

Transit Deserts & Hulchanski's Three Cities

In December (2010), the University of Toronto Cities Centre released an update to their influential 2007 “Three Cities within Toronto” report. This work identifies the growing income polarization and subsequent segregation within the City of Toronto while also describing the changing economic dynamics of the City over time (1970–2005).

The *Three Cities* report identifies three geographically distinct ‘cities’ within the City of Toronto. In City 1, incomes have increased 20% or more since 1970. In City 2, incomes have increased or decreased less than 20% since 1970. Finally, in City 3, income *decreased* 20% or more since 1970 (Hulchanski 2010, 7).

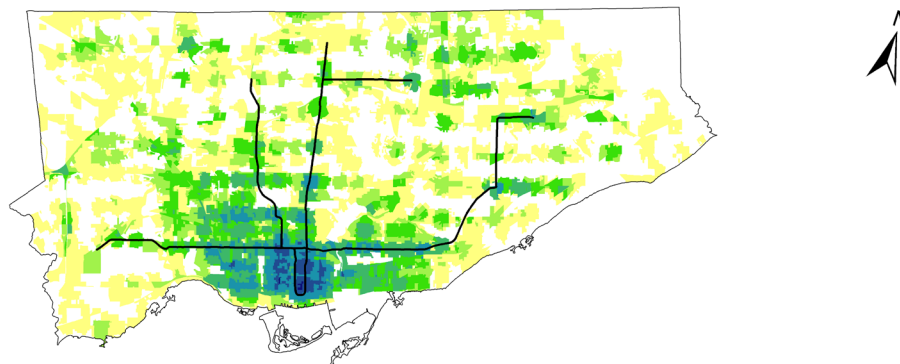
In the updated report, Professor David Hulchanski advocates light-rail for low-income households as a potential policy intervention. This proposal is in line with transit research currently underway at the Martin Prosperity Institute that finds that the city’s inner suburbs are underserved by the transit system.

The highest incomes have the greatest connectivity

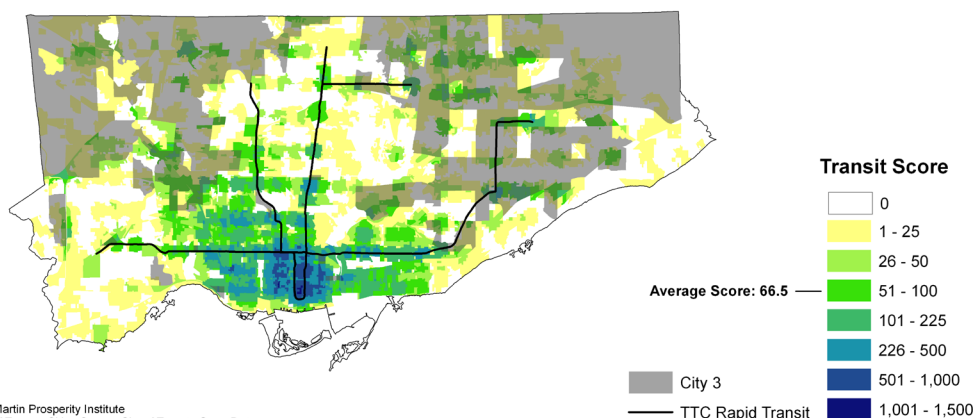
Toronto’s transit deserts & the three cities

Exhibit 1

Map 1: Toronto's Transit Deserts



Map 2: Toronto's Transit Deserts with City 3 Overlay



Map by Zara Matheson, Martin Prosperity Institute
Data Source: University of Toronto Cities Centre, City of Toronto Open Data

Map 1 illustrates the connectivity of the City of Toronto using a transit score developed by the Martin Prosperity Institute. The score uses data from the Toronto Transit Commission and combines the number of stops within 500m of the centroid of a Census block and how often a bus, subway, or streetcar stops there in a specific hour. In terms of relative weighting, subway stops are weighted by 1, streetcars by 0.5, and bus stops by 0.25. On a scale of 0-1,500, the average transit score for the entire City is 66.5. The downtown core is 15 times more connected than the city average, as transit scores are highest where more streetcars and subways are found and lowest towards the outer edge of the city that are only served by buses.

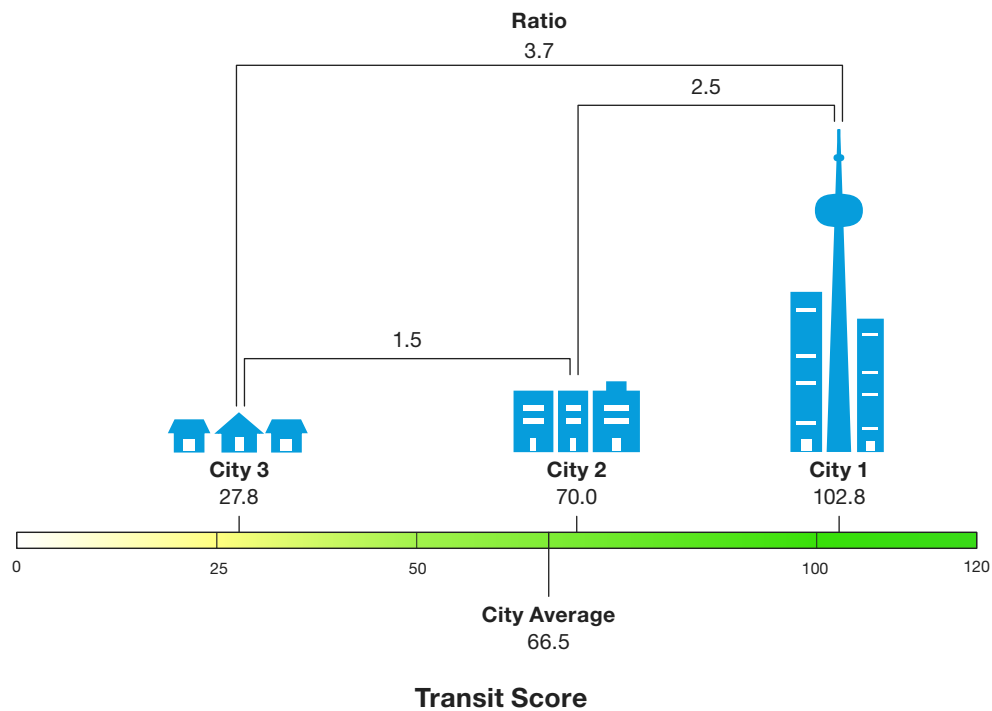
Map 2 overlays the Toronto Transit Desert map with City 3, the poorest and most disadvantaged of the three cities. The overlay demonstrates the connection between household income and transit connectivity in the City of Toronto; namely, that the most economically disadvantaged of the Three Cities—City 3—is the most under-served in Toronto.

City 1 is three times as connected as City 3

In its independent analysis of transit access in Toronto, the MPI finds that the “transit gap” in Toronto’s inner suburbs is even more pronounced than the income differentials described in the *Three Cities* report. The highest household incomes (City 1, dark blue transit score) have the greatest connectivity. The lowest household incomes (City 3) have the poorest connectivity.

City 1 is 3.1 times as connected as City 3

Exhibit 2



Source: Martin Prosperity Institute, 2011
Design & Illustration by: Michelle Hoggood

We also calculated the average transit scores for each of the Three Cities to see where they fell on the transit score spectrum (range 0–1500) and against the city average of 66.5 (**Exhibit 2**). City 1 has an average transit score of 102.9, City 2 has an average score of 70, and City 3 has an average score of 27.8.

Interestingly, transit service in City 1 is almost four times (4x) better than in City 3. Further, the gap in transit service between City 1 and City 3 (3.7 ratio) is *larger* than the gap in incomes between City 1 and City 3 (3.3 ratio). The transit gap between City 1 and 2 is about 1.5 (ratio) and the transit gap between City 2 and 3 is about 2.5 (ratio).

Hulchanski's updated report incorporates analysis of the transit challenges faced by City 3 and identifies that City 3 has only 19 subway stops nearby, which is less than half of the 40 stops near City 1. Residents of Toronto's inner suburbs are not simply less advantaged in terms of income changes over time. They also have inferior access to subways and streetcars. Attempts to mitigate Toronto's growing income polarization are well-targeted to transit.

Future

The Martin Prosperity Institute is currently engaged in a large-scale research project that assesses the connectivity of major North American cities against their respective geographies of work. This research involves transit scores and maps and uses the Institute's occupational typology (Creative, service, and working classes) by census tract dominance over time and builds from research published during our *Mayoral Election Series*.

The Martin Prosperity Institute at the University of Toronto's Rotman School of Management is the world's leading think-tank on the role of sub-national factors—location, place and city-regions—in global economic prosperity. Led by Director Richard Florida, we take an integrated view of prosperity, looking beyond economic measures to include the importance of quality of place and the development of people's creative potential.