Transit Rides Per Capita

Proposed Long-Term Target: Increase transit ridership to 62 rides per capita

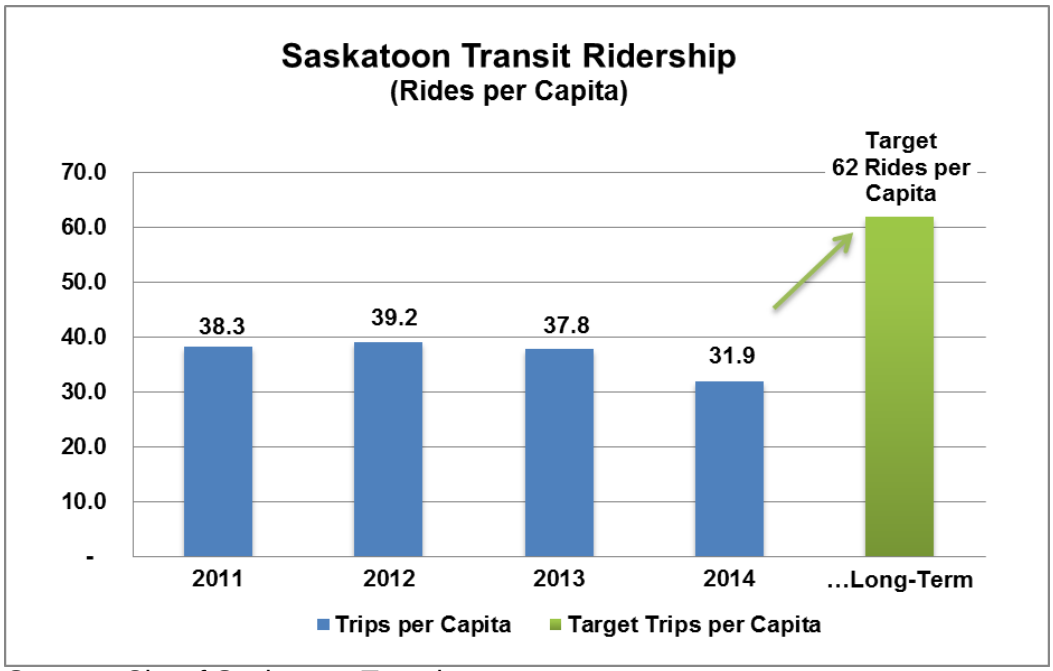
Description: The target measures our success in making our transit system a more efficient option for people to move around in Saskatoon. Achieving this target means that more people are using transit for their travel needs, thereby reducing road congestion. Higher transit use provides the movement of more people rather than more cars, particularly along key corridors.

Bus ridership will be measured using electronic pass swipes which includes transfers.

The transit target is consistent with the transit rides per capita target identified in the "*Growing Forward! Shaping Saskatoon"* strategy for a population in 30 to 40 years that is twice the size of Saskatoon's current population.

How are we doing?

In 2011, Saskatoon Transit introduced electronic bus passes. In 2013, based on electronic pass swipes, total bus ridership was 9.4 million or 37.8 rides per capita. Approximately one quarter of Saskatoon's ridership is transfers. In 2014, bus ridership was 8.2 million rides or 31.9 rides per capita.

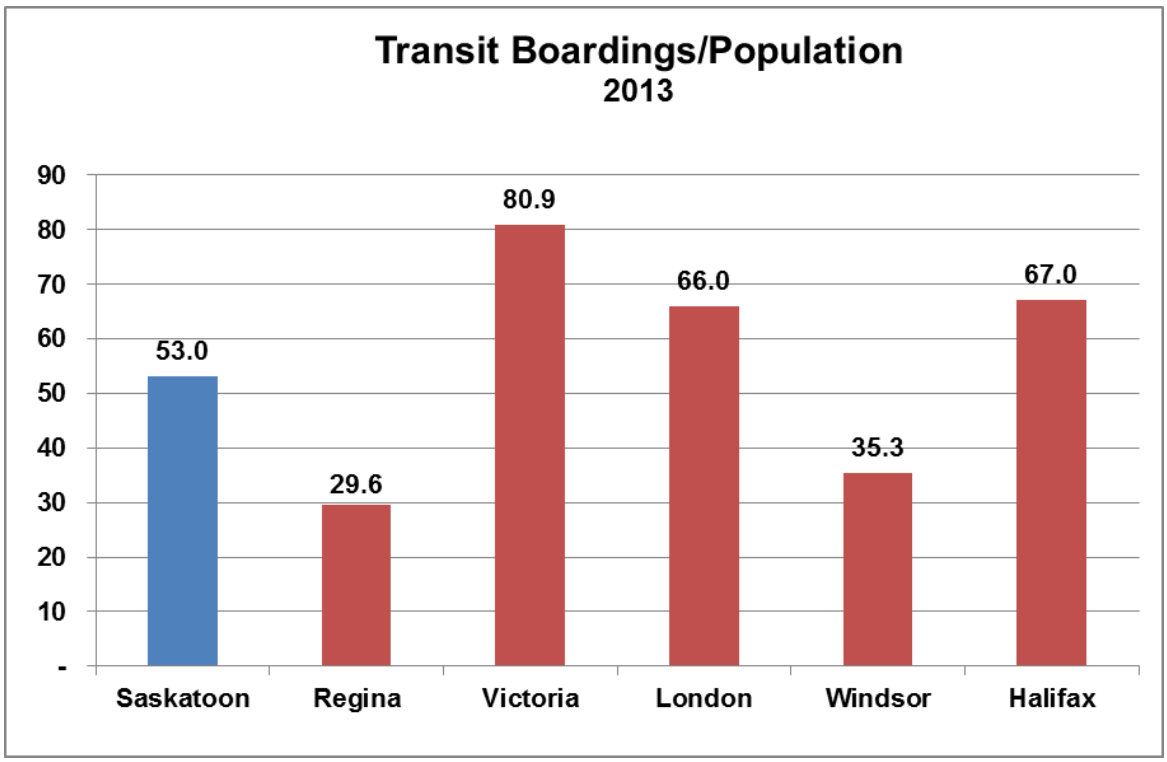


Source: City of Saskatoon Transit

How are other cities doing?

Saskatoon's transit ridership is benchmarked to cities of similar size and with similar transit systems. Based on Canadian Urban Transit Association (CUTA) data, Saskatoon has higher per capita bus ridership than Regina and has mid-range ridership relative to other medium-sized cities with similar transit systems. Saskatoon's U-Pass has resulted in a higher number of students taking transit.

Cities use different methods of defining and estimating bus ridership which makes direct comparisons challenging. Bus ridership numbers are influenced by number of transfers required to get to a destination and allowable transfer times. Transit ridership recorded by electronic swipes is lower than the calculated ridership. Populations may also be defined and estimated differently (e.g. Municipal Population versus Service Area Population).



Source: CUTA Canadian Transit Fact Book – 2013 Operating Data

Notes: The numbers in the graph include each municipality's reported "Boardings" which include transfers and "Municipal Population". Numbers would be different if "Service Area Population" were used. Saskatoon's data provided to CUTA is an "estimated calculation" which is consistent with previous years and is likely higher than actual numbers, although may be more comparable to some other cities. Regina's number is based on electronic swipes. If electronic swipes were used, Saskatoon's number would be 37.8.

What do we need to do to achieve this target?

To significantly increase ridership, transit needs to be more convenient and reliable. Increased operating and capital investments will be needed to make transit a reliable and convenient transportation alternative. In addition to making improvements in scheduling, routing and service hours, investing in the following five key areas will attract new ridership through decreasing travel time and improving the transit experience:

1. Increase bus frequency:
    - Add more direct routes (16 current limited stop express service routes) to high congestion and high ridership areas.
    - Increase bus frequency on regular routes and offer new routes as the city grows.

2. Improve reliability and on-time performance:
    - Implement Intelligent Transit System (ITS) providing improved efficiency through more detailed route analysis. ITS will allow fleet resources to be appropriately focused on problematic areas so that schedules are more closely adhered to, ultimately increasing the reliability of the service.
    - Decrease average fleet age from 14 years to 9 years through the purchase of new buses. This will reduce downtime due to major maintenance requirements.
    - Decrease the bus/mechanic ratio from 15:1 to approximately 7:1 through hiring more mechanics.

3. Enhance comfort:
    - Provide cleaner buses and shelters to offer a more comfortable, enjoyable ride.
    - Convert high volume shelters to heated shelters.
    - Install shelters in more locations.

4. Improve customer service:
    - Provide more customer focused training to build customer-centered service skills.
    - Increase the quantity and quality of the information that customers receive. By dedicating staff to this area, Transit will be able to communicate up-to-date information through multiple communication channels (Transit's website, social media, and public service announcements).

5. Implement Bus Rapid Transit (BRT)
    - Develop a Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) plan to implement rapid transit corridors throughout Saskatoon, increasing frequency, reliability and commuting options.

What are the benefits of achieving the target?

- Fewer private vehicles on the road results in lower greenhouse gas emissions, a decrease in congestion, and a healthier environment.
- An easier commute means a higher quality of life for Saskatoon citizens.

What are the risks?

- The greatest barriers to encouraging new ridership are time, convenience and reliability. As congestion increases, the ability to commute by personal vehicle will become more difficult and public transportation will become a more attractive option. With funding allocations going to decrease congestion, Saskatoon Transit's current services will be a less attractive option than driving.
- A primary risk to achieving this target is insufficient funding invested to make transit a more attractive transportation option. Higher frequencies, newer buses and a more comfortable commute require increases in both capital and operating budgets.