

Routes to Homes: Transit and Social Skills Support Intervention for Homeless Youth

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Introduction

Research conducted by the Old Strathcona Mapping and Planning Committee

- Homeless youth depend on public transit to access services, seek employment, and follow court orders.
 - Use the transit system without payment
 - Cost of ticketing and court appearances is \$1200
 - Limited ability to pay fares or fines

Mixed Methods

Research Questions What is the impact of public transportation assistance (i.e., bus tickets; bus passes) and a pilot–support intervention on homeless youth: (a) interactions with transit authorities, (b) safety (c) exclusion, and (e) access to support, supportive services, and housing?

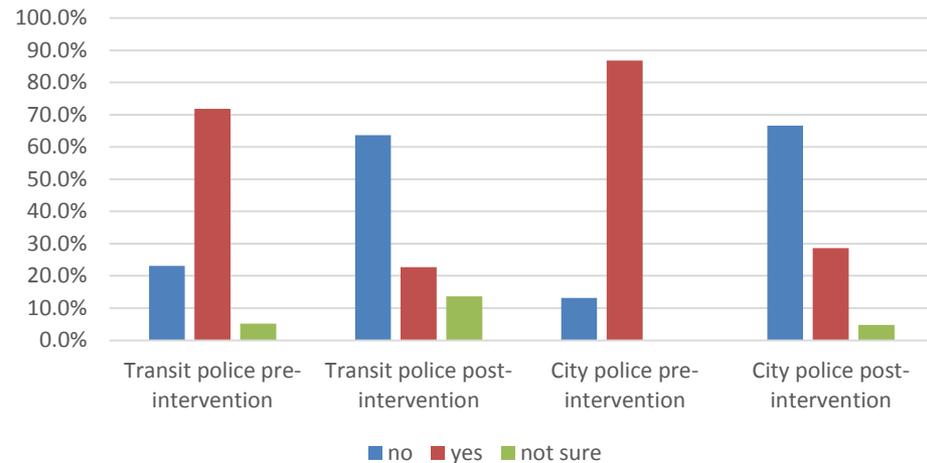
40 Homeless youth randomly assigned to receive either: 1) a monthly bus pass, or 2) 30 bus tickets every 2 weeks for 3 months (January - March 2013).

Results

Overwhelmingly positive for these youth.

- fewer encounters (self-reported) with transit police ($p=.002$) and city police ($p>.001$) when they had access to monthly transit passes and tickets than before.
- made them “feel normal”,
- increased personal safety in some situations, and
- enabled them to access services and supports beyond their normal walking range.

Figure 3: Encounters with Transit and City Police



“It was the best feeling in the world, like liberation, being able to go where you can or need to go. It got me to my school. I did temporary jobs, it got me to my workplace in the morning. It is like the difference between being normal and homeless.”

Conclusions

- Long-standing social exclusion
 - Youth thought they were on the streets because they did not fit in and conversely that they do not fit in because they are on the streets.
- Transportation is route to:
 - Productive Activities, Employment & Housing changes
 - Hope and Self Efficacy

“Streetkids didn’t learn the lessons at home that they needed to learn, so they have to learn them on the streets. Streets are a terrible place to learn these things. You get into these institutional rings that keep you in these institutional traps because you can’t find hope. If you are homeless, you get into drugs and being a slut because you have no choice. You are young and you get taken advantage of. Trying to save \$90 for a bus pass is hard so to hop transit and get a fine--easy. Where are we going to get \$250? It’s a lot easier to keep going down than to dig yourself out. I don’t know why you had to do a study to find out that giving them a bus pass will give them hope.” Young woman.