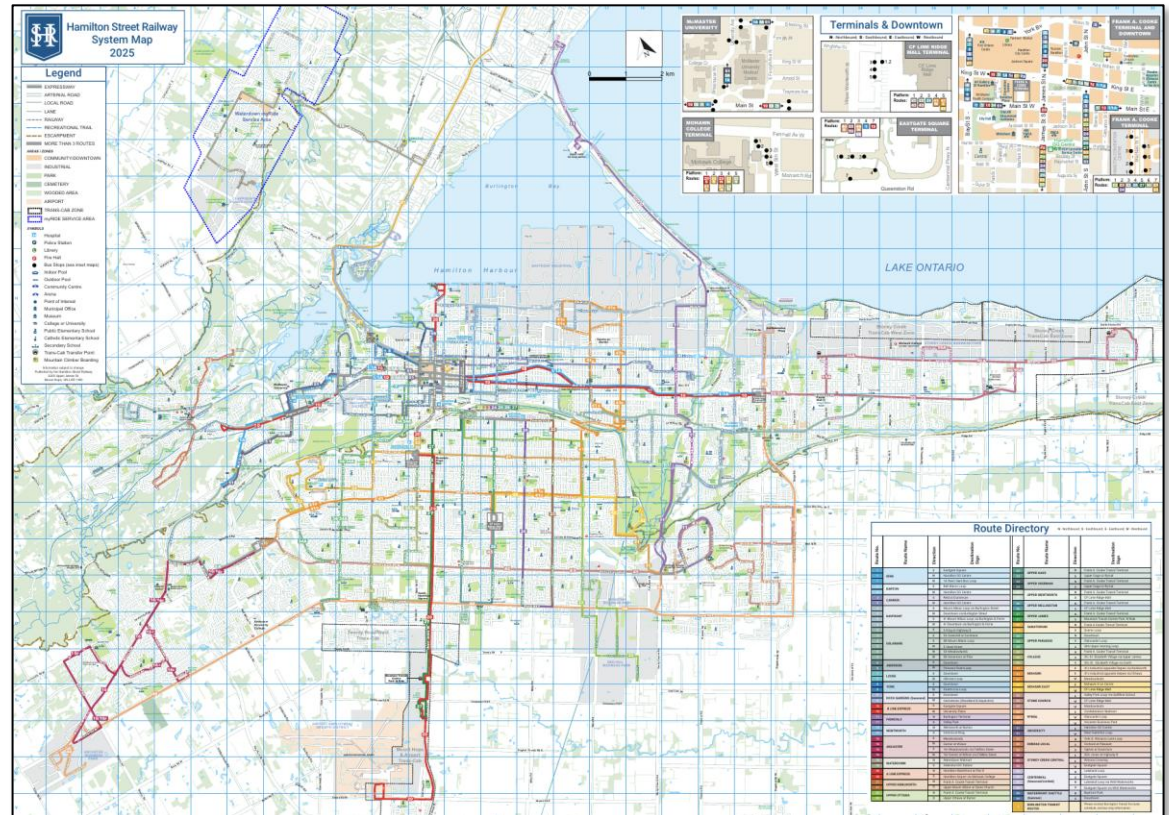
/ TRANSIT CURRENT STATE

Transit services are provided through the Hamilton Street Railway

The Hamilton Street Railway (HSR) serves a population of over 500k residents and 243 km² across Hamilton, Dundas, Flamborough, Ancaster and Stoney Creek

The HSR aims to fulfill the City's overall vision of being the best place to raise a child and age successfully.

- ▶ The HSR operates within the City of Hamilton's Public Works Department.
- ▶ Within the HSR's operating area, there are 35 routes that operate 7 days a week.
- ▶ HSR employs 961 full-time and 64 part-time employees, made up of operators, mechanics, maintenance and administrative staff.
- ▶ The City has a fleet of 305 buses, with 49 being articulated and the remaining buses standard.
- ▶ With Hamilton's population set to grow to over 660,000 by 2031, the City has engaged in several transit infrastructure projects to sustain its expansion, most recently through HSR Next (2025). This includes adding an additional 450 employees and a 55% increase in service hours over the next 7 years.



HSR has six core fare categories

Fares are split by demographic and payment type

HSR offers different fares by classification. Fares are generally split into both demographic and length (single use, monthly pass, annual pass).

All cash fares are assessed at the same rate, regardless of demographic. Cash fares can be paid using exact change, a paper ticket or tapping your debit or credit card. Residents save when they use PRESTO rather than paying with cash or card. For adults, the savings amount to \$0.90 per ride.

- ▶ Children 5 and under ride free, and those between 6-12 ride free with a PRESTO card. Seniors 80+ are eligible for a “Golden Age Pass”, which also grants free rides.
- ▶ Seniors 65+ and Youth between 13-19 with a PRESTO card are offered a discounted fare of roughly 46% on each trip.
- ▶ Post-Secondary (and Columbia College) passes are included with the cost of tuition.
- ▶ HWSTS provides a School Hour pass to public board students that live more than 3.2km from their school.

We collated each fare type into six categories:

Child	Youth (13-19)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Child under 5* ▶ Child 6-12 (with) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Youth Ticket ▶ Youth Monthly Pass ▶ Youth – Fare Assist
School	Post-secondary
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Columbia College (includes off-campus, on-campus and non-residence) ▶ School Hour Only ▶ School Plus 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ McMaster Graduate Students Association ▶ McMaster Student Union ▶ Mohawk College ▶ Redeemer College
Adult	Seniors (65+)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Adult Cash ▶ Adult Ticket ▶ Adult Monthly Pass ▶ Adult – Fare Assist ▶ Employer Commuter Pass 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Senior Ticket ▶ Senior Monthly Pass ▶ Senior Annual Pass ▶ Senior – Fare Assist ▶ Golden Age Pass (80+)

HSR piloted Fare Assist in 2024, making it permanent in 2026

From 2007 until 2024, HSR offered an Affordable Transit Pass

This program allowed residents to purchase an Adult Monthly Pass at half price based on eligibility. The program was then replaced with the pilot Fare Assist program launching in 2024, providing a 30% discount off Adult, Youth and Senior fares.

As of January 1st, 2026, the discount increased to 50% off and has become permanent.

Fare Assist follows a “pay as you go” format, where participants can load funds only as needed on their PRESTO Card. This gives financial autonomy to many users of the program, without having to commit to placing the full amount on their PRESTO account each month.

The program also extends to household members including spouse/partner and children, something the Affordable Transit Pass did not have.

This is also the opinion of many respondents of our survey, with over 70% who believe that Fare Assist is effective and just over half that are in favour of expanding it for low-income residents.

HSR determines eligibility for Fare Assist based on having a household income at or below the Low-Income Measure After Tax

This also includes those receiving support payments like

- ▶ Ontario Works
- ▶ Ontario Disability Support Program
- ▶ The Canada Pension Plan Disability Benefit
- ▶ Employment Insurance
- ▶ Workplace Safety and Insurance Board

Additionally, the program has also expanded to refugees and newcomers to Canada.

HSR programs give everyone the opportunity to use transit

HSR has implemented alternative programs to ensure neither cost, geography nor ability is a barrier to transit

One of HSR’s goals is to provide barrier-free access to transit for all. To implement this, HSR created accessible transit policies and priorities as shown to the right.

In addition to the Fare Assist, each program created by HSR contributes to one or more guiding principles.

These programs provide community benefit by enabling mobility for residents who may be excluded otherwise.

The HSR Support Person program helps to make sure there is equality of access regardless of ability.

In addition to these programs, HSR has also rolled out accessible low floor buses, safely allowing individuals using PMDs and wheelchairs to access transit. If an individual has difficulty using HSR buses, Accessible Transportation Services provides equitable coverage through its DARTS and Taxi Scrip program.

Program	Description
TransCab	Shared ride service between HSR and Blue-Line taxi in areas of Hamilton that are not serviced by transit. This service is fully accessible for residents with mobility needs. There is a 50-cent surcharge.
Accessible Transportation Services (ATS) - DARTS	ATS contracts DARTS, a non-profit organization that provides door-to-door shared paratransit services. Fares are the same as conventional transit.
HSR Support Person	Allows a support person to accompany an eligible rider at no cost.
Taxi Scrips	A discount taxi program which allows registered residents to receive a 40% discount on trips. This program is intended for persons with physical or functional disabilities that are unable to use fixed-route transit.
myRide On-Demand	Similar to ride hailing, customers can book through an app or by calling to be picked up in designated areas by optimizing routes based on demand. This service will ultimately replace the TransCab service.

Fare assist provides greater discounts to improve accessibility

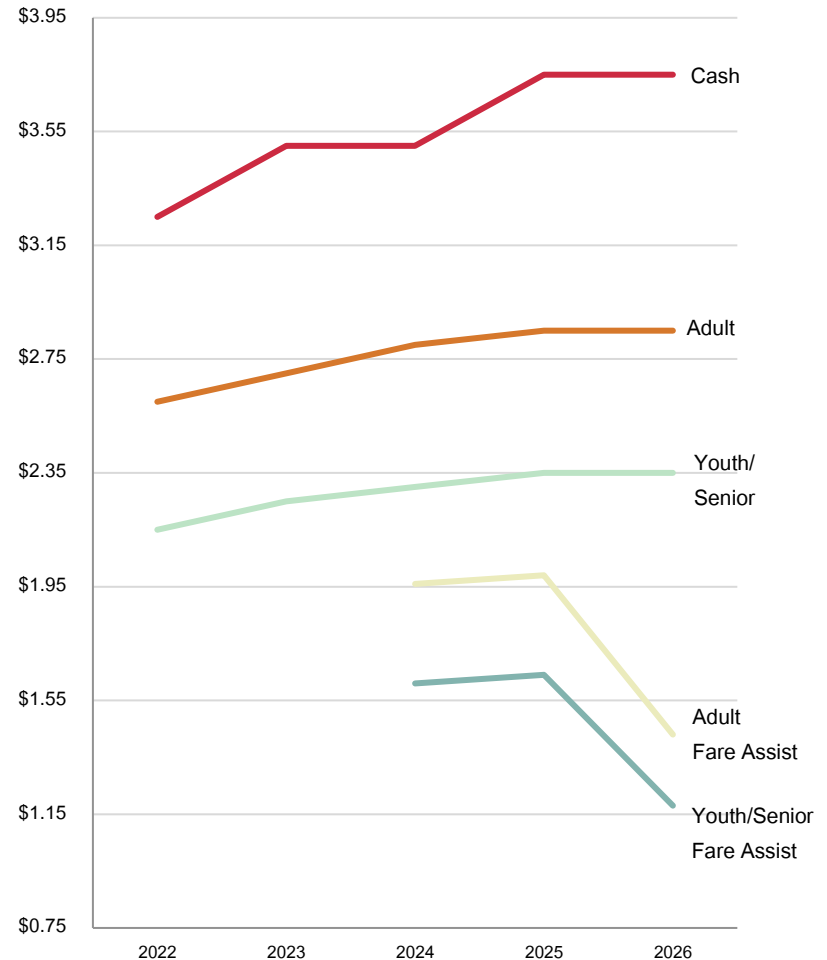
Fare Assist now provides a 50% discount off each respective fare as of this year

To determine fares for each group, the City currently uses traditional, differential and comparative pricing.

HSR's 10-Year Transit Strategy and the 2023 Fare Policy report prescribed a minimum annual increase equivalent to the Consumer Price Index, combined with other per-fare increases as approved by Council.






- ▶ Differential pricing refers to determining fees based on user characteristics, such as age and income level. HSR's Guiding Principles outlines who fees affect and benefit.
- ▶ HSR also established a comparative pricing principle to encourage alignment with peer transit agencies.
- ▶ Between 2022 and 2026, fares increased from 9%-14%. This is modestly above cumulative inflation over the same period, at 7.8%.
- ▶ Adult and Youth/Senior Fare Assist trips now are set at a 50% discount to regular fares to promote equity and inclusion.
- ▶ Post-secondary and school fares are negotiated through agreements with their respective educational institutions or associations and do not have a single trip fare cost.

Single Trip Fares 2022-2026



In the past ten years, HSR has created policies to guide transit fares







In support of the City's strategic goals, HSR developed documents to guide transit planning and service delivery. Each document addresses different aspects of network growth, rider experience and service planning, while reinforcing the principles of equity and accessibility. Below are the documents that are contributing to the City's transit philosophy and are relevant to the creation of future fee policies.

	<p>HSR Next: Moving Hamilton Forward (2025) →</p>	<p>HSR's has an implementation plan for the (Re)Envision network over the course of seven years, with implementation beginning in 2027. This significantly expands transit services across Hamilton and particularly in high-growth areas that are poorly connected today.</p>
	<p>HSR Fare Policy (2023) →</p>	<p>The most current iteration of the HSR's fee policy, which outlines policies that make transit equitable and remove barriers based on HSR's current Guiding Principles. Notably, this introduced the new Fare Assist Program.</p>
	<p>Transforming the HSR Network – (Re)envision the HSR (2019) →</p>	<p>A review of HSR's conventional bus service to design a network and reaching modal split targets set in the TMP. Proposed network design informed by significant public consultation and technical expertise from McMaster University.</p>
	<p>Transportation Master Plan: City in Motion (TMP) (2018) →</p>	<p>Strategic planning framework for future transportation related studies and projects. Acts as a transportation blueprint and catalyst to achieve the goals from the City's 2016-2025 strategic plan.</p>
	<p>10-Year Local Transit Strategy Report (2015) →</p>	<p>Discusses Hamilton's Long Term Rapid Transit System and the Rapid Ready plan for transit.</p>

HSR's Guiding Principles are outlined in HSR Next

In 2021, HSR updated the six guiding principles as a part of the (Re)envision the HSR project and extend into the HSR Next

These principles contribute directly to shaping the future of the HSR's user fee policy, placing in perspective what is important for residents and riders. It prescribes how user fees and subsidies are applied to different groups, based on what matters most to residents. They relate to the proposed guiding principles of community benefit, accessibility, equity and affordability. The six current guiding principles are:

		
<p>Customer experience is at the heart</p>	<p>Honour equity, diversity and inclusion</p>	<p>Deliver on promises</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Ensure a smooth customer journey. ▶ Be open to feedback and complaints and exceed the expectations of riders. ▶ Drive positive change through continuous improvement and outreach, including on where user fees are directed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Implement fare policies to ensure every group can afford to take transit when they need it. ▶ Provide barrier-free transit that is accessible for all, including through reduced fares. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Provide reliable and comfortable transit to riders. ▶ Ensure that all parts of the journey are smooth, from stops and shelters to a clean and enjoyable ride.
		
<p>Connect, innovate and evolve</p>	<p>Engage with employees to improve customer experience</p>	<p>Make a positive impact on communities, environment and economy</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Integrate mobility for customers to connect to other forms of transportation, such as the One-Fare Program using. ▶ Appeal to new riders and make transit the first choice when taking a trip. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Integrate mobility for customers to connect to other forms of transportation, such as the One-Fare Program using. ▶ Appeal to new riders and make transit the first choice when taking a trip. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Design a transit-first philosophy. ▶ Have a strong partnership with businesses and support advocacy within communities. ▶ Acting on climate change, including having one of the greenest transit fleets in Canada.

Ridership has been steadily recovering since 2021

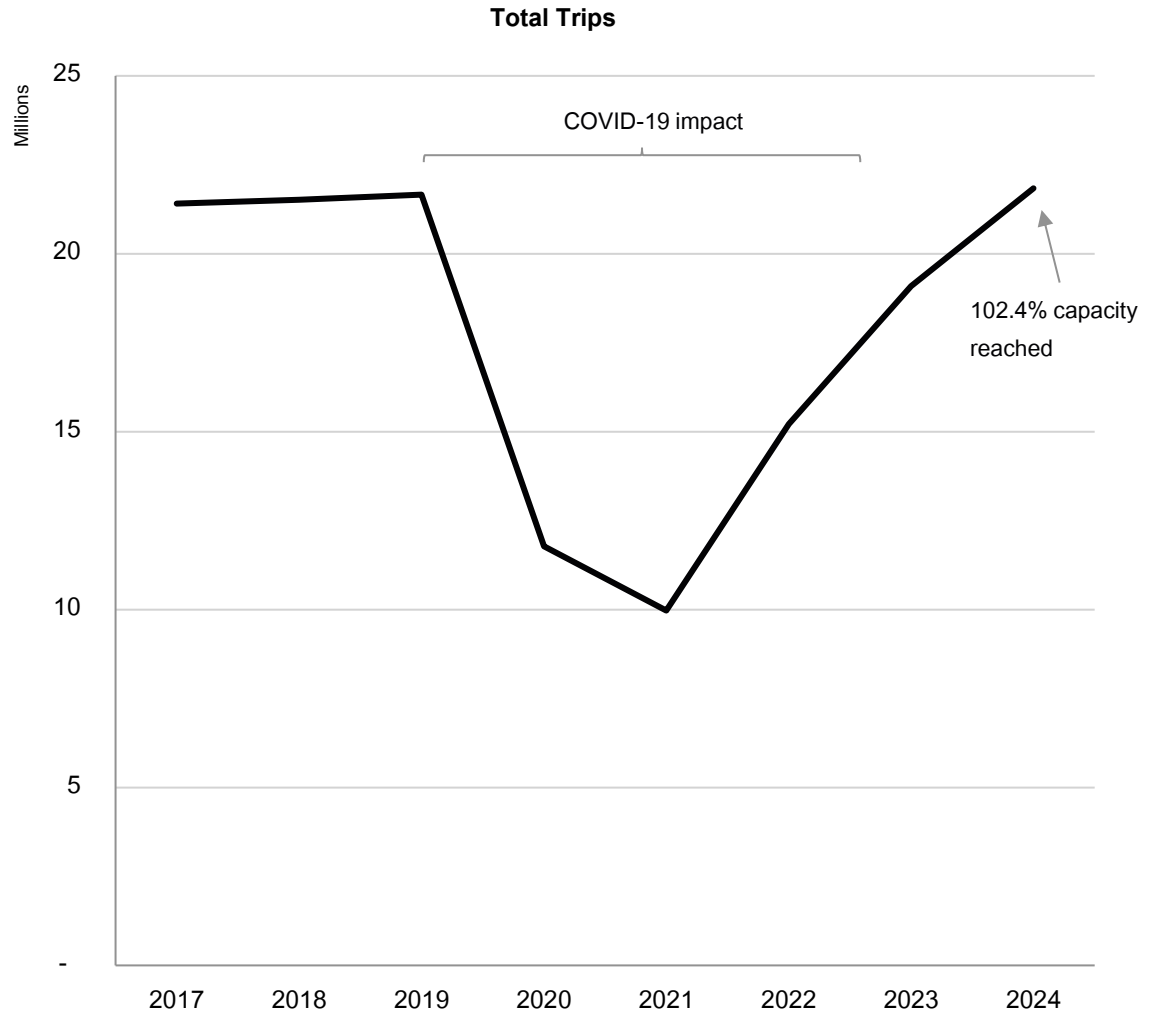
Despite prescribed CPI-linked fare adjustments, total boardings continue to grow and surpass pre-pandemic levels

This suggests that price sensitivity has not materially constrained demand at current levels.

HSR has implemented service and fare initiatives to help with ridership recovery across all groups. In 2024, HSR introduced the Fare Assist program as an equity measure, for those at or below the low-income measure (LIM) and were disproportionately affected by the pandemic.

Despite a brief pause during the pandemic, HSR continued to increase transit service hours and capacity through the 10-Year Local Transit Strategy.

Fare assist programs, such as the ones discussed [here](#) aim to improve access to ridership. This follows one of the City's Guiding Principles that affordability supports ridership rather than eroding it.



Cost recovery for fares broadly aligns with community benefit

2024's recovery outcomes are generally aligned with their intended design

Child tickets and Golden Age Passes make up 0% of cost recovery, which makes transit more accessible for those groups.

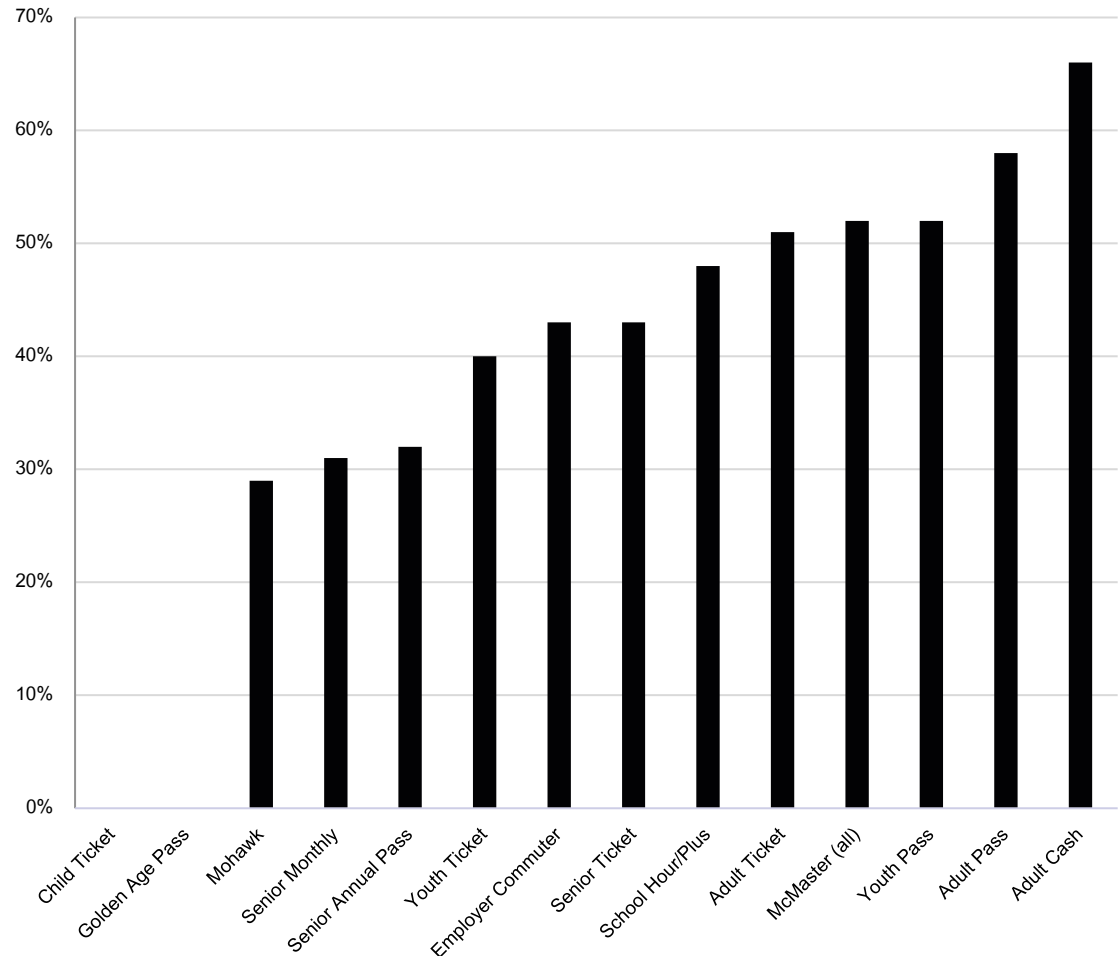
Certain subsidized groups, such as Senior tickets, Youth passes and Youth tickets meet or exceed the average cost recovery mark.

Adult and Cash fares came in at 59% and 65% respectively, helping to balance the overall cost recovery as core fares.

Outside of fee groups with no intended cost recovery, Mohawk College has the lowest cost recovery percentage in 2024, which is due to high ridership in comparison to fees paid.

Both Redeemer College and Columbia College had over 350% cost recovery and are not included in the graph. Students in these categories pay upfront for transit costs but are using the system less overall.

Cost Recovery by Fare Type 2024

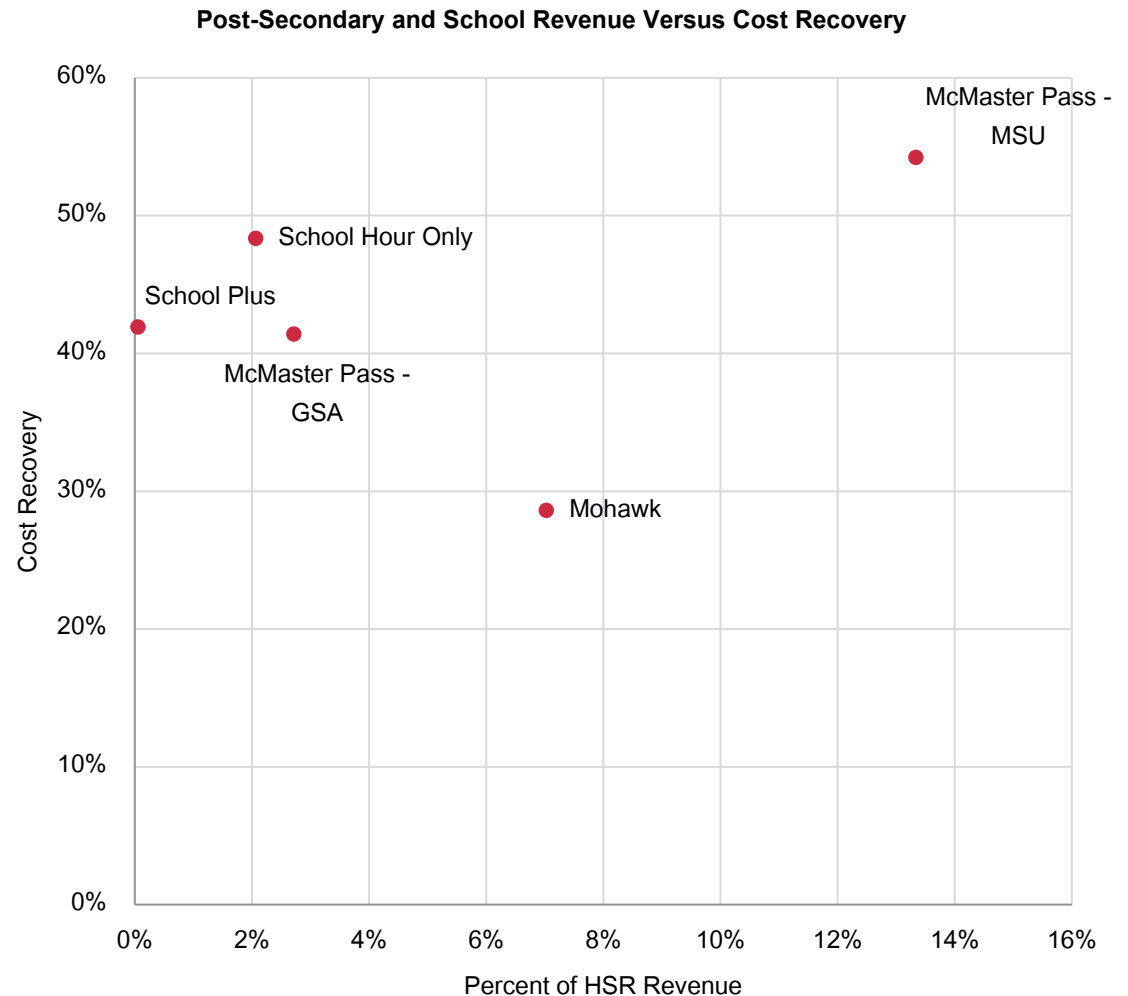


Post-secondary and School have high-cost recovery, but only make up 25% of revenue

Post-secondary institutions and schools assess the levy at the beginning of the year

This model of paying up front has led to higher recovery rates.

- ▶ With 27,000 students, the McMaster Student Association (consisting of undergraduate students) accounted for most school and post-secondary revenues.
- ▶ Columbia College had a recovery rate at 355% and Redeemer College at 348%, but each account for a small proportion of revenue (0.4% each). These colleges are excluded from the chart as costs for these services are not fully recorded against revenues, including costs providing additional transportation services.
- ▶ While post-secondary passes generate under 25% of revenue, reliance on these passes comes with risk. As of 2026, the federal government has placed a cap on the number of international students in Canada. This may affect the HSR's overall revenue received from post-secondary institutions.



The relative fare index shows most fares are recovering in proportion to usage (1/2)

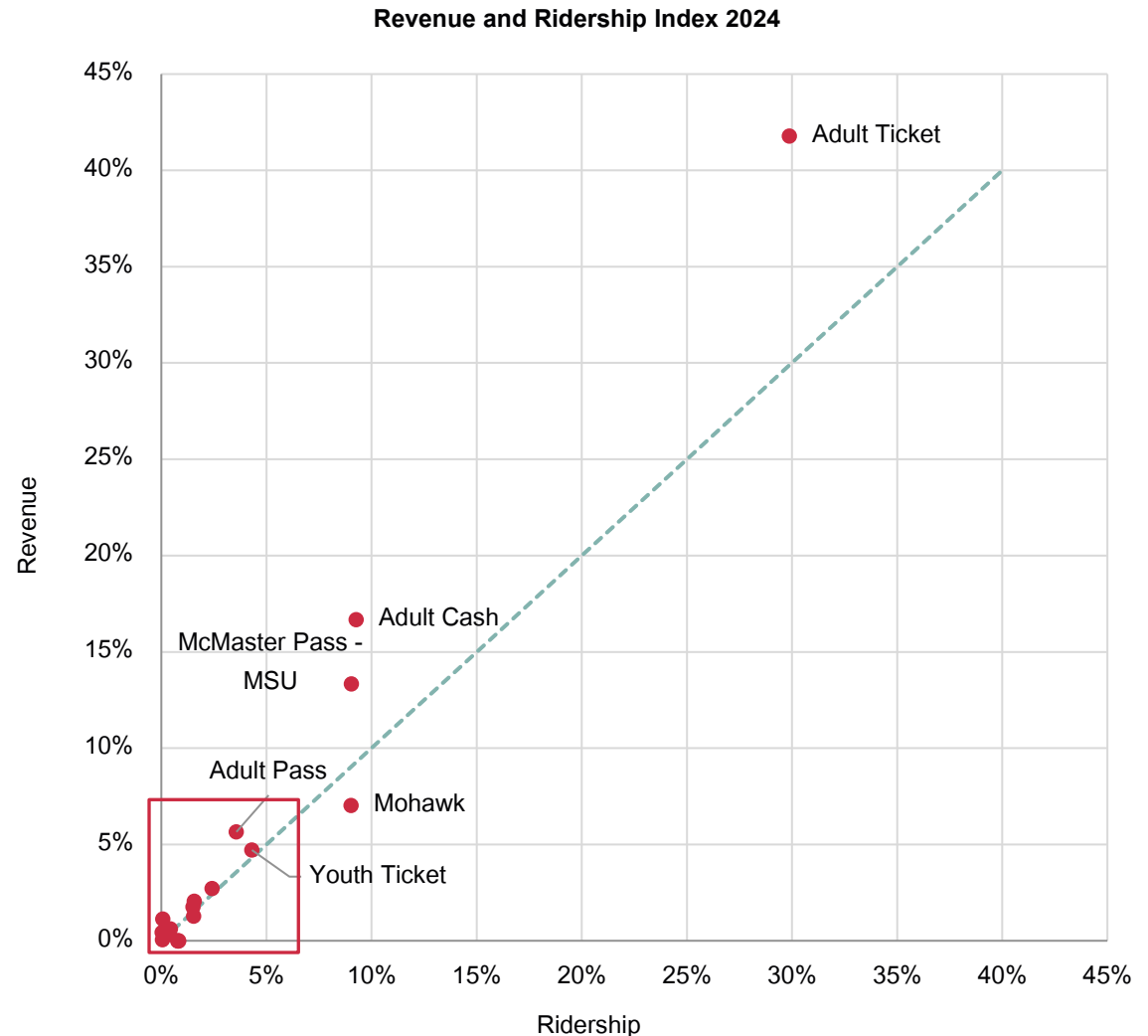
Several fees pull more than their share of weight

The relative fare index was calculated by taking the percentage of total revenue for each fare type, divided by the percentage total ridership attributed to each fare.

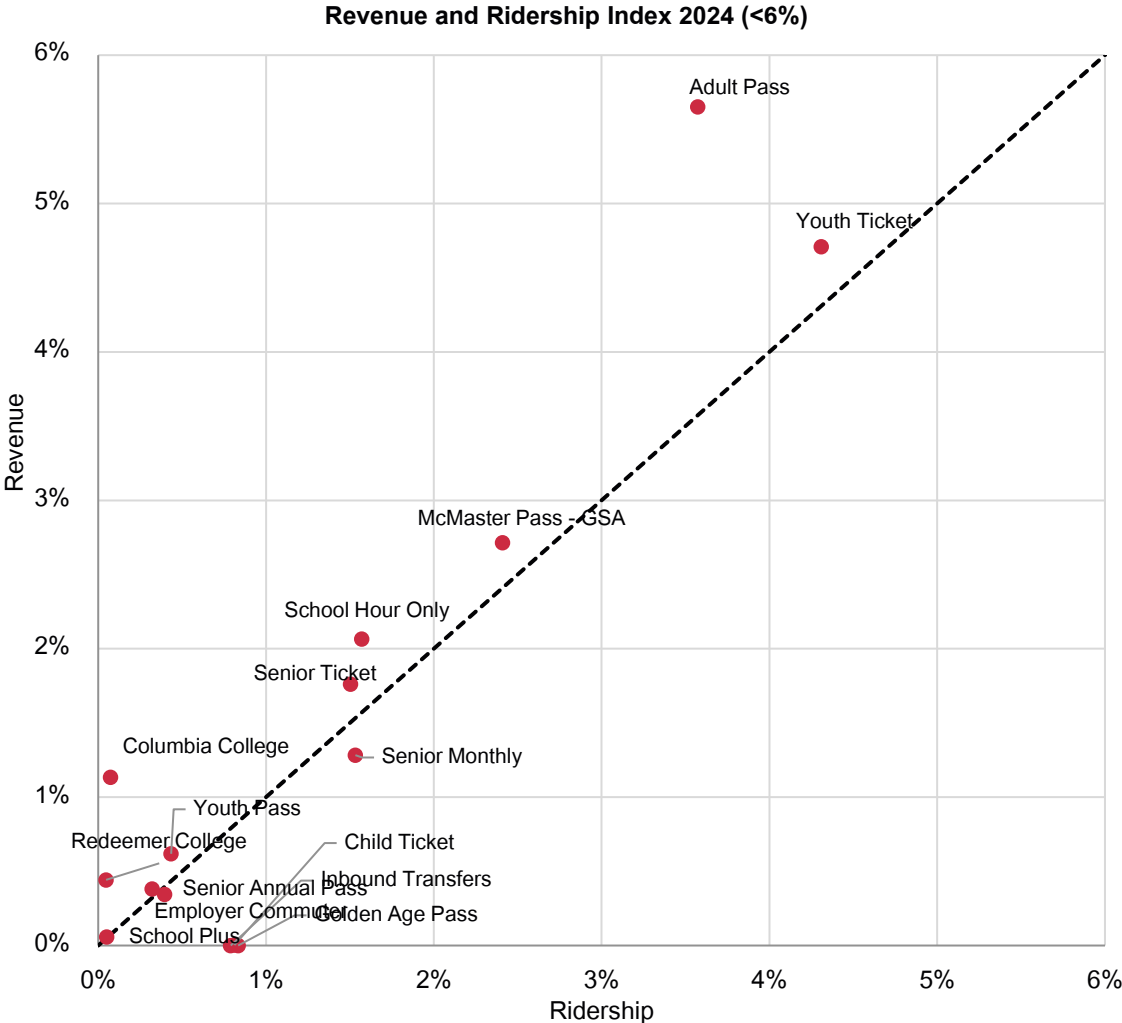
- ▶ Points on the trendline indicate revenue generated is exactly in proportion to use. The red chart inset is broken out on the following page.
- ▶ Points above the trendline indicate the fare contributes more revenue than trips.
- ▶ Points below the trendline indicate the fare contributes less revenue than trips.

Fares that are paid up front, such as passes or tuition generate revenue regardless of actual trips taken.

Subsidized groups will generally have a lower ratio as they are designed to improve overall access to transit and increase ridership.



The relative fare index shows most fares are recovering in proportion to usage (2/2)



/ TRANSIT PEER APPROACHES

Peers have similar guiding principles

We selected four municipalities to compare Hamilton against – Burlington, Brampton, Mississauga and Oakville

These peers were chosen based on proximity and shared regional context in the GTHA.

However, there are some differences to consider, as each network has a different level of system maturity, urban density and service intensity. These factors affect cost recovery performance and ridership levels. Comparisons should be interpreted within that context rather than as direct equivalents.

All municipalities broadly create and run their transit operations under four values.

The chart to the right shows the common principles that peer municipalities use to set user fees.

These values can conflict, such as when balancing equity with long-term financial sustainability. This issue is especially relevant for subsidized fares.



Affordability

- ▶ Keeping fares affordable for children, youth, seniors, students and low-income riders.
- ▶ Ensuring routine fare increases do not create extra barriers.



Ridership Growth

- ▶ Trying to increase ridership post-pandemic, while balancing the current cost-of-living conditions.
- ▶ Using fare structure adjustments to influence ridership patterns (e.g., time-based transfers, loyalty programs).



Financial Sustainability

- ▶ Aligning fare adjustments with the annual budget process.
- ▶ Setting expectations for farebox recovery tied to service growth and affordability.
- ▶ Generating funds through user fees to offset subsidies.



Access

- ▶ Integrating PRESTO fares across the GTHA.
- ▶ Removing fares for residents who face extra barriers or challenges, such as for: persons with vision loss, veterans, support persons, children, youth or seniors.

We identified different practices when designing a user fee framework

There are three main factors that contribute to how peers set fares

According to the Canadian Urban Transit Association (CUTA), fare frameworks must balance affordability, simplicity, equity, financial sustainability and ridership growth¹. However, these goals are often at odds with one another.

Policy priorities



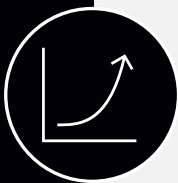
- ▶ Policy goals are generally derived from municipal- or transit-wide goals, such as Hamilton's Transit Vision 2040, Oakville's accessibility priorities or Burlington's Transit 5-Year Business Plan.
- ▶ Councils often provide direction on determining concession groups. These priorities will determine which groups are subsidized and how deeply.

Fare design



- ▶ Most contacted peers operate under a flat-rate pricing scheme. While concession categories are consistent, municipalities may choose how to apply pricing to these categories.
- ▶ Some peers offer time-based flat-rate pricing, such as Mississauga and Hamilton who provide a 2-hour transfer window through PRESTO.

Cost recovery and modelling



- ▶ Methods to determine cost-recovery targets vary by municipality. Some use scenario modelling an elasticity analysis; others rely more on annual budget cycles, forecasting and benchmarking.
- ▶ Ensuring cost effectiveness based on municipal investment and supporting financial sustainability was also a priority when determining recovery targets.
- ▶ Few peers set cost recovery (farebox) targets. Brampton currently sets their farebox recovery at 50%.
- ▶ Mississauga and Oakville both project multi-year revenues, while Brampton projects revenues and targets

Peers also use different pricing models

Peers referenced a mix of approaches when describing pricing models

While terminology and application vary across transit services, most combine elements of multiple pricing techniques to balance cost recovery, equity and regional expectation. The table below categorizes techniques mentioned by peers.

Comparative



- ▶ Setting fares by benchmarking against neighboring transit systems or regional averages to remain competitive and align broader affordability goals.
- ▶ This method is used to ensure fares remain in-line with regional expectations and to maintain affordability for residents.
- ▶ Brampton, Burlington, Mississauga, Oakville

Cost-Based



- ▶ Considering the direct operating costs, such as for labour, fuel and maintenance when assessing fare adjustments. This ensures revenue keeps pace with rising costs.
- ▶ Brampton, Oakville

Differential



- ▶ Fees are varied based on user characteristics, offering discounted or free fares for groups such as youth, seniors and low-income riders.
- ▶ Used by many peers to encourage ridership growth and promote transit equity,
- ▶ Brampton, Hamilton, Mississauga, Oakville

Traditional



- ▶ Applying inflationary or planned adjustments to maintain consistency and predictability year over year.
- ▶ Brampton, Hamilton, Oakville

Peers have various fare equity mechanisms in place

Each municipality has identified different groups to promote fare equity in their region

Additionally, all municipalities offer discounted transit fares for post-secondary students.

Municipality	Equity and Inclusion Tactics
Hamilton	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Children (0-12) and Seniors (80+) ride for free with a PRESTO card. Youth (13-19) and Seniors (65+) pay a discounted fare. ▶ Loyalty program that offers free trips after eleven paid trips in a week. ▶ Fare Assist program based on total household income that gives a 50% discount on single-ride PRESTO fares.
Brampton	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Seniors 65+ (with a Brampton Transit Senior Identification Card) and children (0-5) ride free. ▶ Veterans, as defined by Veterans Affairs Canada who reside in Brampton are eligible to ride for free. ▶ Participates in the Peel Affordable Transit Program (ATP), which subsidizes 50% of the cost of an adult monthly PRESTO pass. ▶ Loyalty program that offers free trips after your 11th paid trip in a week. ▶ Those registered with the Canadian Institute for the Blind (CNIB) as a person with vision loss can ride free.
Burlington	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Seniors 65+ and children under 12 ride free with a PRESTO card. Youth (13-19) pay a discounted fare before 6pm on weekdays. Occasionally Burlington offers free fares for youth (e.g. in summer). ▶ Participates in Halton Region's Subsidized Passes for Low-Income Transit (SPLIT) Program based on eligibility.
Mississauga	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Seniors 65+ and children under 12 ride free with a PRESTO card. Youth pay a discounted fare ▶ Participates in the Peel Affordable Transit Program, which subsidizes 50% of the cost of an adult or senior monthly PRESTO pass. ▶ Launched the “Sauga Summer Pass” where youth 12-16 rode the bus for free in the summer. ▶ Those registered with the Canadian Institute for the Blind (CNIB) as a person with vision loss can ride free.
Oakville	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Seniors, youth and children ride free in Oakville with an age-verified PRESTO pass. ▶ Oakville takes part in the Halton SPLIT fare program for low-income riders. ▶ Free transit through Care-A-Van service, a door-to-door specialized transit service for persons with disabilities.

Fares vary across peers

Municipalities have different fares for the same demographics, selecting different groups to subsidize

- ▶ Not every peer sets a fare for every demographic. The only comparator that has a child fare is Brampton, while only Hamilton has a senior fare for 65–80-year-olds. Oakville allows youth to ride free with a PRESTO, as well.
- ▶ Even though peers use similar fare categories (adult, youth, senior, child), the subsidy applied to each group varies. This reflects policy choices about who should receive financial support.
- ▶ Some municipalities charge higher fares for fee paying groups to subsidize non-paying, such as Oakville and Brampton.
- ▶ Many charge a cash price, for those without PRESTO, by paying by either cash or contactless debit/credit. Some cash prices differ based on demographic, such as the Brampton \$1 senior cash fare.

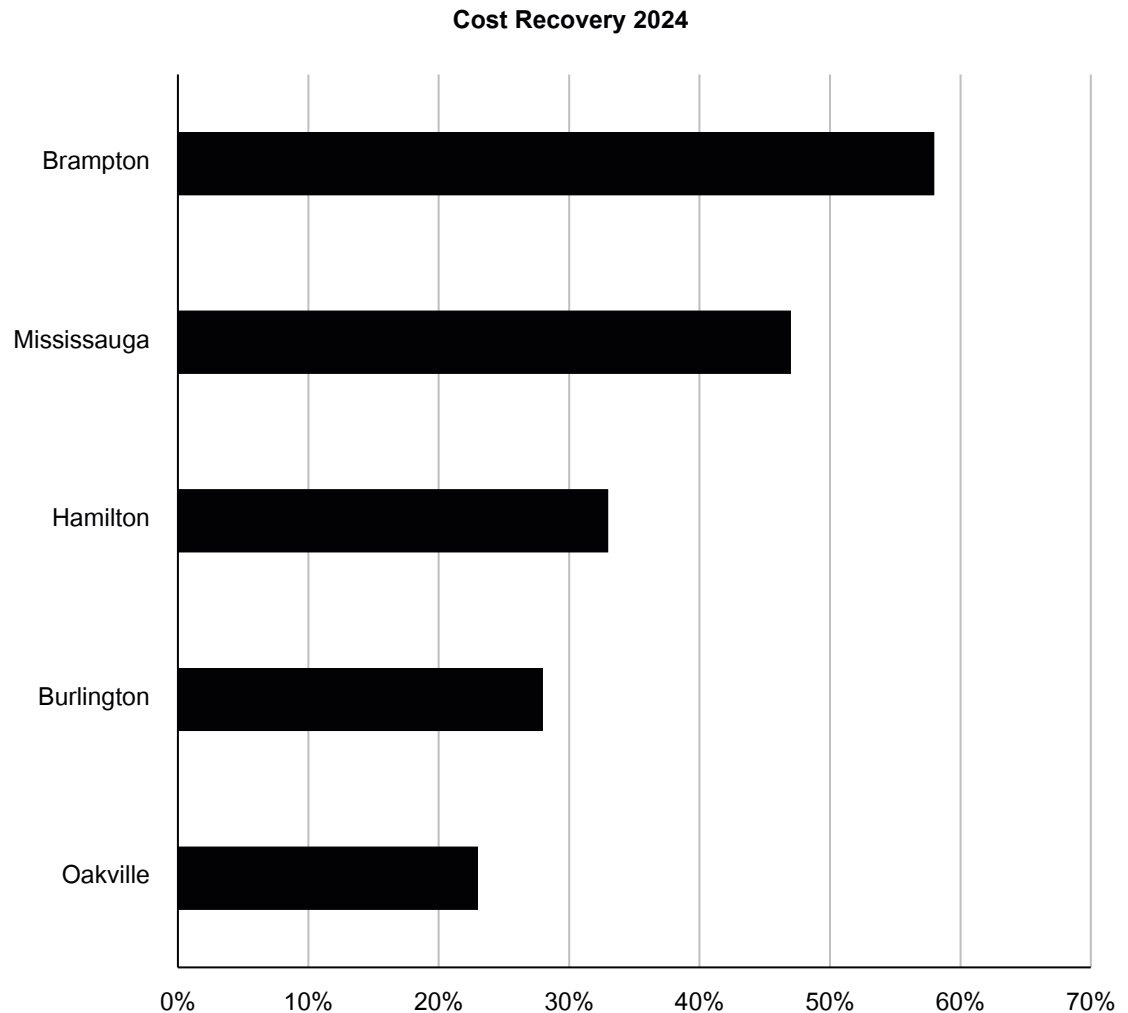
Municipality	Cash	Adult	Senior	Youth	Child
Hamilton	\$ 3.75	\$ 2.85	\$ 2.35 (65-80) Free (80+)	\$ 2.35	Free (0-12)
Brampton	\$ 4.50	\$ 3.40	\$ 1.75 (65+)	\$ 2.80	Free (0-5) \$ 2.00 (5-12)
Burlington	\$ 3.50	\$ 2.75	Free (65+)	\$ 1.90	Free (0-12)
Mississauga	\$ 4.25	\$ 3.40	Free (65+)	\$ 2.65	Free (0-12)
Oakville	\$ 4.00	\$ 3.40	Free (65+)	Free (13-19)	Free (0-12)

Peers recover between 28% and 58% through fares in 2024

Recovery levels vary as municipalities prioritize affordability differently

Recovery rates are not directly comparable, as differences in urban density and service coverage influence recovery patterns. This comparison remains valuable in understanding regional recovery targets and policy choices. Hamilton's cost recovery uses CUTA data from 2023; peer information is from 2024.

- ▶ Burlington and Oakville subsidize the highest percentage of transit, at 72% and 77%, respectively. Both municipalities offer some of the lowest fares and deepest concessions, leading to lower cost recovery.
- ▶ Mississauga and Hamilton have maintained mid-range recovery levels, with moderate discounts and fees.
- ▶ Brampton's cost recovery is high as it offers fewer free-fare programs, only offering free transit for senior riders.
- ▶ The average cost recovery between all five peers was 41%. The overall average across Canada based on data from CUTA was 36.6%.



/ TRANSIT SURVEY FINDINGS

This section presents findings from the Transit User Fees Survey

A total of 748 respondents provided feedback

The online, non-probability survey covered transit fares, the Fare Assist program and priorities for service delivery.

Key Findings

- ▶ Moderate value perception: 71% rate HSR as good or very good value, notably lower than recreation (86%).
- ▶ Strong income gradient in affordability: 72% find fares affordable overall, but only 59% of lower-income riders vs. 84% of higher-income riders agree.
- ▶ Fee assistance is the preferred policy response: 48% favour expanding Fare Assist as the primary fare adjustment approach.
- ▶ Higher Fare Assist awareness: 66% are aware of Fare Assist, substantially higher than recreation fee assistance (43%).
- ▶ Service issues rival cost as barriers: Route coverage (15%) and frequency (15%) are cited as barriers more often than fare cost (10%).

These survey findings align with previous survey findings by the City of Hamilton and HSR. While cost is often an important concern, particularly for lower-income riders, service frequency and route coverage are often rated as higher-priority considerations.

Value perceptions are dominated by fare satisfaction

- Fare-related changes will have outsized effects on how riders perceive the system overall.

The affordability gap is an equity concern

- The large gap between lower-income (59%) and higher-income (84%) affordability perceptions indicates current fares are regressive in their perceived impact.

Fee assistance is the consensus policy preference

- Fare Assist expansion is the top choice across income groups, compared to recreation where preferences diverge.

Fare Assist awareness is relatively strong but could improve

- At 66% overall and nearly 70% among lower-income riders, awareness exceeds recreation. However, 30% of eligible residents remain unaware.

Service barriers rival cost barriers

- Route coverage (15%) and frequency (15%) are cited more than cost (10%), indicating that fare policy alone will not address all access issues.

Three distinct segments require different approaches

- Service Investors want quality improvements; Equal-Fare Advocates want universal treatment; Cost-Burdened Riders need affordability relief

Usage frequency is distributed across occasional and regular riders

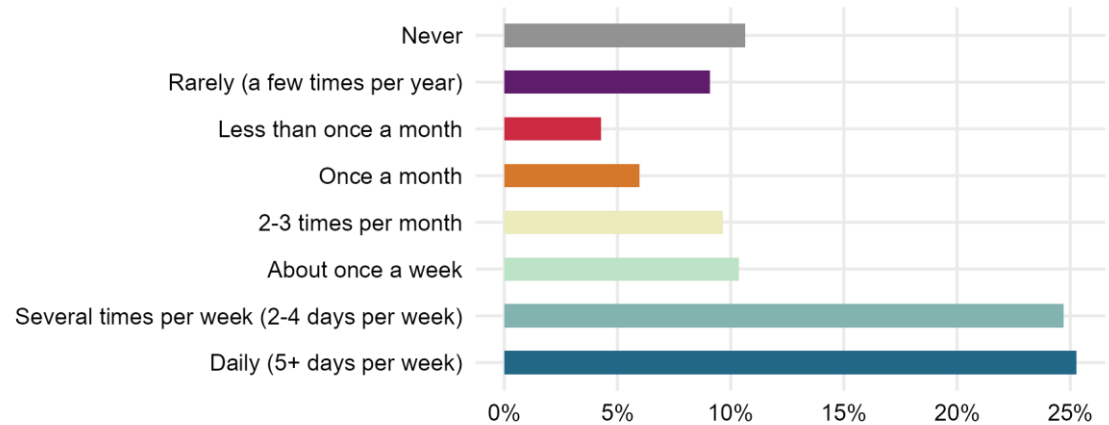
Respondents say that shopping/errands and recreation are the most common trip purposes

About eight in ten survey respondents use HSR bus service, with more than half using it weekly or more frequently.

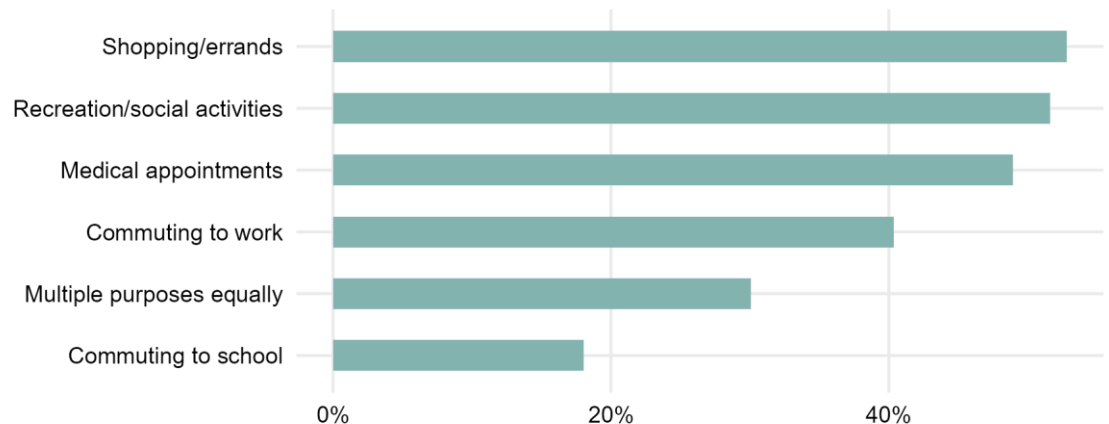
Shopping and recreation/social activities lead, followed by medical appointments and work commuting.

Only 18% cite school commuting, suggesting the non-representative sample underrepresents student riders.

How often do you use HSR bus service?



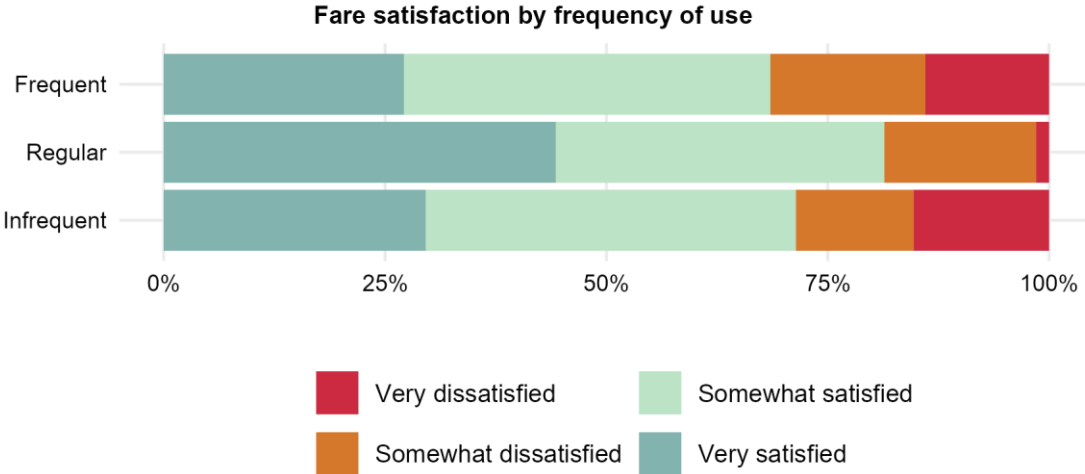
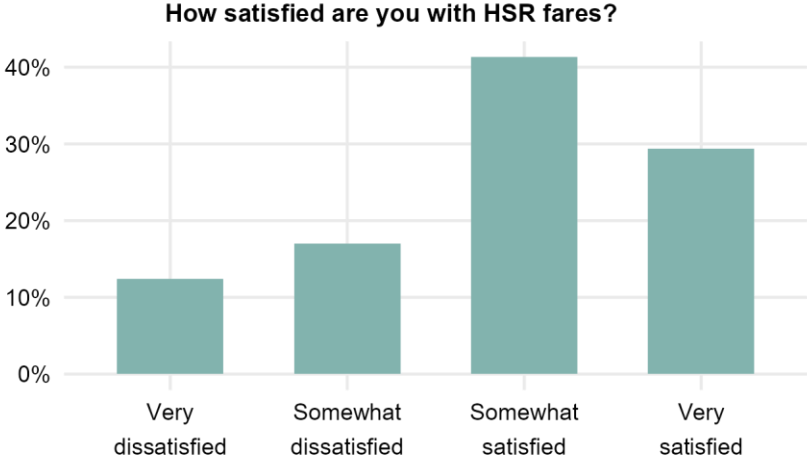
For what purposes do you use HSR?



Most respondents are satisfied with current fares

Satisfaction does not vary dramatically by usage frequency

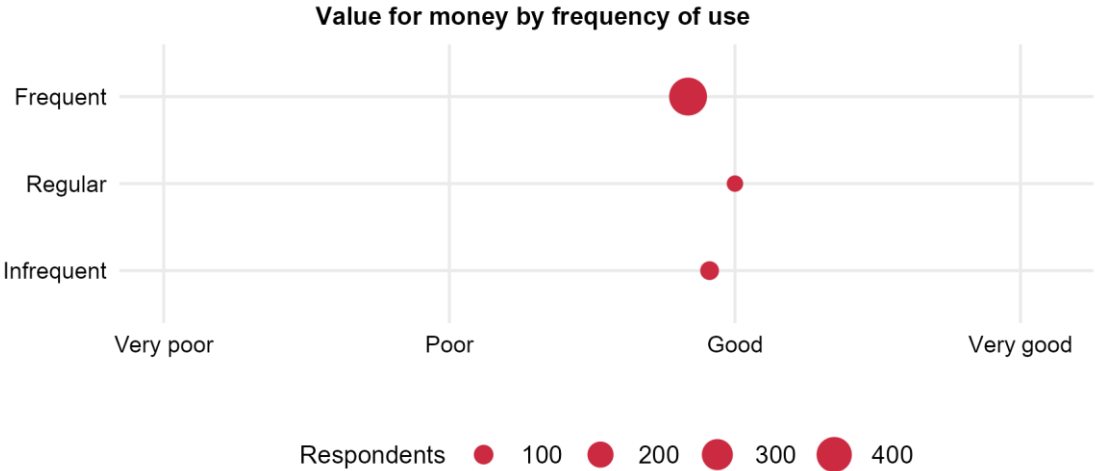
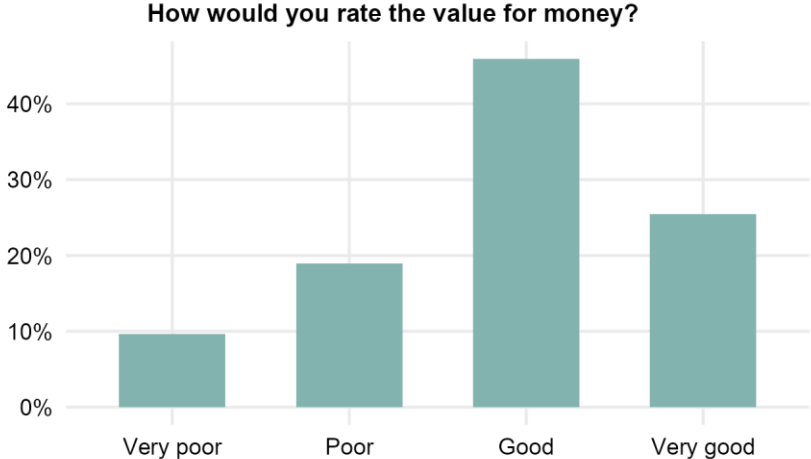
Frequent, regular and infrequent riders rate their satisfaction with fares similarly, suggesting fare perceptions are relatively consistent regardless of how often respondents ride.



Most respondents say they get good value for money

Value perceptions are similar across usage frequencies

Frequent, regular and infrequent users rate value for money similarly, suggesting fares are perceived consistently regardless of how often respondents use HSR.



Two thirds of respondents are aware of Fare Assist

Fifteen percent of respondents have used Fare Assist

One-third of respondents say they do not meet program requirements for Fare Assist.

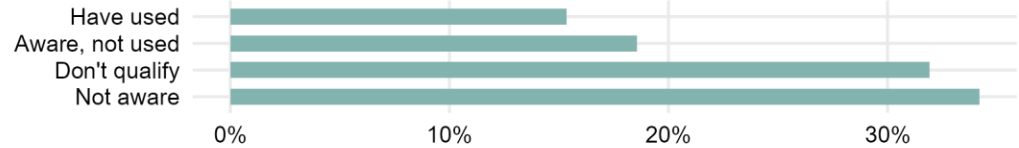
Use of Fare Assist is substantially higher among lower-income respondents, but overall awareness is similar.

Seven in ten respondents say Fare Assist is somewhat or very effective in helping low-income residents access transit. Perceptions of effectiveness are higher among people who have used the program.

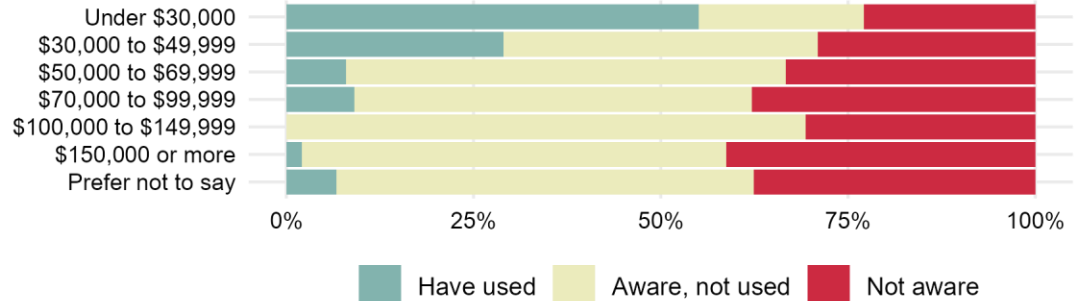
Fewer respondents report being unable to assess effectiveness compared to recreation.

HSR Fare Assist Program

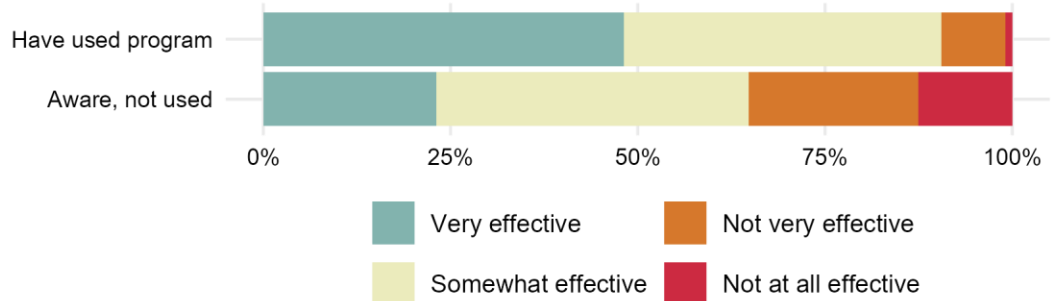
Are you aware of the HSR Fare Assist Program?



Awareness by household income



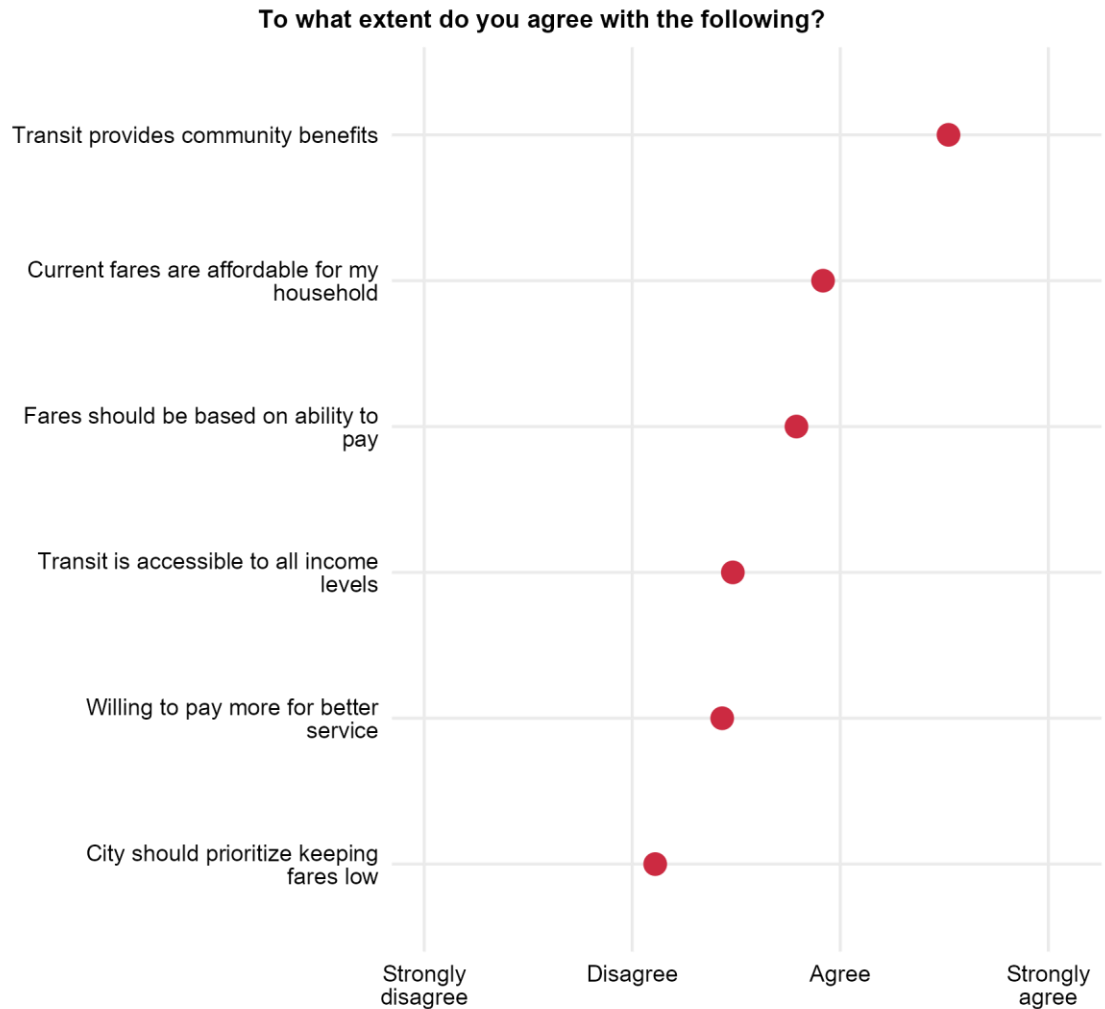
How effective is the Fare Assist Program?



Almost all say transit provides important community benefits, but only half say it is accessible to all income levels

This gap is even larger than recreation's 33-point gap, indicating stronger concerns about transit equity

Only 29% agree the City should prioritize keeping fares low, suggesting other priorities (service quality, coverage) compete for attention.



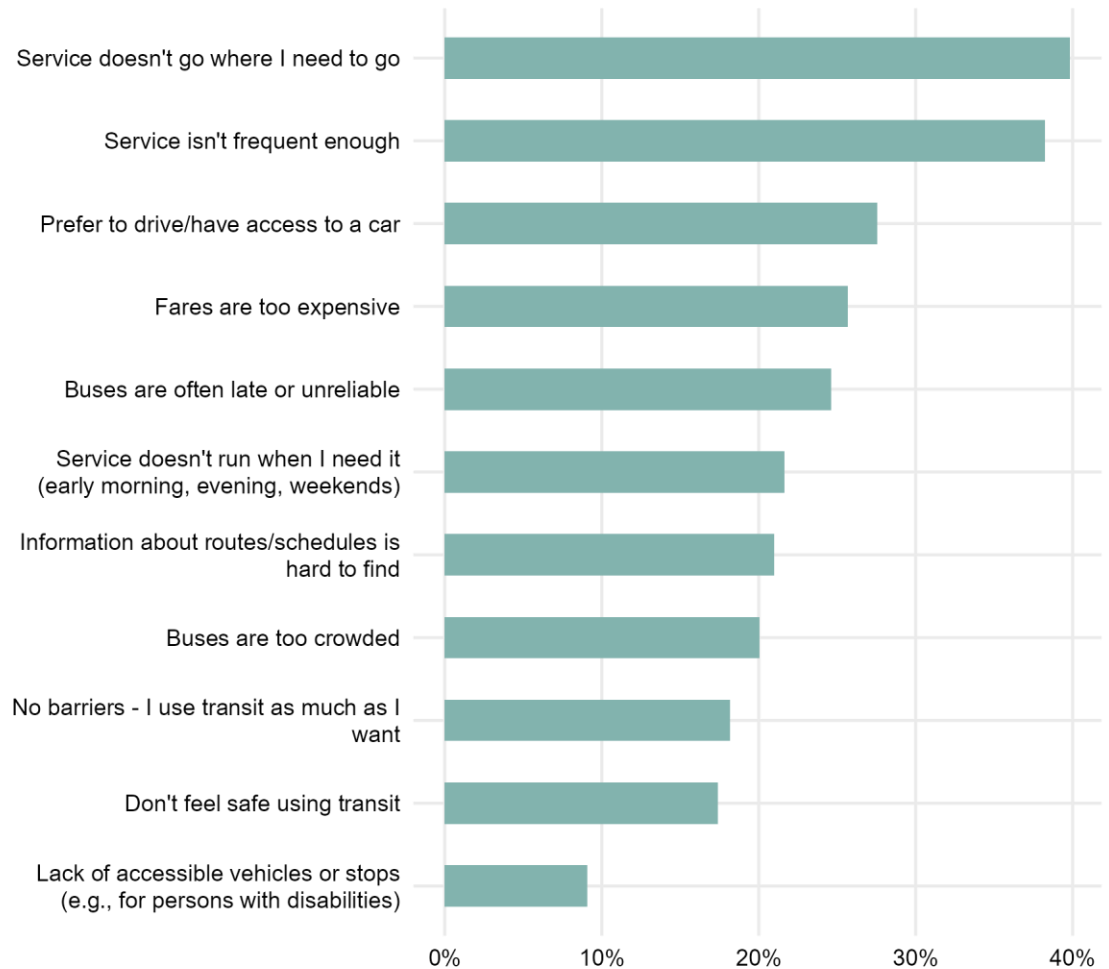
Service coverage and frequency are the most cited barriers, not fare cost

Respondents say service coverage and service frequency are the top barriers to using HSR more often

Fare cost (26%) ranks fourth, below service issues (40%, 38%) and preference for driving (27%). Only 18% report no barriers.

Note that question wording did not include or ask about destinations for the “Service doesn’t go where I need to go” option.

What barriers prevent you from using HSR more often?

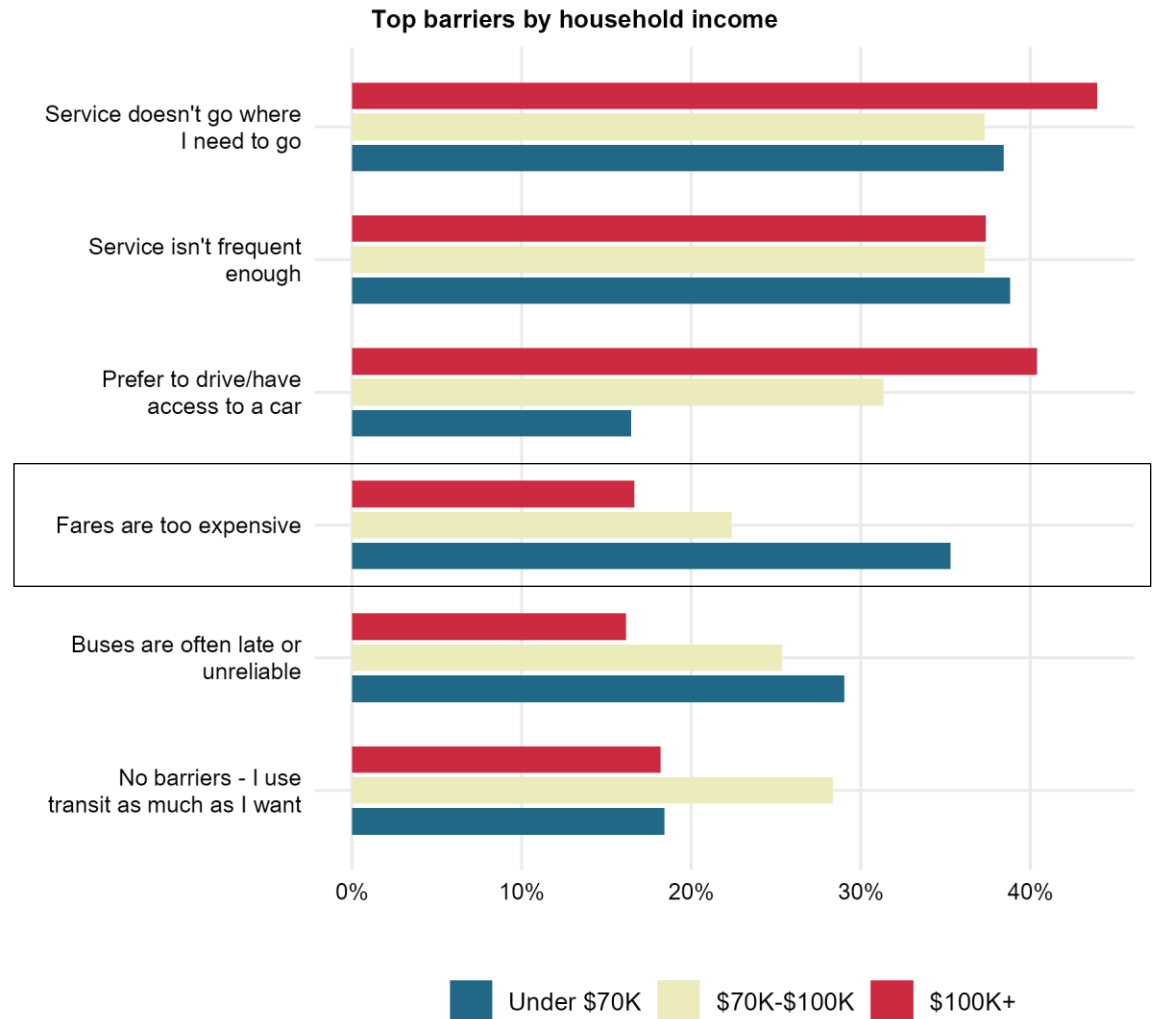


Cost barriers are more common in lower-income households

However, service barriers are most frequently mentioned for all groups

Lower-income riders are more likely to cite fare cost as a barrier, but frequency and coverage issues are prominent across all income levels.

Higher-income riders more often cite preference for driving.



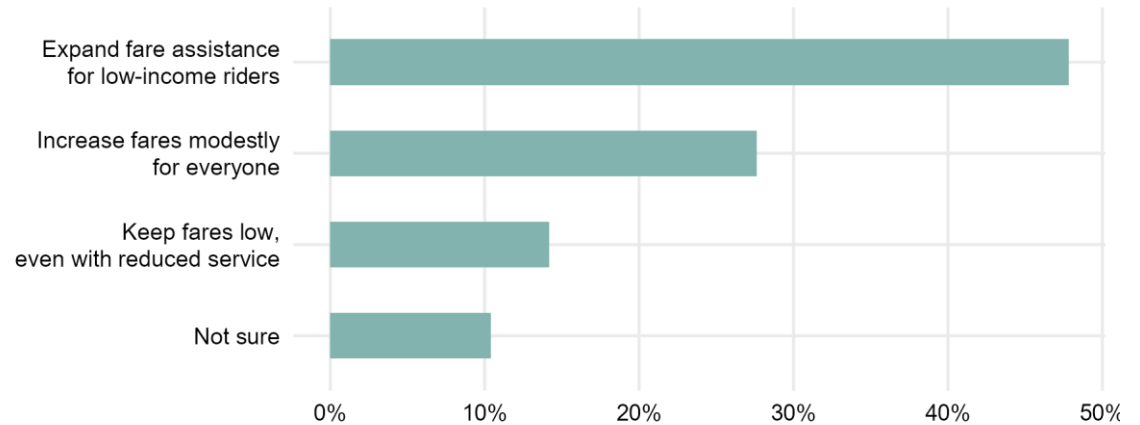
Support for fee assistance is consistent across income levels

Fee assistance is the strongly preferred fare adjustment approach

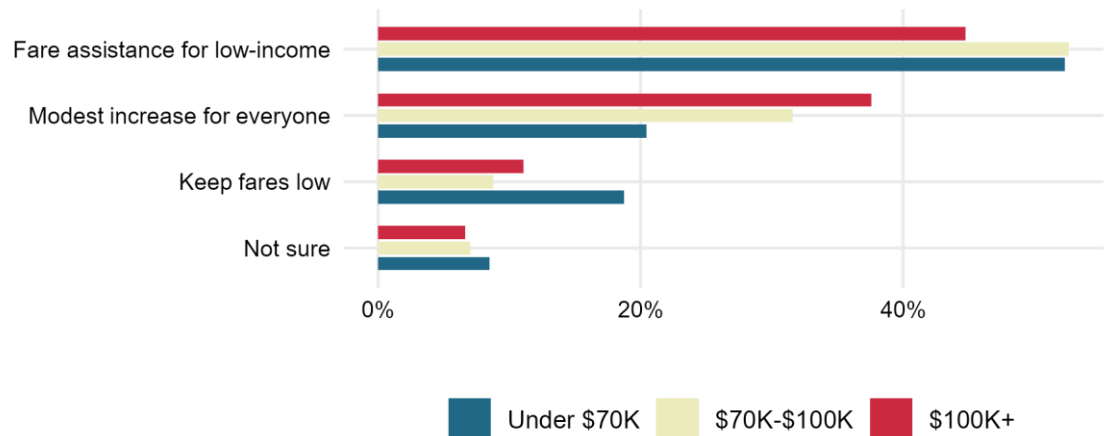
About half of respondents favour expanding Fare Assist for low-income riders, ahead of modest increases for everyone or keeping fares low with reduced service. Only 10% are unsure, indicating clear preference for means-tested approaches.

Unlike recreation, where preferences diverge by income, transit respondents across income groups support Fare Assist expansion.

If the City needed to adjust fares, which approach would you prefer?



Fare adjustment preference by household income

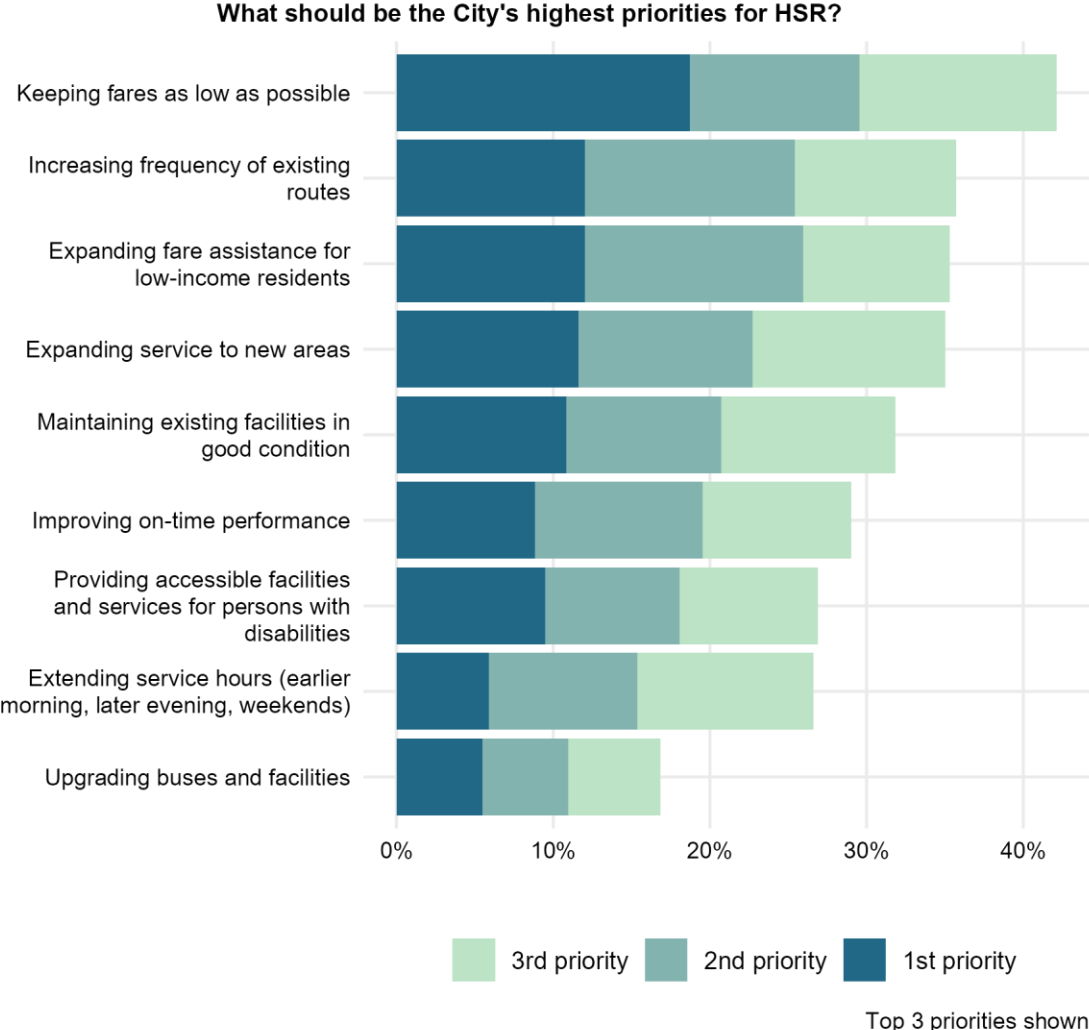


Respondents value keeping fares as low as possible but many also prioritize expanding fare assistance

Keeping fares low is selected as a top 3 priority by 42% of respondents

Other choices selected as a top 3 priority include increasing frequency of existing routes (36%), expanding Fare Assist (35%) and expanding to new areas (35%), all ranking closely.

Improving frequency, on-time performance and extending service hours follow. This balance suggests no single priority following respondent concerns about fares.



/ NEXT STEPS

Data and financial information limitations constrain evidence-based fee setting

Hamilton already applies differential cost recovery based on perceived benefit

This is similar to other peers who apply a similar approach. For example:

- ▶ Golf: 100% target (individual benefit, premium activity)
- ▶ Ice: 50% target (organized groups, dedicated use)
- ▶ Programs/Admissions/Rentals: 35% target (broad community access)

Residents are supportive of tiered pricing models, with one third (34%) preferring to "increase fees for premium services while keeping basic programs affordable". But there is no formalization of these principles as a decision-making tool.

Further, Hamilton's general ledger codes do not align with user fee service groupings. Recreation structures fees into five groups (Rentals, Programs, Admissions, Ice, Golf), but financial data is organized by facility location and function. Cost recovery cannot be calculated consistently at the user fee group level, and analysis relies on facility-level data, which obscures detailed facility- and service-level performance.

- ▶ The City cannot definitively answer questions like, "Are we meeting our targets for programs vs. rentals?".

Any new framework will require investment in the City's technology infrastructure to improve tracking and accountability.

Current recreation fees are very complex, with 300+ distinct recreation fees across five service areas

There is currently no simplified tier structure that residents can easily understand, with limited public-facing documentation explaining the rationale for fee levels. Fee changes are currently not tied to guiding principles (e.g. simple, one-sentence explanation).

- ▶ Hall rentals alone branch into 9 different fees (3 room categories × 3 user types)
- ▶ Variations of prime-time vs. non-peak, subsidized vs. standard, resident vs. non-resident rates add additional complexity

While this review focuses on Recreation and Transit services, approaches around simplified and accessible fee structures may be applicable for other business areas of the City.

Both Recreation and Transit have room to improve awareness and uptake of fee assistance programs

Fee assistance is a core equity tool but low awareness of programs means eligible residents face unnecessary financial barriers

Both RAP and Fare Assist use the Low Income Measure After Tax to determine program eligibility, but Hamilton does not have consistent corporate standards to, proactively reach to eligible populations, simplify application processes or regularly monitor awareness.

The City has departmental guiding principles with limited formality, not corporate-wide. Departments currently have flexibility to set fees, with approvals as necessary. The City may wish to consider documented rationale when fee changes diverge from policy and consider regularly assessing performance against the user fee framework.

	Recreation Assistance Program	Transit Fare Assist
Overall awareness	43%	68%
Aware and haven't used	11%	19%
Aware and have used	8%	15%
Awareness by respondents in households with under \$70k income	44%	73%
Usage by respondents in households with under \$30k income	36%	55%
Usage by respondents in households with income between \$30k and \$70k	21%	29%

/ APPENDICES

Appendix A: Participation by Facility

The ten most frequented facilities accounted for nearly half of Recreation's total visits in 2023

The facilities displayed in the chart to the right account for 47% of all visits

Despite considering 76 recreation facilities with recorded participation data in 2023, a small number of facilities account for a significant portion of total visits.

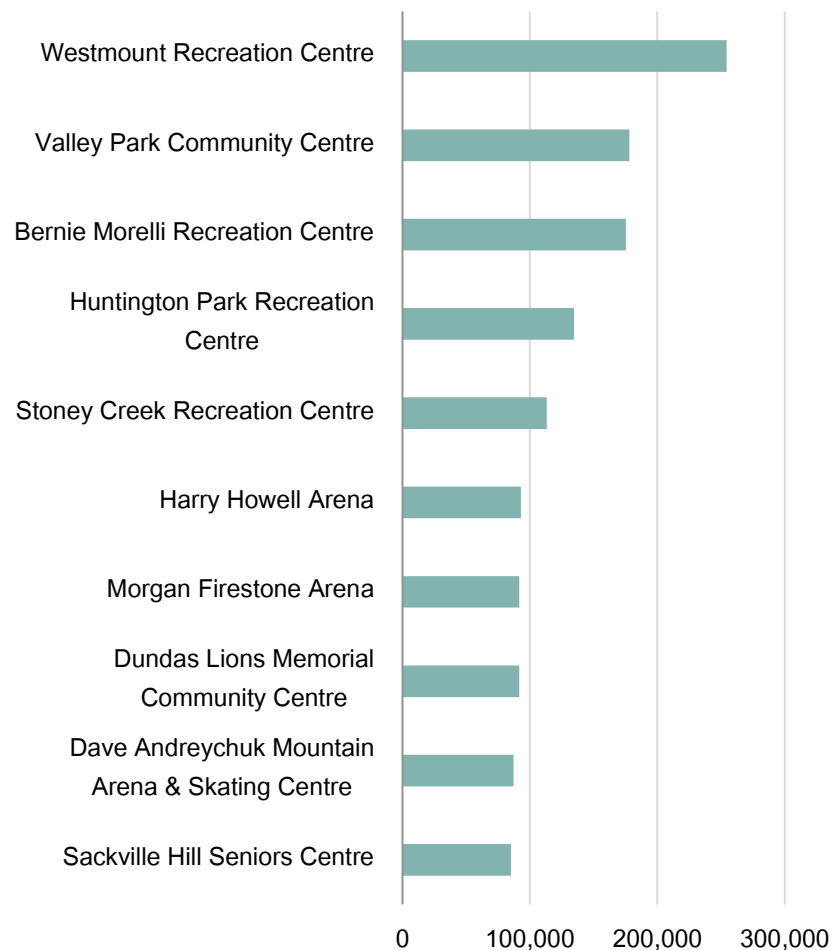
- ▶ Recreation centres and community arenas generate higher visitation because they deliver broader community benefits through diverse programming, drop-in access and shared community spaces. Facilities that provide multiple pathways to participate attract repeat and sustained use, reinforcing the relationship between community benefit and overall visit volume.

Despite generating significant total revenue, the two municipal golf clubs do not rank among the most visited facilities, reflecting their more specialized, individualized use.

We excluded the following facilities from our participation analysis.

- ▶ Due to the number of parks and playgrounds, the City groups them under umbrella categories.
- ▶ Community groups have agreements at the Winona Community Centre to use the rooms as office space, elevating the visit count.
- ▶ Even though the LIUNA 4 Ice Centre did not appear in the top ten, we did not consider its participation data due to its unique operating model.

2023 Total Visits Distribution



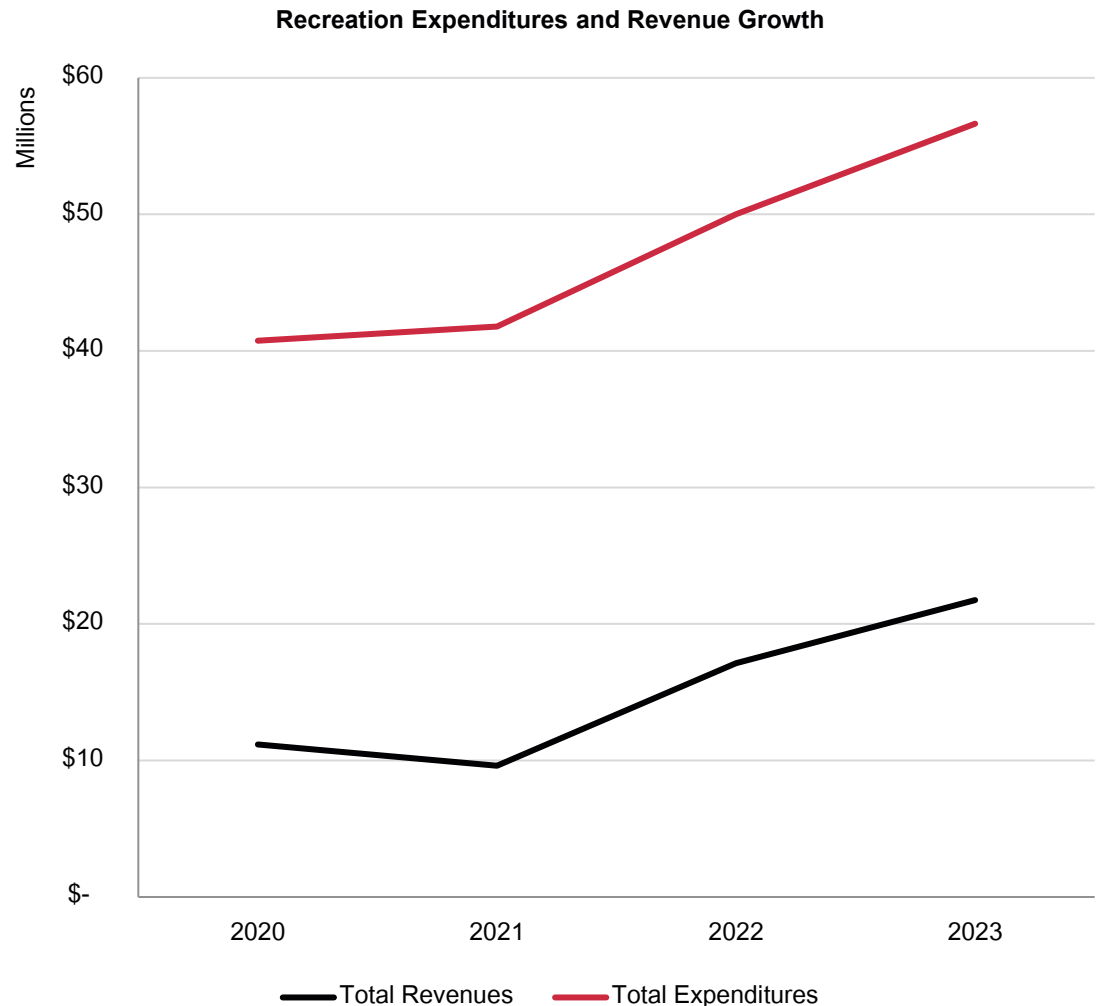
Appendix B: Financial Performance Insights (1/2)

Recreation expenditures and revenue are growing in parallel

We reviewed Hamilton's Recreation revenues and expenditures from 2020 to 2023 to assess how financial performance is evolving over time

As shown to the right, both revenue and expenditures increase steadily over this pandemic and post-pandemic period, indicating:

- ▶ Proportional scaling rather than a widening gap over the period shown.
- ▶ Service recovery following the pandemic, with a return toward greater participation.
- ▶ Inflationary pressures contributing to higher operating costs and in turn, revenue growth driven by corresponding user fee revisions.



Appendix B: Financial Performance Insights (2/2)

Per visit revenue and expenses are correlated

Hamilton's 2023 financial and participation data shows a clear positive relationship between expense and revenue per visit

As displayed to the right, facilities with lower expense per visit cluster at lower revenue levels, while higher cost facilities generally demonstrate stronger revenue capture on a per visit basis.

This suggests that higher operating costs tend to accompany amenities and service offerings that enable higher pricing and revenue intensity.

Due to their individualized nature and higher pricing structure, the two municipal golf clubs appear on the upper end of both expense and revenue per visit.

We excluded the LIUNA 4 Ice Centre due to the visits in the City's dataset reflecting only the rentals for the set number of hours allocated from Nustadia Recreation.



Appendix C: Cost Recovery by Recreation Service (1/7)

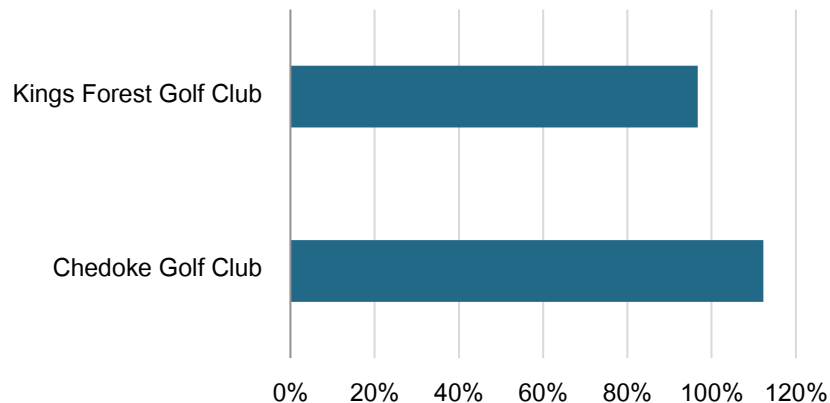
Golf is the only recreation service with cost recovery greater than 100%

Kings Forest falls just short of golf's 100% cost recovery target, although Chedoke exceeds it

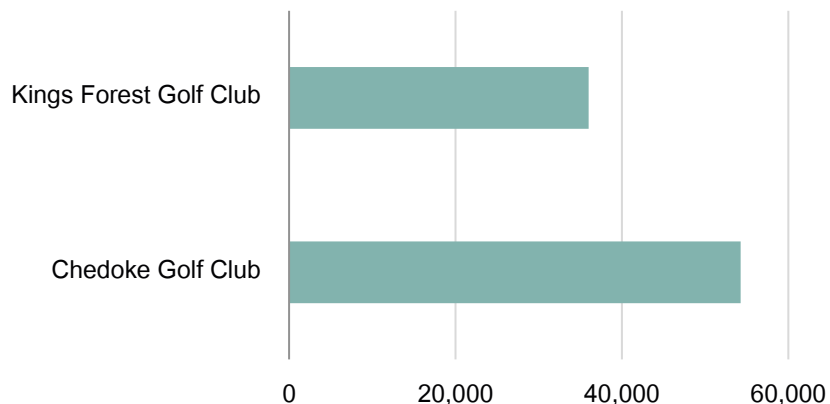
In 2023, Kings Forest's operating expenditures were approximately \$158K higher than Chedoke's, while its revenues were about \$145K lower. These differences align with the final cost recovery results: 97% for Kings Forest versus 112% for Chedoke, as displayed to the top right.

- ▶ Kings Forest generates revenue from alcoholic beverages and confectionaries, while Chedoke's coding shows no equivalent activity. While this increases expenditures, it improves the clubs cost recovery position.
- ▶ The primary driver of the difference in cost recovery relates to service revenue. Green fees at Chedoke exceed Kings Forest by more than \$500K, with a further excess of \$250K when factoring in equipment rentals too. This stems from stronger participation at Chedoke in 2023, with nearly 20,000 more visits than Kings Forest. Chedoke operates two 18-hole courses, compared to a single course at Kings Forest. Chedoke also has lower user fees than Kings Forest.
- ▶ Kings Forest performs better in terms of membership fees, earning \$150K more than Chedoke. Kings Forest earned nearly \$150K from special events, while Chedoke recorded only \$2K.

2023 Golf Clubs Cost Recovery



2023 Rounds Played



Appendix C: Cost Recovery by Recreation Service (2/7)

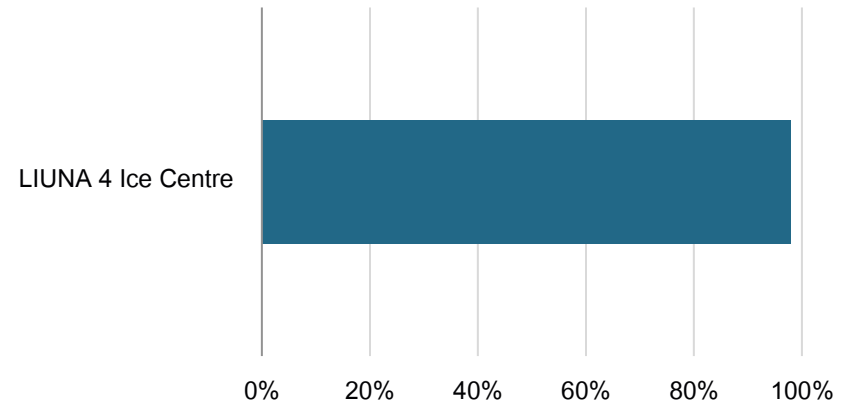
The LIUNA 4 Ice Centre attains close to full cost recovery

The LIUNA 4 Ice Centre achieves 98% cost recovery

As displayed to the top right, the arena recovered nearly all of its costs in 2023. Hamilton employs a third-party partnership model with Nustadia Recreation where the City does not operate the arena but contractually allocates ice time for user groups. This operating model drives stronger cost recovery.

- ▶ Nustadia Recreation generated roughly \$2.70M in rental revenue, and the City generated an additional \$460K in rental revenue.
- ▶ The cost associated with this revenue, including all operating expenditures, is \$3.22M.
- ▶ The arena recorded just over 50,000 visits across the City's 2,506 allocated hours at LIUNA 4 Ice Centre.

2023 Quad Arenas Cost Recovery



Appendix C: Cost Recovery by Recreation Service (3/7)

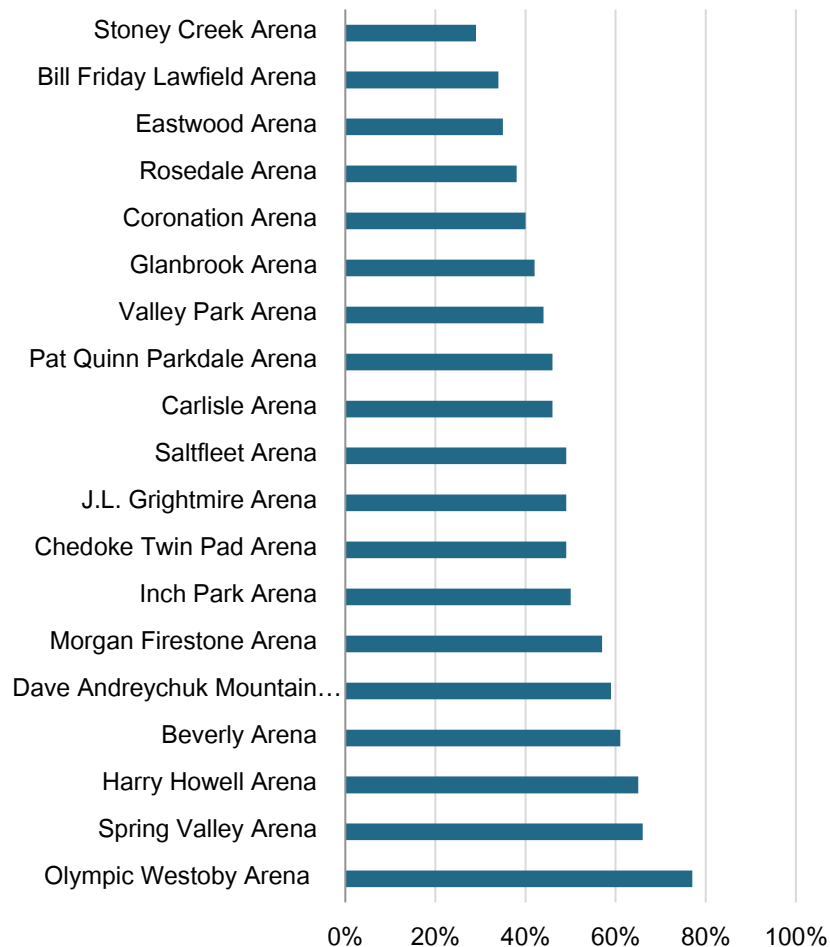
Most community arenas recover roughly one-third to one-half of their costs

Hamilton-owned arenas show varied cost recovery performance, with most recovering between 30 to 60 percent

These results reflect the balance the City strikes between generating revenue and covering facility costs, while maintaining affordable and accessible services.

- ▶ Arena expenditures stem mainly from payroll (~\$4.6M), Hydro (~\$2.1M), direct facilities recovery (~\$1.6M) and water and sewer charges (~\$400K).
- ▶ Revenue primarily comes from ice rentals (~\$5.4M). Smaller drivers include admissions such as ice skating (~\$110K) and hall rentals (~\$75K).
- ▶ Stoney Creek, Bill Friday Lawfield and Eastwood spend close to \$950K cumulatively but earn just under \$300K combined. All three sit among the lowest total recorded visits in 2023 (~11K-23K), which aligns with their lower recovery. The Recreation Master Plan identified both Eastwood and Stoney Creek for decommissioning. Eastwood's ice pad has since closed, reinforcing the direction to consolidate lower-performing facilities.
- ▶ Saltfleet performs strongly despite having a lower visit total (~19K) compared to other facilities. It's direct facility recovery totals and wages remain among the lowest across all the arenas.
- ▶ Harry Howell had the most visits in 2023 with over 90K, explaining its higher recovery. Contrastingly, Spring Valley and Olympic Westoby sit in the middle of the pack, with around 24.5K and 29K visits, respectively. Yet they achieve the best ratios by a significant margin when comparing wages to rental ice revenue.

2023 Community Services Arenas Cost Recovery



Appendix C: Cost Recovery by Recreation Service (4/7)

Recreation facilities face structural limitations to cost recovery

Recreation centres and indoor pools recover a relatively narrow share of costs

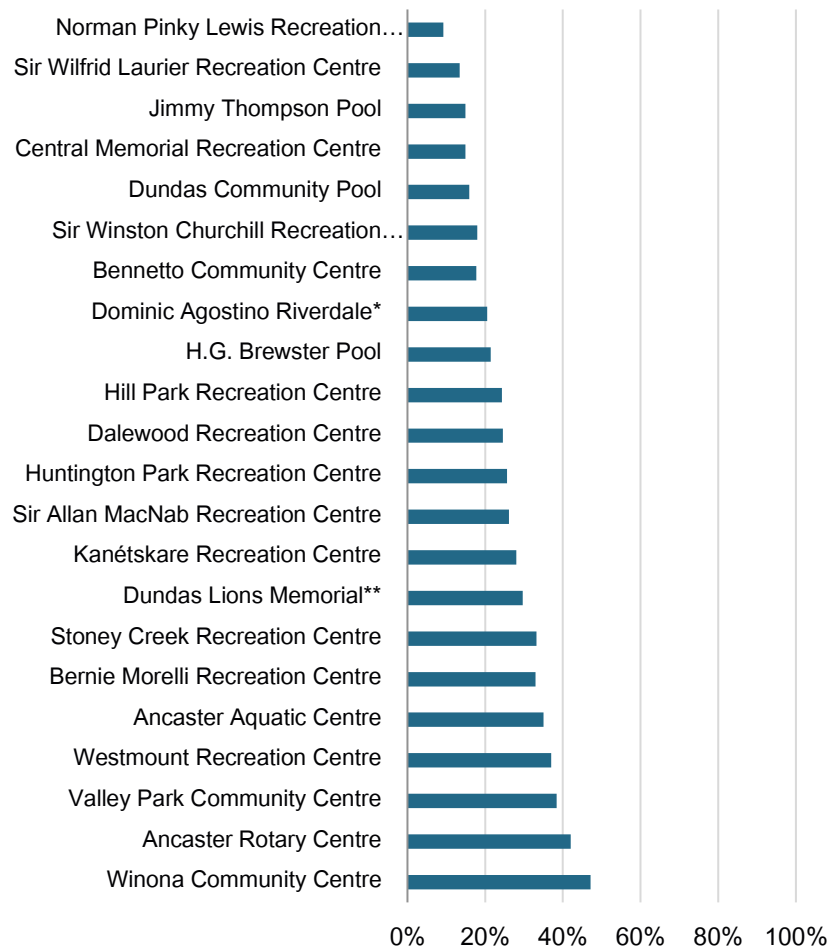
Cost recovery across recreation facilities heavily cluster between 15 to 30%, as shown to the right.

Admissions and programs at centres and pools provide a great degree of benefit to many residents. These facilities promote physical activity, youth development, social interaction and overall community wellbeing. As such, the City intentionally sets user fees at levels that remain affordable and accessible for all residents, aligning with Recreation’s guiding principles and CBF. In the pursuit of amplifying community benefit, there is an inherent trade-off with maximizing cost recovery.

Since the City relies on the collection of user fees to sustain these facilities, there is a noticeable correlation between total visits and cost recovery. Outliers include:

- ▶ Hill Park Recreation Centre: with the third fewest visits compared to other recreation centres (~26K total visits in 2023), Hill Park still has stronger cost recovery than other centres with more visits.
- ▶ Ancaster Rotary Centre: similarly, this centre is in the bottom half of total visits with close to 47K visits, yet it attains one of the best cost recovery ratios across all recreation facilities.
- ▶ Dominic Agostino Riverdale Community Centre and Huntington Park Recreation Centre: these spaces record higher participation relative to their comparators at just under 70K and 135K, respectively. However, they recover a lower ratio of costs than their comparators.

2023 Recreation Facilities Cost Recovery



Appendix C: Cost Recovery by Recreation Service (5/7)

Senior centres see lower cost recovery than most of its counterparts due to their split operating model with boards

The City only collects a modest portion of user fees, with the boards of these centres retaining the rest

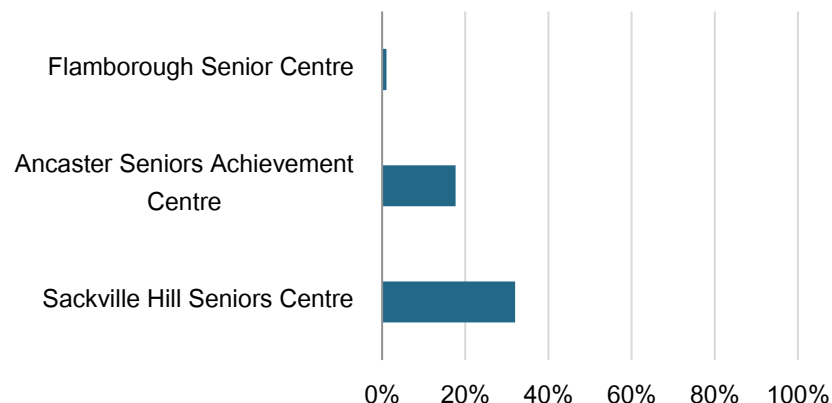
Hamilton recognizes the perceived community benefit these centres provide residents and assists the boards by incurring costs of building maintenance and staffing. However, since Recreation does not directly operate these centres, the division does not see the full amount of membership and admission-based revenues. Instead, remitting a portion to the board to reinvest in the facilities. Similar to senior clubs, some of these centres also received grants. This operating model produces the cost recovery displayed on the right.

The data shows a correlation between participation and cost recovery, as plotted in the scatter chart in the bottom right

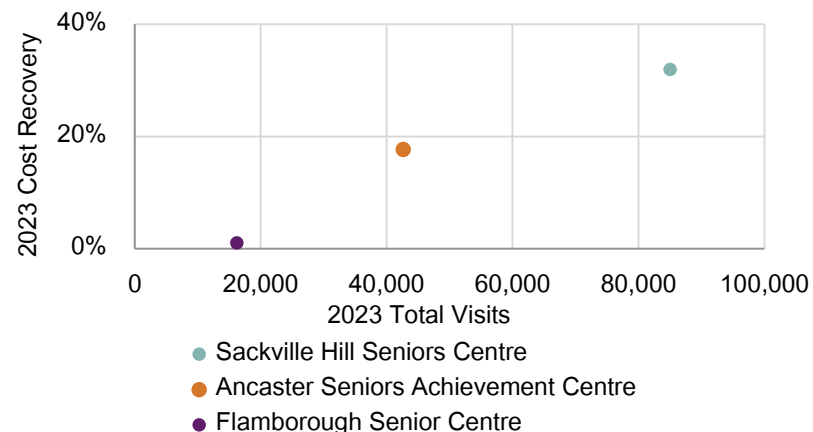
Since Hamilton still collects a portion of membership revenue, the facilities that have higher visits also have stronger cost recovery metrics.

- ▶ Sackville Hill has the most visits, and correspondingly also the highest membership and admissions revenue at just over \$70K.
- ▶ Ancaster Seniors Achievement sits in the middle of pack in terms of participation, and the same with user fee revenue totalling marginally higher than \$17K.
- ▶ Flamborough realized only slightly more than \$1K from memberships and admissions in 2023. It also had significantly less visits. Although, the fact that Flamborough did not receive a grant in 2023, while the other 2 facilities both received just over \$60K in funding pushes the cost recovery differences even further apart

2023 Senior Centres Cost Recovery



2023 Senior Centre Visits and Cost Recovery Ratio



Appendix C: Cost Recovery by Recreation Service (6/7)

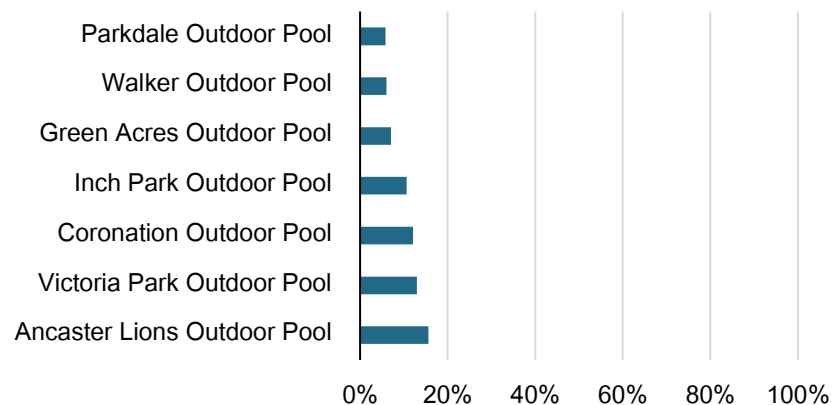
Outdoor pools recover the least amount of costs relative to their counterparts

Due to seasonality, outdoor pools have a smaller window to recover costs that are already priced equitably in alignment with the CBF

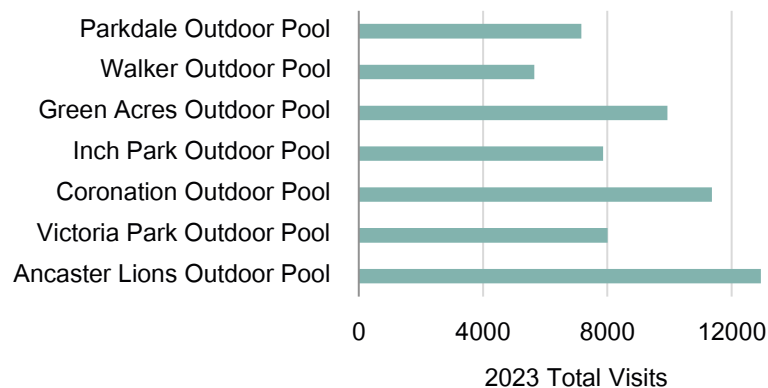
Shorter operating periods limit outdoor pools visit volume as displayed in the chart to the bottom right chart. This results in the low cost recovery range seen in the top right chart. We excluded Birge, Chedoke and Rosedale outdoor pools since these pools only offer free swims and do not have associated user fees.

- ▶ Outdoor pools costs recovery do not show a proportional relationship with total visits. Facilities with higher visitation do not have higher cost recovery, which may be associated with free swim initiatives (e.g. on heat alert days).
- ▶ Parkdale and Walker see the lowest visits in 2023 and correspondingly generates the lowest revenue (\$5.8K and \$6.3K respectively).
- ▶ Green Acres recorded the highest expenditure (\$148K) but sits mid-pack on revenue (\$10.1K) despite strong participation.
- ▶ Coronation shows the second-highest visit count and revenue (\$14.5K). However, its direct recovery expenses are highest.
- ▶ Victoria Park shows lower participation, but the collection of aquatic program fees (\$5.6K) drives higher revenue. Only one other outdoor pool (Coronation) records this type of revenue.
- ▶ Ancaster Lions stands out with \$7.8K in revenue from halls rentals, which other outdoor pools do not have. Combined with the highest visit count across the pools, this positions the pool as a relative top performer in cost recovery across its comparators.

2023 Outdoor Pools Cost Recovery



2023 Outdoor Pools Total Visits



Appendix C: Cost Recovery by Recreation Service (7/7)

The City faces a systemic challenge in isolating cost recovery at a program level

The financial data enabled us to isolate cost recovery for only two specific programs; aquatic leadership and camps

Although the City generally codes revenues and expenditures at the facility level, it does not consistently track financials by individual programs. With activities delivered across many locations, analyzing cost recovery at the program level becomes difficult. This highlights a structural challenge in assessing program-specific performance, common across many municipalities.

Appendix D: User Fee Index (1/3)

We compared the following user fees across municipalities

These fees reflect standard resident rates only and exclude youth, senior, commercial or other discounted categories. For fee types with multiple tiers, we selected the mid-point rate to ensure a balanced, like-for-like comparison.

Service Area	Hamilton Fee Title
Admissions	▶ Recreation Centre & Pool Admission Fees - Single Admit (Adult)
	▶ Recreation Centre & Pool Admission Fees - Monthly Pass (Adult)
	▶ Recreation Centre & Pool Admission Fees - 10 Visit Clip Card (Adult)
	▶ Recreation Centre & Pool Admission Fees - 3 Monthly Pass (Adult)
	▶ Recreation Centre & Pool Admission Fees - Yearly Pass (Adult)
	▶ Waterfit Admission Fees - Single Admit (Adult)
	▶ Arena Admission Fees - Single Admit (Adult)
	▶ Arena Admission Fees - Shinny (Adult)
	▶ Senior Facility Admission Fees - Yearly Pass (Senior Centre)
Golf	▶ Chedoke Golf Memberships - Beddoe & Martin - Adult - any day

Appendix D: User Fee Index (2/3)

We compared the following user fees across municipalities

These fees reflect standard resident rates only and exclude youth, senior, commercial, or other discounted categories. For fee types with multiple tiers, we selected the mid-point rate to ensure a balanced, like-for-like comparison.

Service Area	Hamilton Fee Title
Parks	▶ Hamilton Pavilion (Per Booking)
	▶ Hamilton - Wedding Ceremony/Photos (Per Booking)
	▶ Special Event Exclusive Use Fee (Select Locations Only) (Per Booking)
Programs	▶ Aquatics Programs - Learn to Swim Program (45 Minute Class)
	▶ Aquatics Programs - Private Lesson - Semi (30 Minute Class)
	▶ Aquatics Programs - Private Lesson (30 Minute Class)
	▶ Aquatic Leadership Programs - Bronze Cross
	▶ Aquatic Leadership Programs - National Lifeguard
	▶ Aquatic Leadership Programs - National Lifeguard Recertification
	▶ Adult - Art/Music Program (1 Hour Class)
	▶ Adult - Dance/Fitness Program (1 Hour Class)
	▶ Adult - Sport Program (Non-Instructed) (2 Hour Class)

Appendix D: User Fee Index (3/3)

We compared the following user fees across municipalities

These fees reflect standard resident rates only and exclude youth, senior, commercial, or other discounted categories. For fee types with multiple tiers, we selected the mid-point rate to ensure a balanced, like-for-like comparison.

Service Area	Hamilton Fee Title
Rentals	▶ Sports Field Rentals - Field/Diamond-B (Hourly)
	▶ Hall Rentals - Category B - Standard Community Rooms - Hourly Rate – Standard
	▶ Gym Rentals - Category B - Gym 3500-6000Sq Ft+ (Ancaster Single, Dundas, Huntington, Bennetto, WMT Single)
	▶ Category B - Traditional Pools (With 2 Lifeguards) (All Other Facilities) - Hourly Rate - Standard
	▶ User Group Ice Rates - Prime Time Non Subsidized
	▶ User Group Ice Rates - Non Prime Time

The table below lists the sources consulted for peer municipalities to compile the user fee data used in our benchmarking

Municipality	Source
Hamilton	▶ Internal Information
London	▶ Report to Strategic Priorities and Policy Committee – 2024-2027 Consolidates Fees and Charges By-Law
Windsor	▶ 2024 User Fee Schedule
Burlington	▶ 2024 Budget – Schedule A of Rates and Fees Bylaw
Oakville	▶ Approved 2025 Rates and Fees Schedule (includes 2024 data)

Appendix E: Indoor Space Maintained per FTE

Relative to population, peers manage comparable amounts of indoor recreation space, but staffing levels vary

We compared indoor recreation space per capita using Ontario FIR's and staffing levels provided by peers (FTE per 1,000 residents)

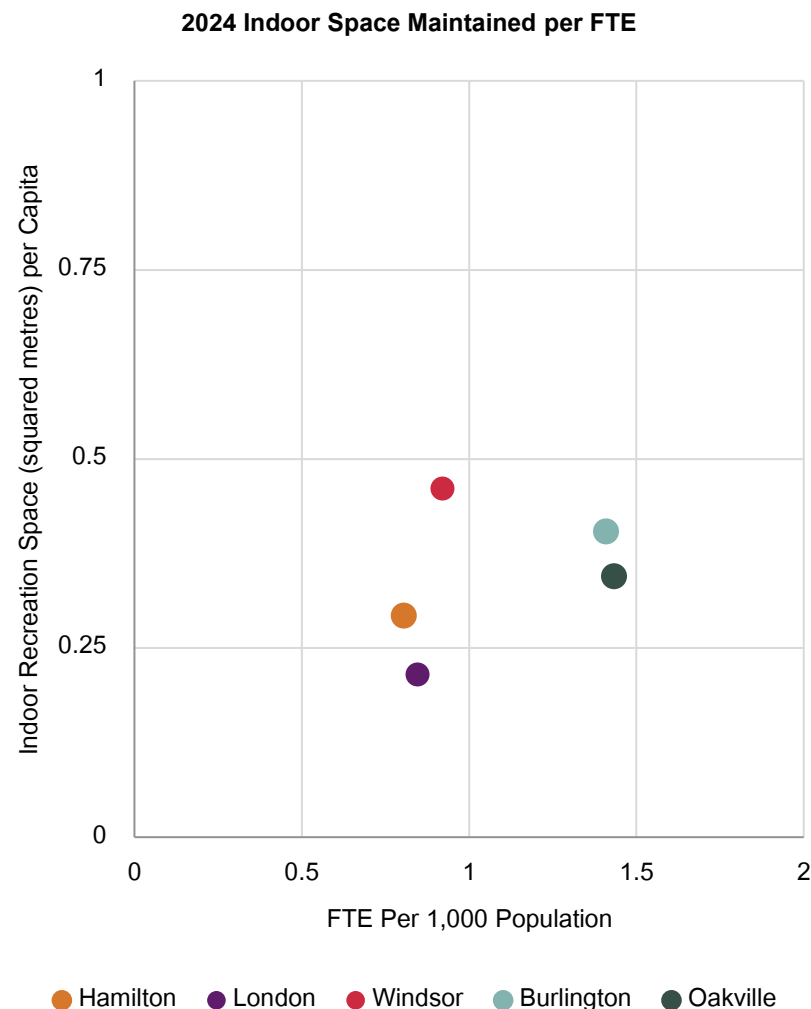
Most municipalities maintain between 0.2 and 0.5 square metres of indoor recreation space per capita, as illustrated in the chart to the right.

However, staffing levels range more significantly, indicating different service delivery models.

- ▶ Hamilton and London operate with slightly lower indoor recreation space per capita and correspondingly lower staffing complements.
- ▶ Windsor provides the highest indoor recreation space per capita, while staffing levels sit in the middle of the comparator group.
- ▶ Burlington and Oakville maintain less indoor space per capita than Windsor but operate with comparatively higher FTE per 1,000 residents.

These results require careful consideration, as the municipal data is not all from the same source.

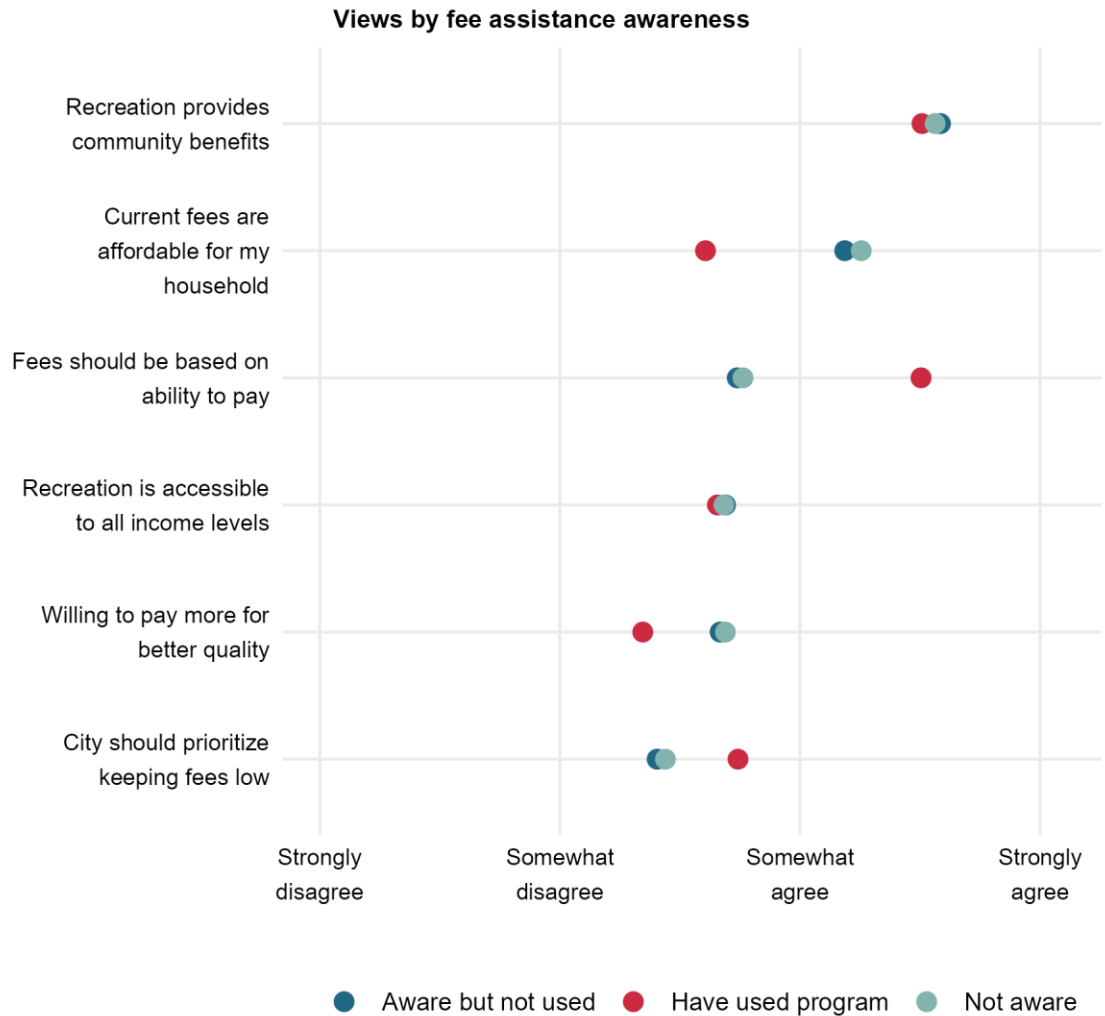
- ▶ For Hamilton, the analysis uses FTE and population figures from the 2026 budget and indoor recreation space data from the 2022 FIR, as updated 2024 space data was not available.
- ▶ For Oakville, the analysis uses FTE, population and indoor recreation space metrics from the 2024 FIR.
- ▶ For the remaining peers, we sourced population and indoor recreation space figures from 2024 FIR data, and each municipality provided its FTE counts directly.



Appendix F: Additional Recreation Survey Insights (1/6)

Those who have used fee assistance show distinct attitude patterns

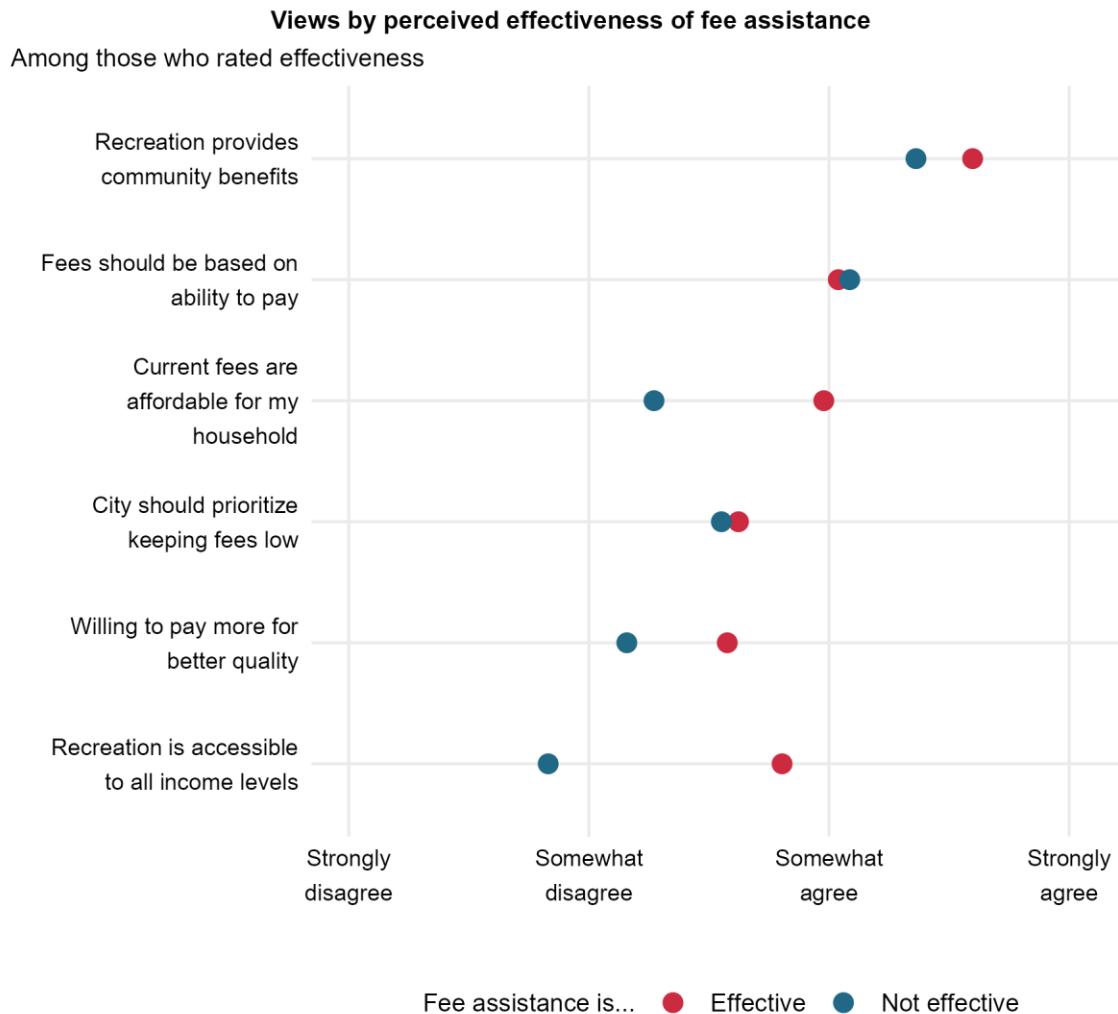
Program users are more likely to perceive recreation as accessible and to support ability-to-pay approaches, though causation cannot be established from this data.



Appendix F: Additional Recreation Survey Insights (2/6)

Those who view fee assistance as effective are more likely to see recreation as accessible

This correlation suggests that effective assistance programs may improve perceptions of system-wide accessibility.

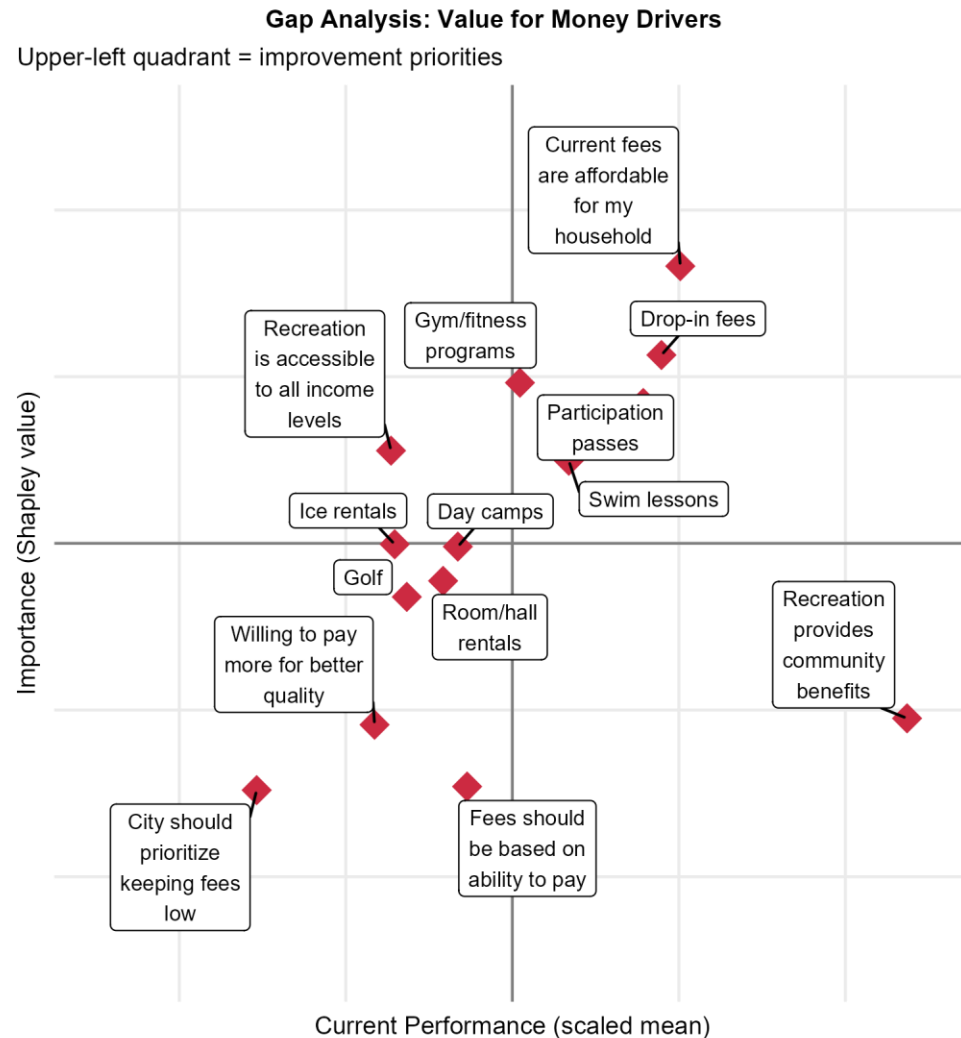


Appendix F: Additional Recreation Survey Insights (3/6)

Personal affordability is the strongest driver of value perceptions

Shapley value analysis reveals that “current fees are affordable for my household” accounts for 14.5% of explained variance in value ratings.

- ▶ Satisfaction with specific fee categories (drop-in fees 12%, gym/fitness 12%, participation passes 11%) follows.
- ▶ Philosophical statements about pricing (ability-to-pay, keeping fees low) show minimal influence on value perceptions.



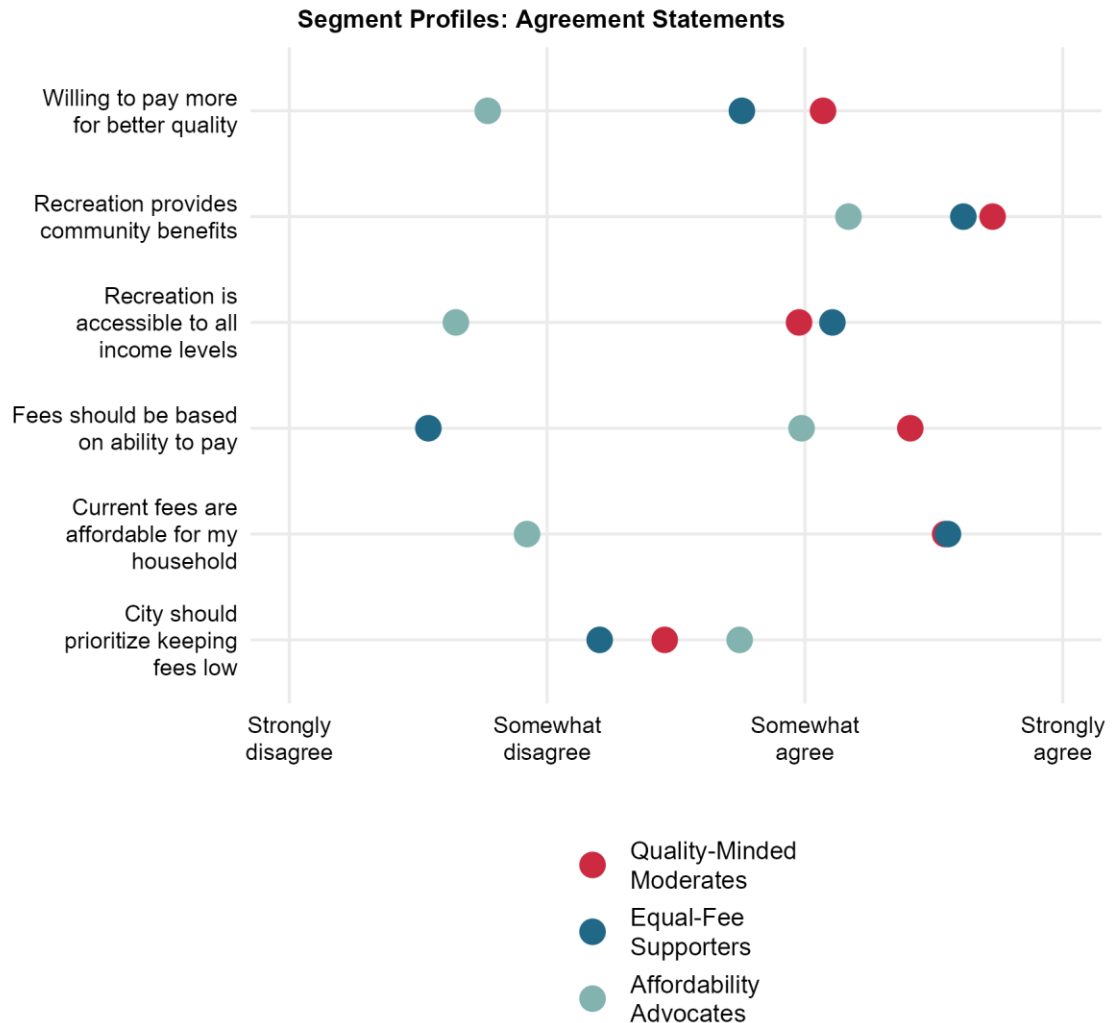
Appendix F: Additional Recreation Survey Insights (4/6)

Respondent segments differ most sharply on affordability and ability-to-pay views

Three distinct respondent segments emerge from the data

Silhouette analysis confirms that a three-cluster solution provides meaningful segmentation based on attitude patterns.

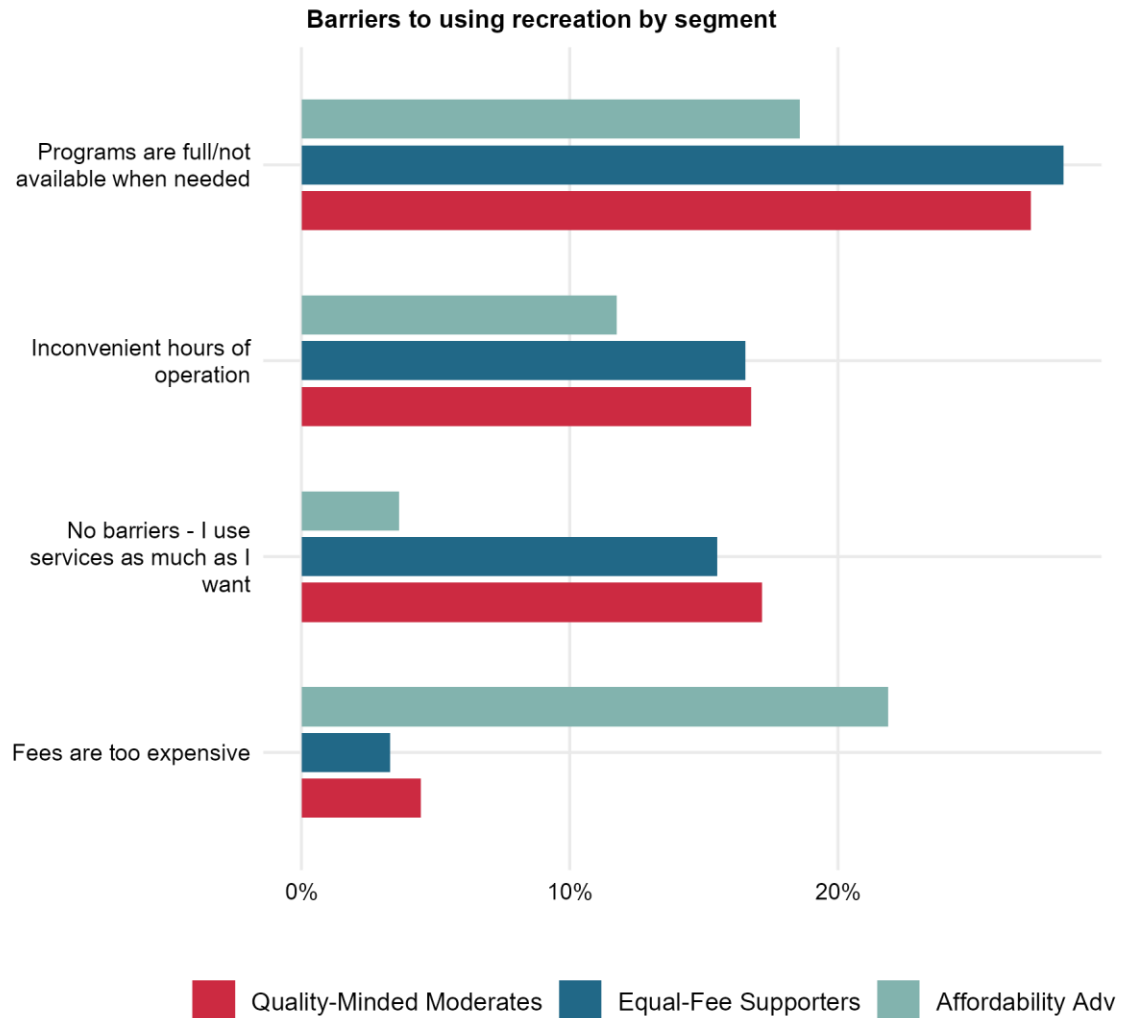
- ▶ **Quality-Minded Moderates** (n=570, 48%): Find fees affordable (mean 3.54), moderate support for ability-to-pay (3.41), highest value ratings (3.43). Predominantly higher-income (50% earn \$100K+).
- ▶ **Equal-Fee Supporters** (n=319, 27%): Find fees affordable (3.55) but strongly oppose ability-to-pay pricing (1.54). Highest income segment (63% earn \$100K+).
- ▶ **Affordability Advocates** (n=308, 26%): Find fees unaffordable (1.92), strongly support ability-to-pay (2.99), lowest value ratings (2.45). Predominantly lower-income (64% earn under \$70K).



Appendix F: Additional Recreation Survey Insights (5/6)

Affordability Advocates report cost barriers at much higher rates

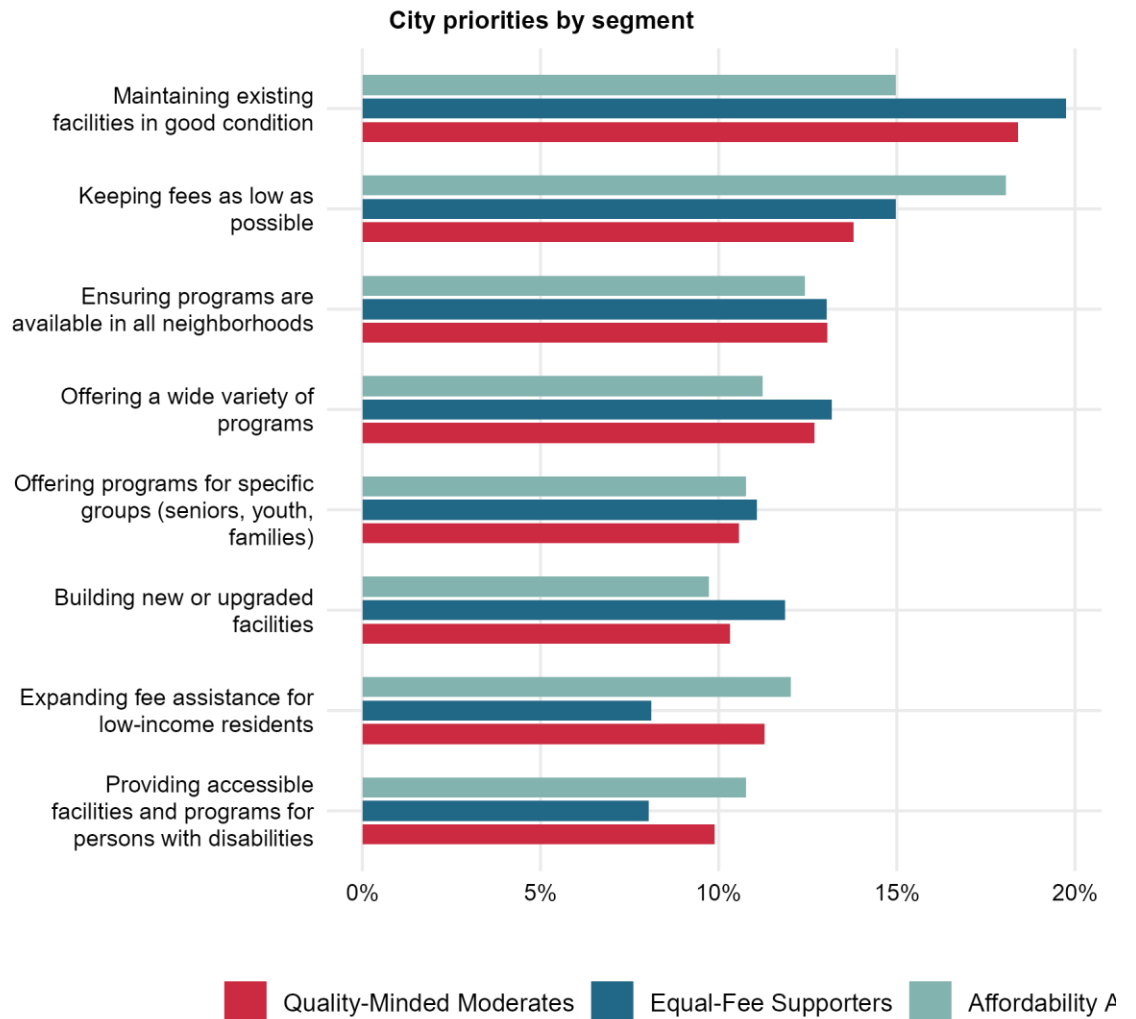
This segment is approximately three times more likely to cite fees as a barrier compared to the other segments.



Appendix F: Additional Recreation Survey Insights (6/6)

Fee adjustment preferences align with segment profiles

- ▶ Affordability Advocates favour fee assistance.
- ▶ Equal-Fee Supporters prefer universal approaches
- ▶ Quality-Minded Moderates are distributed across options.



Appendix G: Further Transit Analysis

All trip types are increasing but pass trips exhibit high seasonal variation

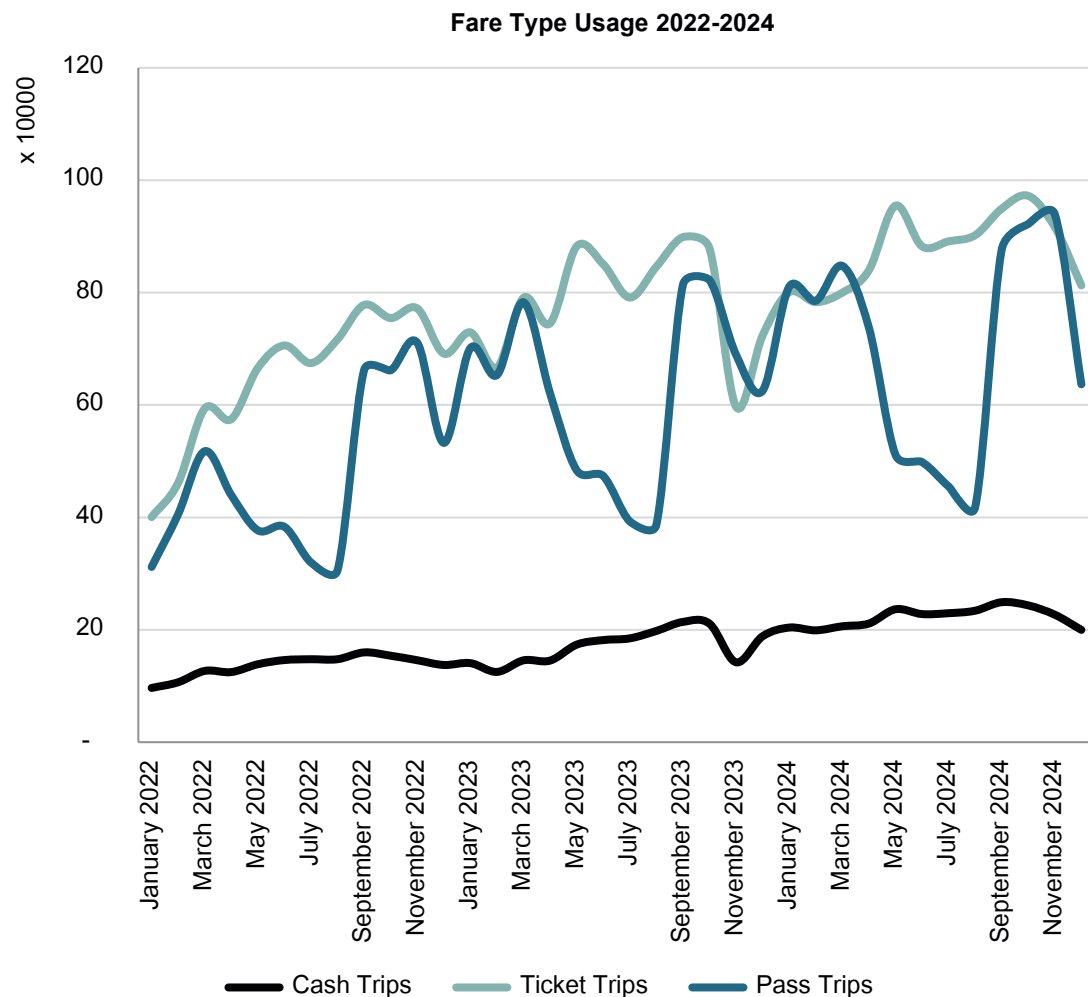
Both ticket and pass trips have risen consistently

Cash passes include exact change fares and when riders tap with a debit/credit card. This charges the full fare, regardless of age or group.

Ticket trips are those taken using a PRESTO or a pre-purchased ticket and offer a heavy discount.

Pass trips are also taken using PRESTO, but are paid by month, year or semester.

- ▶ While the overall trend is increasing, pass trips dip occur during the summer months when both school-age and post-secondary students are off.
- ▶ Cash trips remain stable but slowly increasing, reflecting the overall shift toward modern fare types, such as PRESTO, which was adopted in 2021 and tap-to-pay, which was introduced in 2023.
- ▶ Additionally, Metrolinx launched the One Fare Program in 2024, allowing residents of the GTHA to only pay once through the region, as opposed to separate fares on different transit systems. This further prompted the switch to ticket and pass trips.



Appendix G : Further Transit Analysis

Ridership within youth and school fares have declined

Core fare groups of Adults and Post-secondary students have driven ridership increases

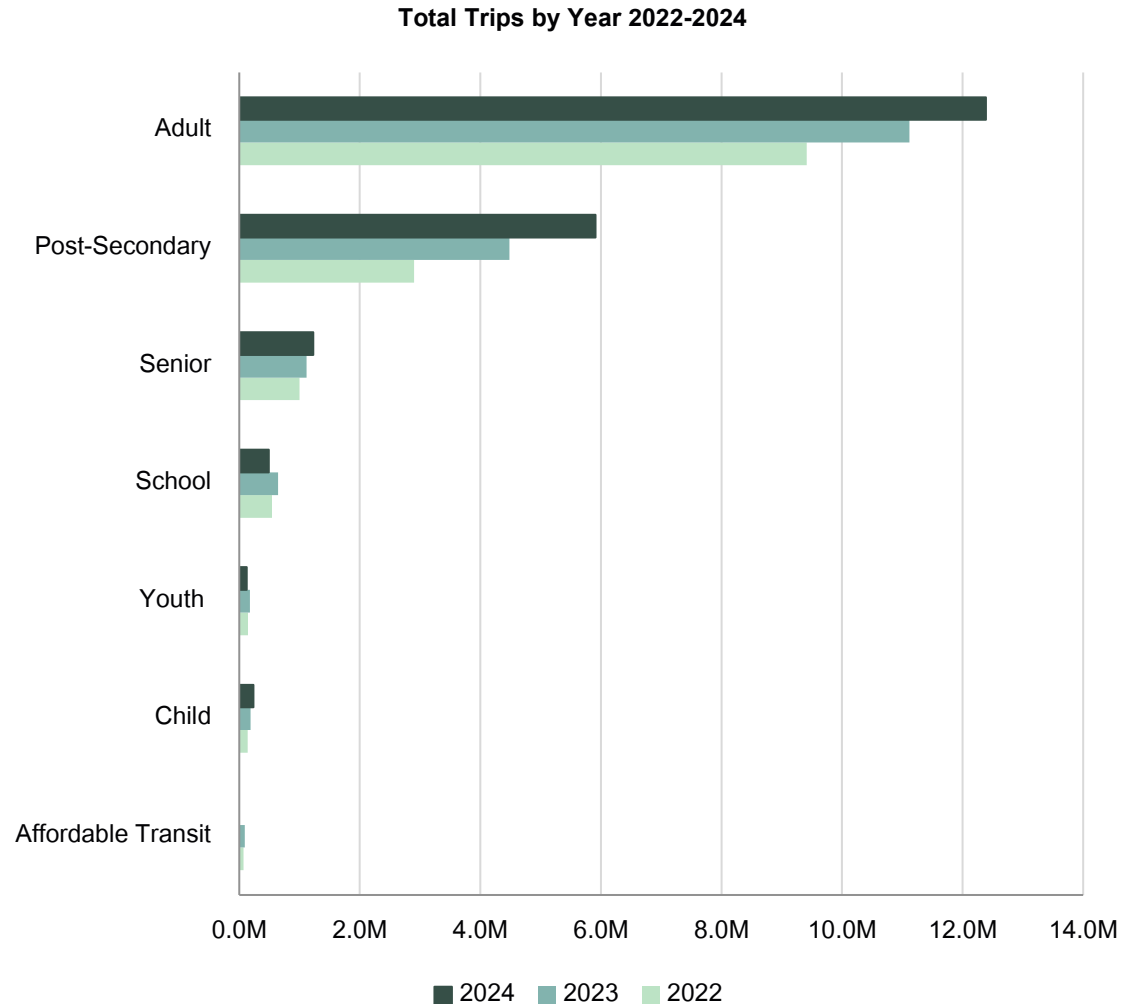
As the Affordable Transit program was switched to Fare Assist in 2024, there is no ridership data.

Youth riders took about 20k less trips and School riders took 90k less between 2022 and 2024. These declines are not likely tied to pricing, indicating that there are other barriers for these groups. Reasons for less youth trips could include a shift to more virtual or remote activities, staggered schedules or switching to other modes of transit.

On the other side, Senior riders took 231k more trips, an increase of around 23%. This is to be expected with a growing senior population.

The fare category with the sharpest increase was Post-Secondary, with approximately a 104% increase from 2.9 million to 5.9 million trips across three years.

Nationally, CUTA noted a slight overall decline in student trips from 2023 to 2024, after the introduction of the international student cap.



Appendix G: Further Transit Analysis

Monthly transit costs peaked in October 2023

Between 2022 and 2024, the City recovered an average of 40% of costs through fares

Cost recovery, sometimes also referred to as farebox recovery, is a measure of how much money is recovered through user fees to offset expenses. In this case, the user fees are the fares paid by HSR users.

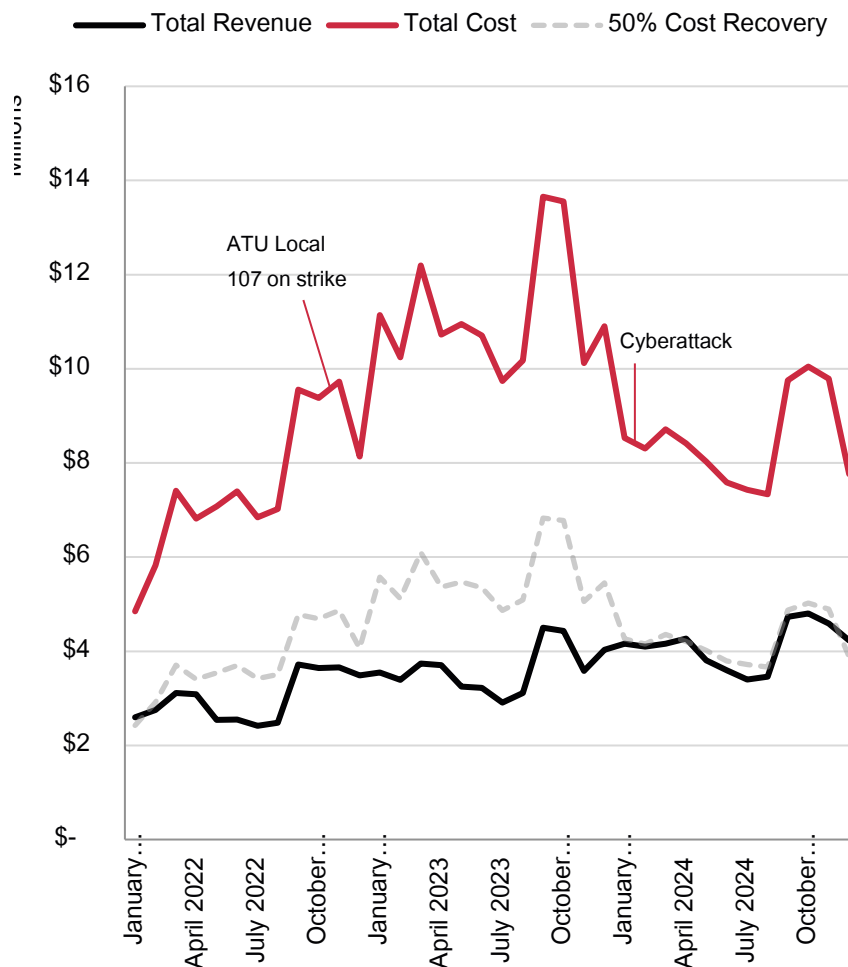
While the City has not published targets for the last few years the grey dotted line represents a 50% cost recovery ratio, which was the long-term goal set out in the 10 Year Local Transit Strategy. For 2026, the City established a ratio of 40%.

Across peer municipalities, transit is not designed to achieve cost recovery, rather it is funded as a public good. Notable exceptions exist internationally where transit is structured around alternative revenue models. For example, Amtrak in the U.S. generates revenue through tourism and long-distance travel markets, while Hong Kong's MTR transit operations generate revenue for development.

For HSR and peers, a portion of operating costs are intentionally subsidized to keep fares affordable for different equity groups. These subsidies also support broader mobility and service coverage objectives.

The gap reached \$53m in 2022 and peaked at \$90m in 2023, after the Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU) Local 107 strike. Costs declined to \$52m in 2024.

Revenue and Cost 2022-2024



Appendix G: Further Transit Analysis

Both cost and revenue per trip have been decreasing over time

As ridership is recovering after the pandemic, cost (or subsidy) per trip is continuing to fall

Transit costs are partially offset by fare revenues, with the remaining costs subsidized by the City to support service delivery, staffing, fleet operations and maintenance.

The average cost and revenue per trip is calculated by dividing total operating costs (or revenues) for a given year by regular service trips for that year.

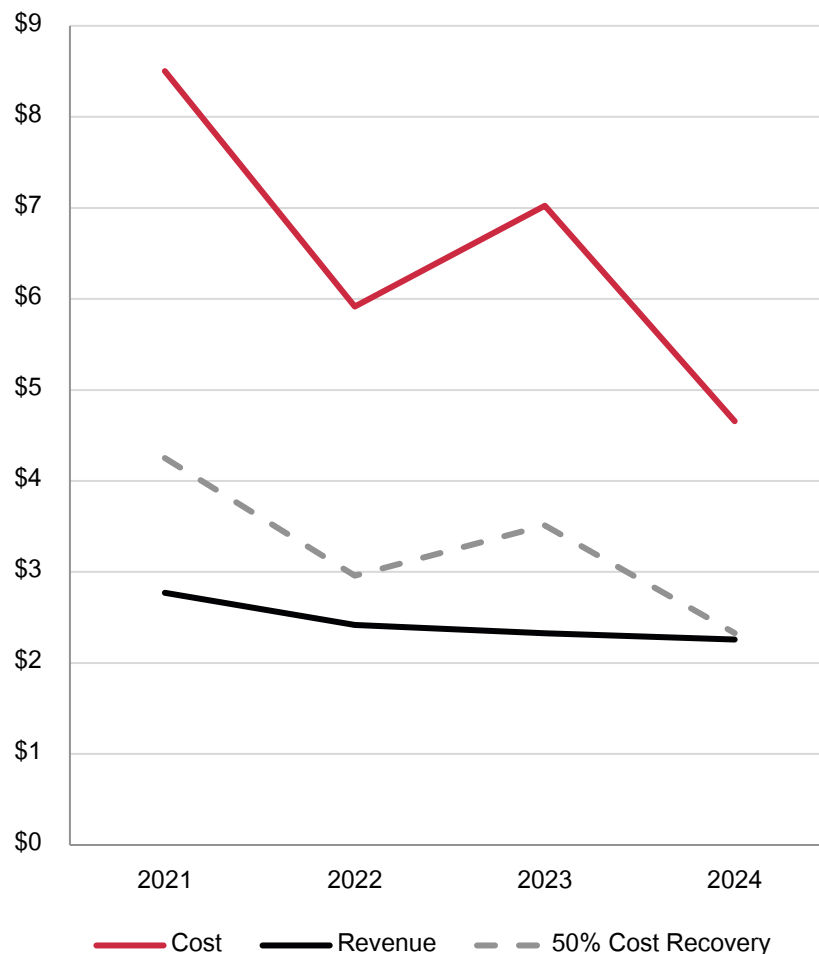
This subsidy is between all fare types, including those that are revenue generating (Adult, Employer Commuter), partially subsidized (Senior, Youth) and fully subsidized (Child, Golden Age).

At the height of COVID-19 in 2021, the average subsidy the City was providing per trip was at a high of \$8.50. Revenue peaked at \$2.77, but the overall gap between cost and revenue was the largest out of the four years.

In 2024, both cost and revenue hit a low of \$4.66 and \$2.26 respectively, per trip.

The decrease in both revenue and cost suggests that access to transit is improving across fare types. The City is recouping more from user fees which offsets costs. The decrease in revenue shows that more trips are being taken by groups that are intentionally priced below cost recovery.

Cost vs Revenue Average per Trip 2021-2024



Appendix G: Further Transit Analysis

Adult and Post-Secondary fares bring in the most revenue for the City

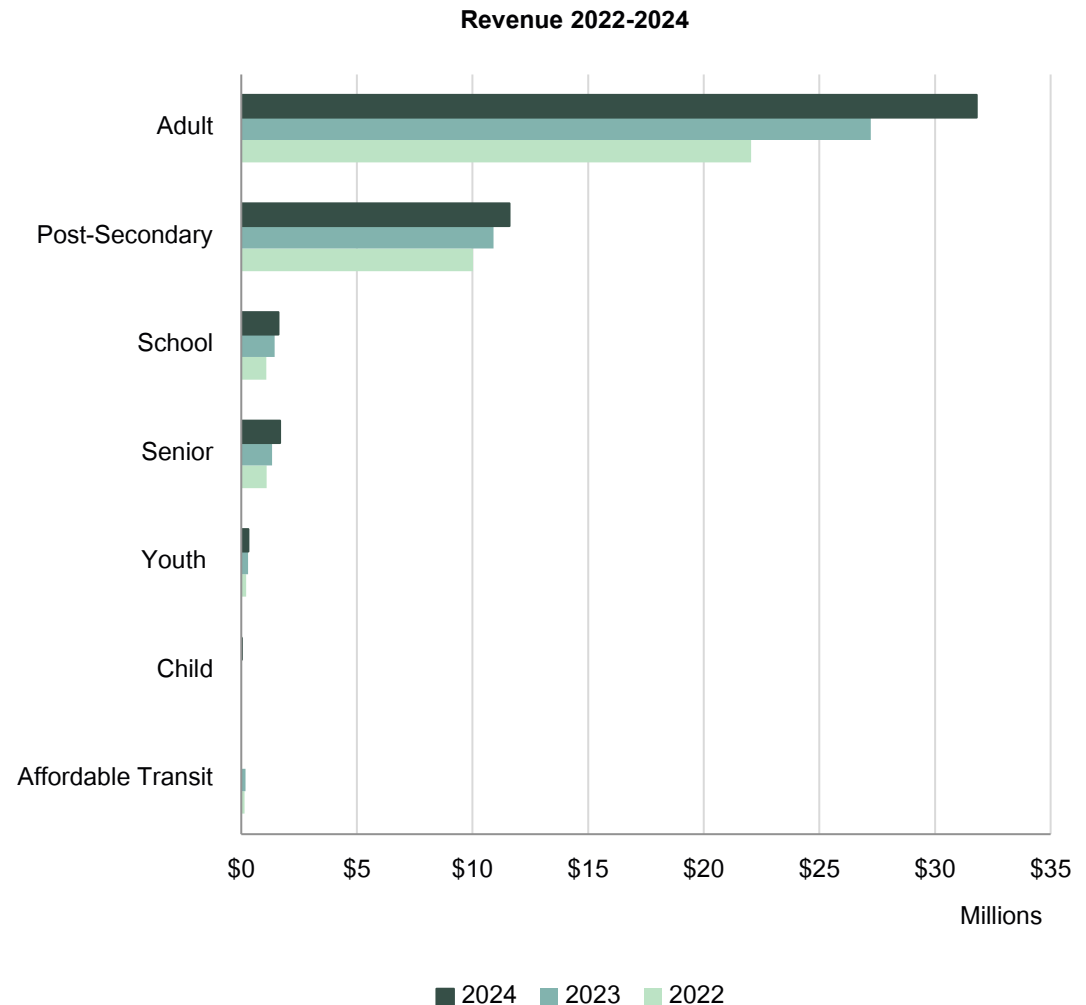
Broken down into fare types, the revenue distribution is what we would expect

The dollar amount to the right of each category represents the total user fee revenue generated from 2022-2024, in millions.

Each category has seen a large jump from 2022-2024, with the largest being youth at 62%, Senior at 52%, School at 49%, Child at 45% and Adult at 44%.

Post-secondary passes are a consistent stream of revenue, as riders in this category will pay a fixed pass price up front with tuition, regardless of how often they will be using the service. For example, the HSR has an agreement in place with both the McMaster Student Union (MSU) and Graduate Student Association (GSA) until August 2026.

Higher revenue fares help to offset the intentional under-recovery for Child, Youth and Senior fares to support the City's broader objectives and preserve affordability.

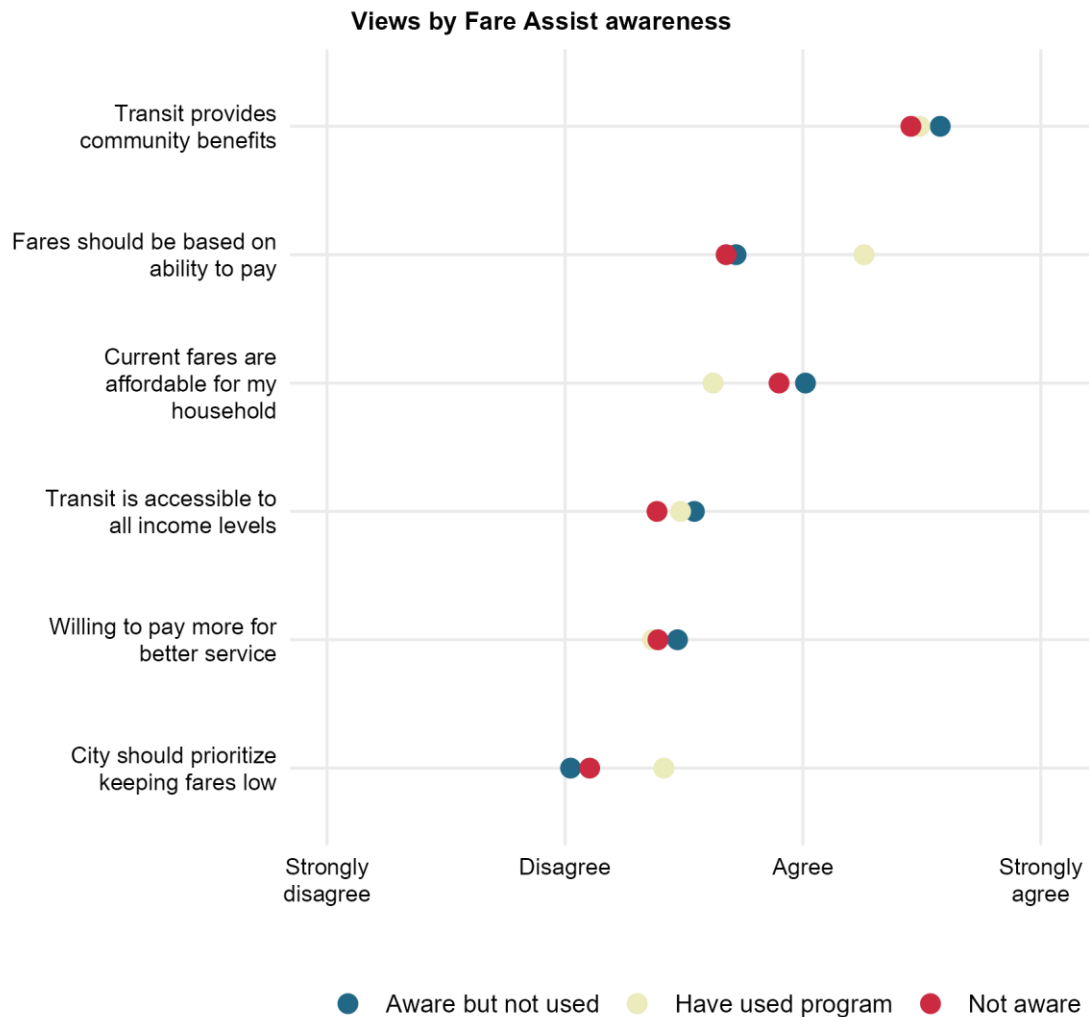


Appendix H: Additional Transit Survey Insights

Fare Assist users are more likely to say fares should be based on ability to pay

Those who have used Fare Assist show higher agreement that fares should be based on ability to pay and that the City should prioritize lower fares

Fare Assist users are also less likely to agree that current fares are affordable for their households.

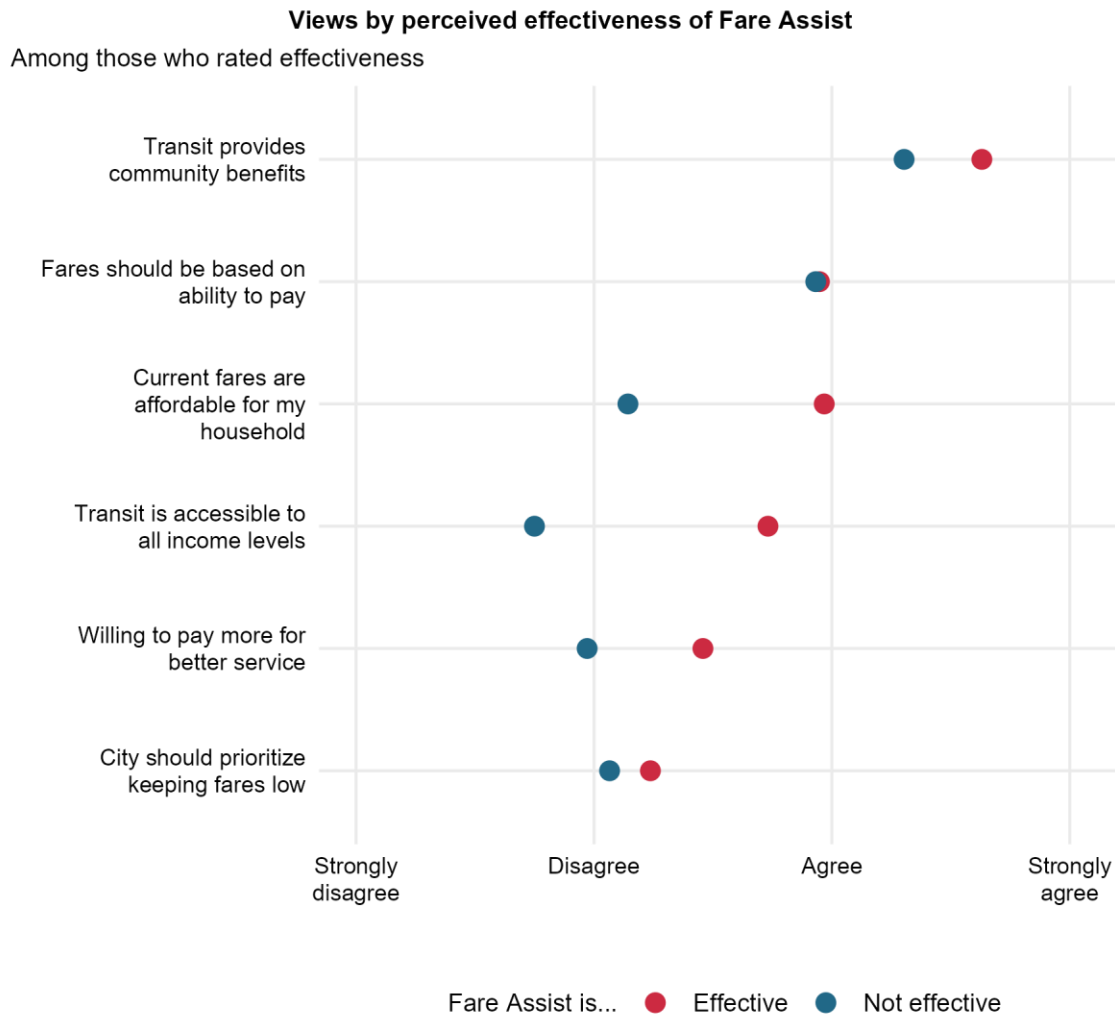


Appendix H: Additional Transit Survey Insights

Perceptions of Fare Assist effectiveness correlate with accessibility views

Those who view Fare Assist as effective are more likely to see transit as accessible overall

They are also more likely to agree that current fares are affordable for their household.



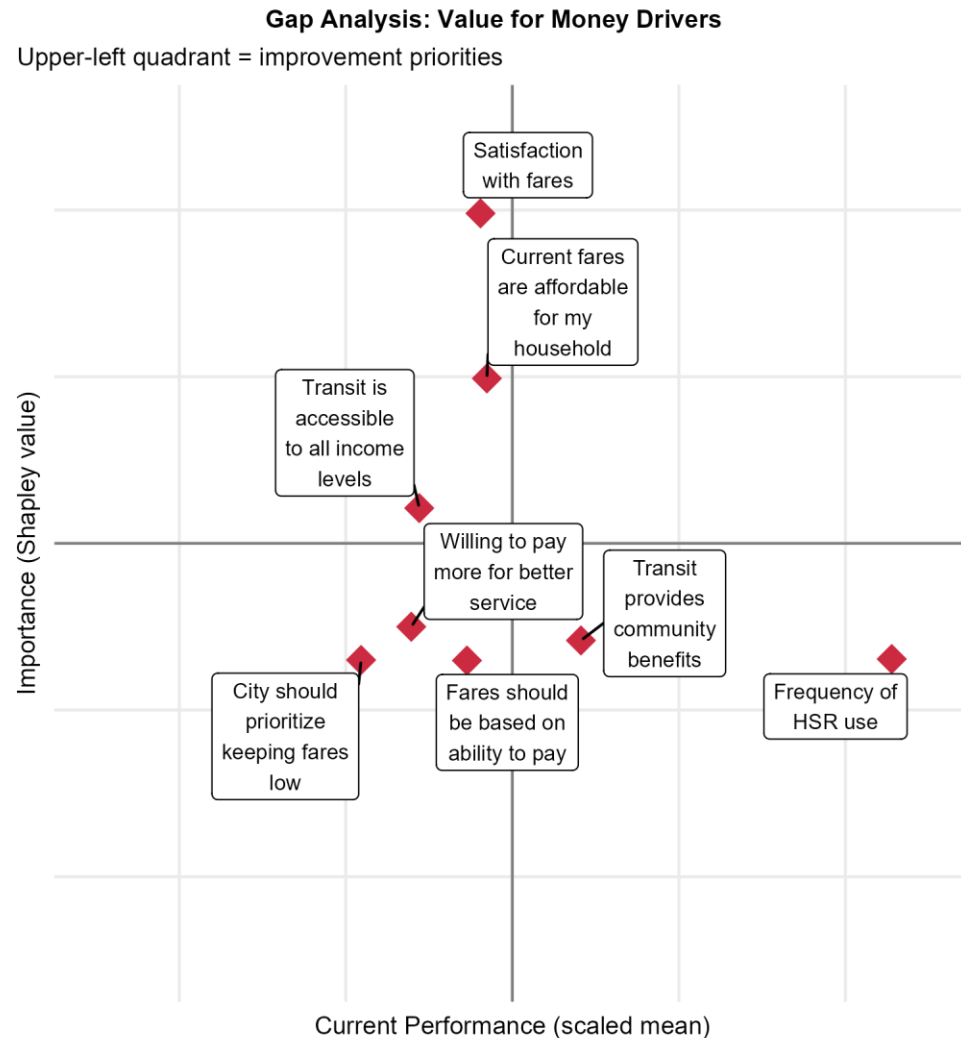
Appendix H: Additional Transit Survey Insights

Fare satisfaction dominates perceptions of value for money

Shapley value analysis reveals that satisfaction with fares accounts for almost half of explained variance in value ratings

This is more concentrated than recreation's more distributed drivers.

Current fare affordability (30%) and perceived accessibility (16%) follow. Principle-based statements (ability-to-pay, keeping fares low) show minimal direct influence.



Appendix H: Additional Transit Survey Insights

Transit segments differ sharply on affordability and service investment

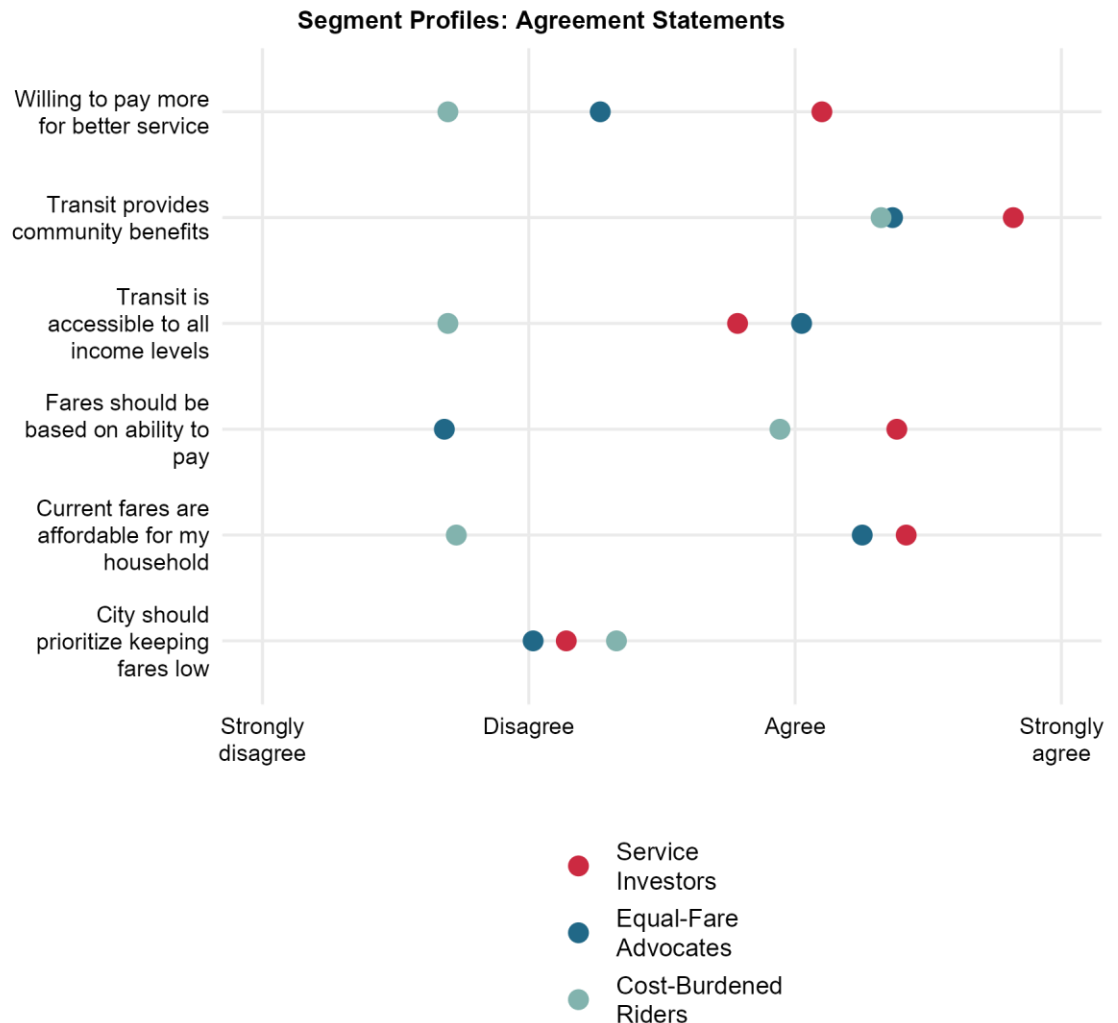
Transit segments show cleaner separation than recreation

Higher silhouette scores indicate more distinct attitude groupings, making the three-segment solution particularly meaningful for transit.

The three segments are clearly distinguishable. The cluster visualization shows less overlap than recreation, suggesting transit attitudes form more coherent groupings.

- ▶ **Service Investors** (n=199, 41%): Find fares affordable (mean 3.42), support ability-to-pay (3.38), highest willingness to pay for better service (3.10). Value rating: 3.20. Mixed income composition.
- ▶ **Equal-Fare Advocates** (n=123, 26%): Find fares affordable (3.25) but strongly oppose ability-to-pay pricing (1.68). Lowest support for keeping fares low (2.02). Value rating: 3.12. Highest income segment (51% earn \$100K+).
- ▶ **Cost-Burdened Riders** (n=158, 33%): Find fares unaffordable (1.73), perceive low accessibility (1.70), support ability-to-pay (2.94). Lowest value rating (2.00) and fare satisfaction (1.95). Predominantly lower-income (73% earn under \$70K).

Service Investors and Cost-Burdened Riders are both more likely to ride HSR daily or weekly compared to Equal-Fare Advocates.



Appendix H: Additional Transit Survey Insights

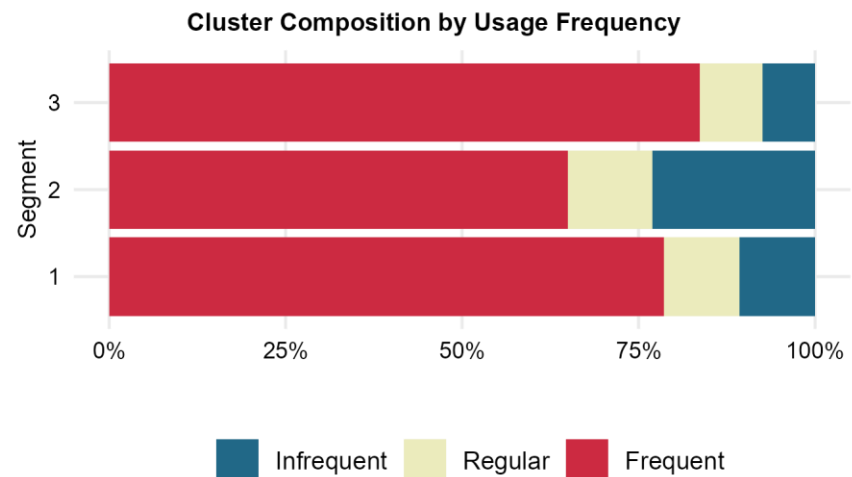
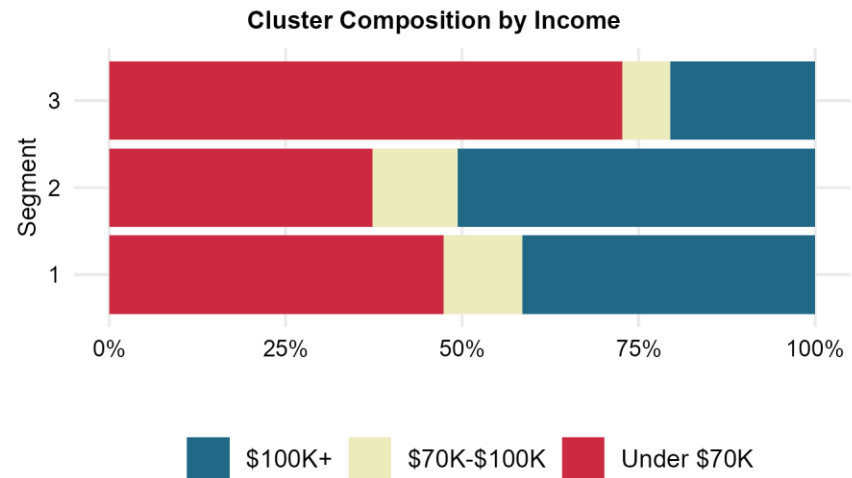
Income composition differs dramatically across segments

However, usage frequency is similar across segments

Unlike income, usage patterns do not differentiate segments, indicating that differences reflect economic and attitudinal positions rather than how often people ride.

Cost-Burdened Riders are overwhelmingly lower-income (73%), while Equal-Fare Advocates are majority higher-income (51%).

The sharp income-segment correlation confirms that transit attitudes are strongly shaped by economic circumstances.

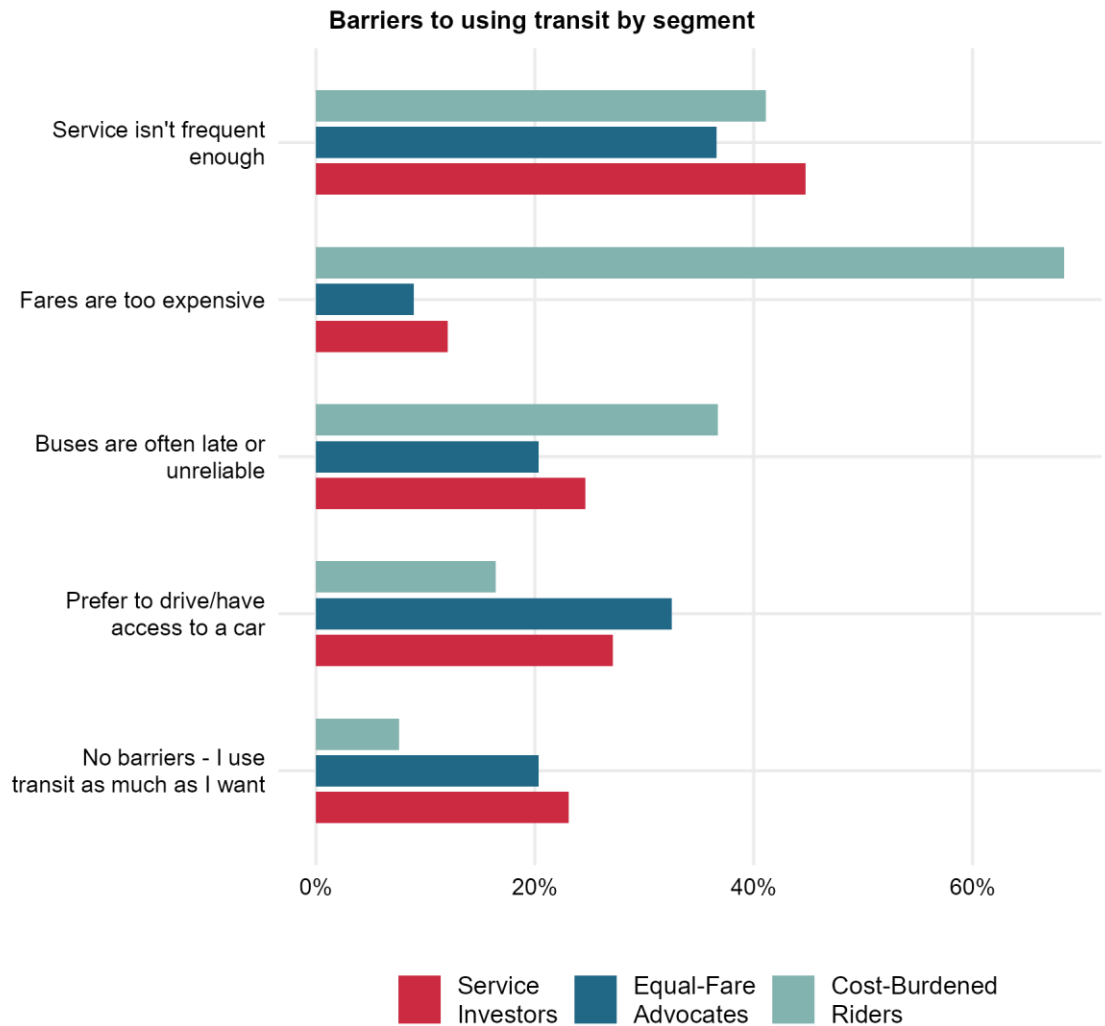


Appendix H: Additional Transit Survey Insights

Cost-Burdened Riders report fare barriers at dramatically higher rates

This segment cites fares as a barrier at more than five times the rate of other segments

Confirming that their self-identified affordability concerns translate into actual usage barriers.

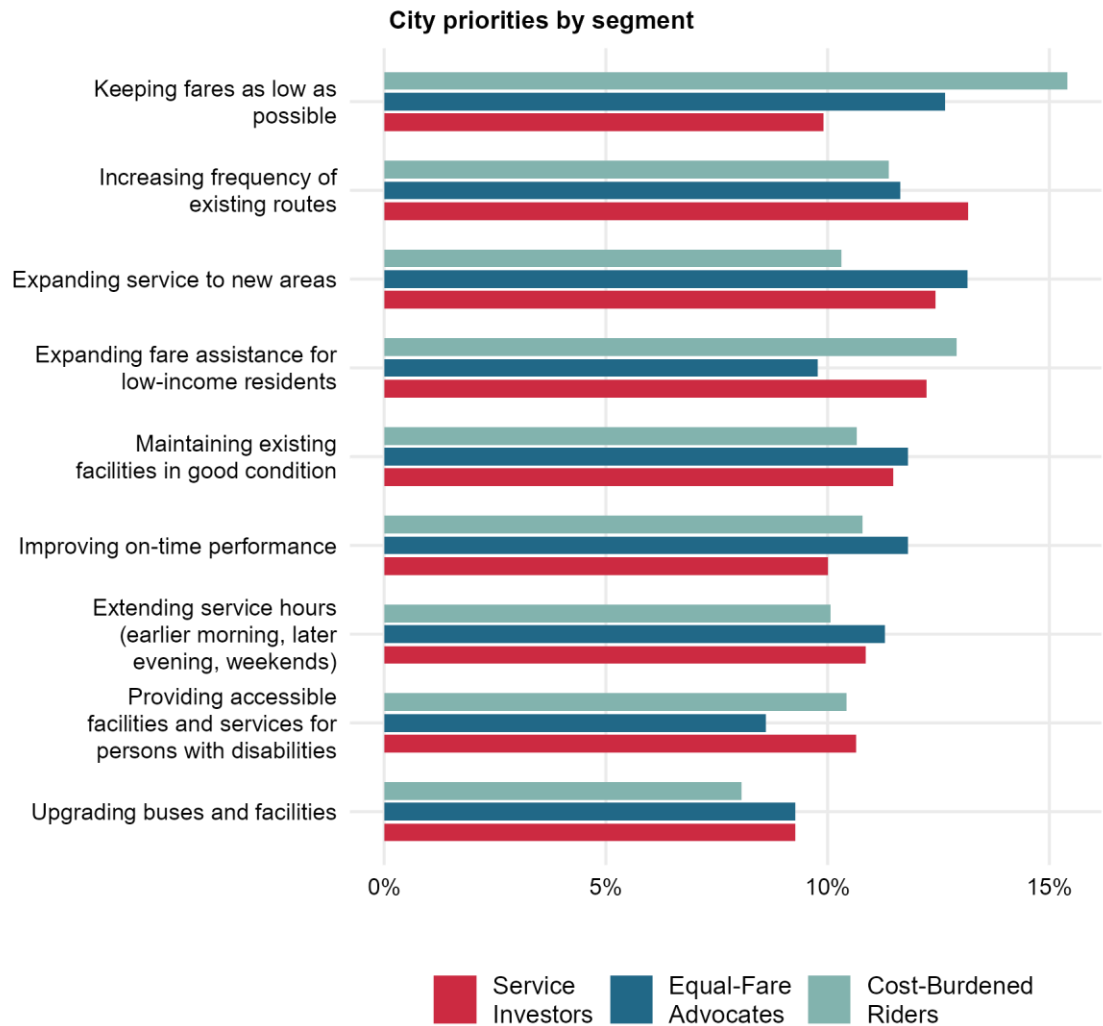


Appendix H: Additional Transit Survey Insights

Priority rankings reflect segment values

Cost-Burdened Riders prioritize keeping fares low and expanding assistance

Service Investors prioritize frequency and coverage, while Equal-Fare Advocates prioritize service improvements over affordability.



B L A C K L I N E C O N S U L T I N G