

Bridging the Gap: Addressing the Last Mile Mobility Problem for Immigrant Populations in Transit Planning and Urban Governance

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Abstract

Immigrants typically favour cities that have high levels of transit accessibility and affordable housing. In recent years, municipalities surrounding Toronto have experienced a rise in immigrant settlement (Government of Ontario, 2022). However, many of these municipalities contain suburbs which have moderate to lower levels to transit accessibility, creating barriers for immigrants from connecting to employment, education, and health networks. Transit infrastructure within the GTA has been reported to be inefficient and inconvenient, discouraging usage and creating challenges for immigrant mobility (Bista et al., 2021). Municipalities, with financial support from provincial governments and partnerships with transit agencies, are responsible for creating, improving, and implementing transit infrastructure. While various studies exist on measures to improve infrastructure to increase connectivity, and accessibility, intergovernmental relations and poor policy initiatives hinder any progress for improvements. This paper seeks to explore the governance issues such as funding and intergovernmental collaboration, and examines how municipalities can overcome these barriers to improve transit infrastructure for immigrant populations. The paper aims to analyze transit projects and planning documents from cities in the GTA, such as Markham, Mississauga, Vaughan, Pickering, and Brampton, between the years 1990 and 2025, to examine its impact on transit infrastructure today. The paper's objective is to provide guidelines for municipalities to make educated, and informed policy decisions pertaining to public transit planning.

Biography

Rabbab Akhtar is a Master's student in the Public Policy and Administration program at Toronto Metropolitan University. She completed her BA in Political Science, specialization in Public Law and Judicial Studies, from McMaster University in 2023. Her research interests are about social and public infrastructure and its relation to immigrant integration. Rabbab aims to explore how employment, housing, and civic infrastructures impact immigrant experiences and settlement quality. Additionally, she is interested in the challenges municipalities face in providing effective infrastructure and strategies for involving immigrant voices in urban planning initiatives.