

# COVID-19 and public transit ridership: meeting customer needs now and beyond the pandemic

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Public transit ridership has been severely impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic across Canada, with numerous patrons working and studying from home, switching for transportation modes that allow greater physical distancing, or avoiding travelling altogether. We use the findings of public surveys conducted among transit riders in Edmonton in June-July 2020, and in Metro Vancouver in December 2020 to gain insights into patron's experience of using transit before and during the COVID-19 pandemic, their perceptions of safety, as well as actions in response to challenges of public transit use in the past.

Based on the analysis of the Edmonton survey, we can state that a person better informed about the measures Edmonton Transit Service (ETS) is taking to ensure the health and safety of its riders is more likely to feel safe using public transit. Similarly, more than half of surveyed riders reported that social distancing measures and a requirement to wear a mask increased their feeling of safety while using public transit in Metro Vancouver. Given that, we recommend that transit agencies continue exercising a dedicated effort to effectively communicate their ongoing initiatives to ensure and increase the health and safety of all users to retain and regain ridership.

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