

# Mobility Monitor

Issue #16

JULY 2007

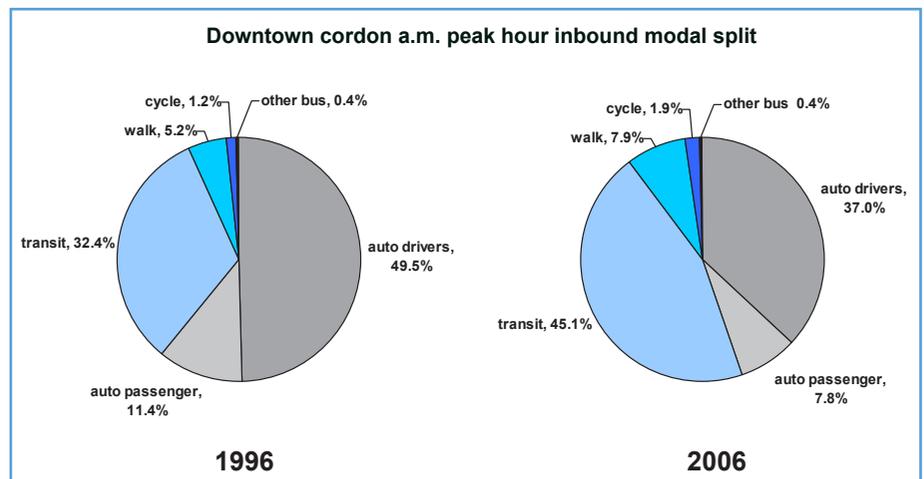
## VEHICLES AND PEOPLE ENTERING THE DOWNTOWN IN THE MORNING PEAK HOUR

The downtown is the most important travel destination in the city, with more than 20% of the city's employment in the Central Business District. The map below shows the downtown cordon.



### KEY FINDING

***As of 2006, transit has surpassed auto driver as the mode of choice for people entering the downtown during the morning peak hour.***

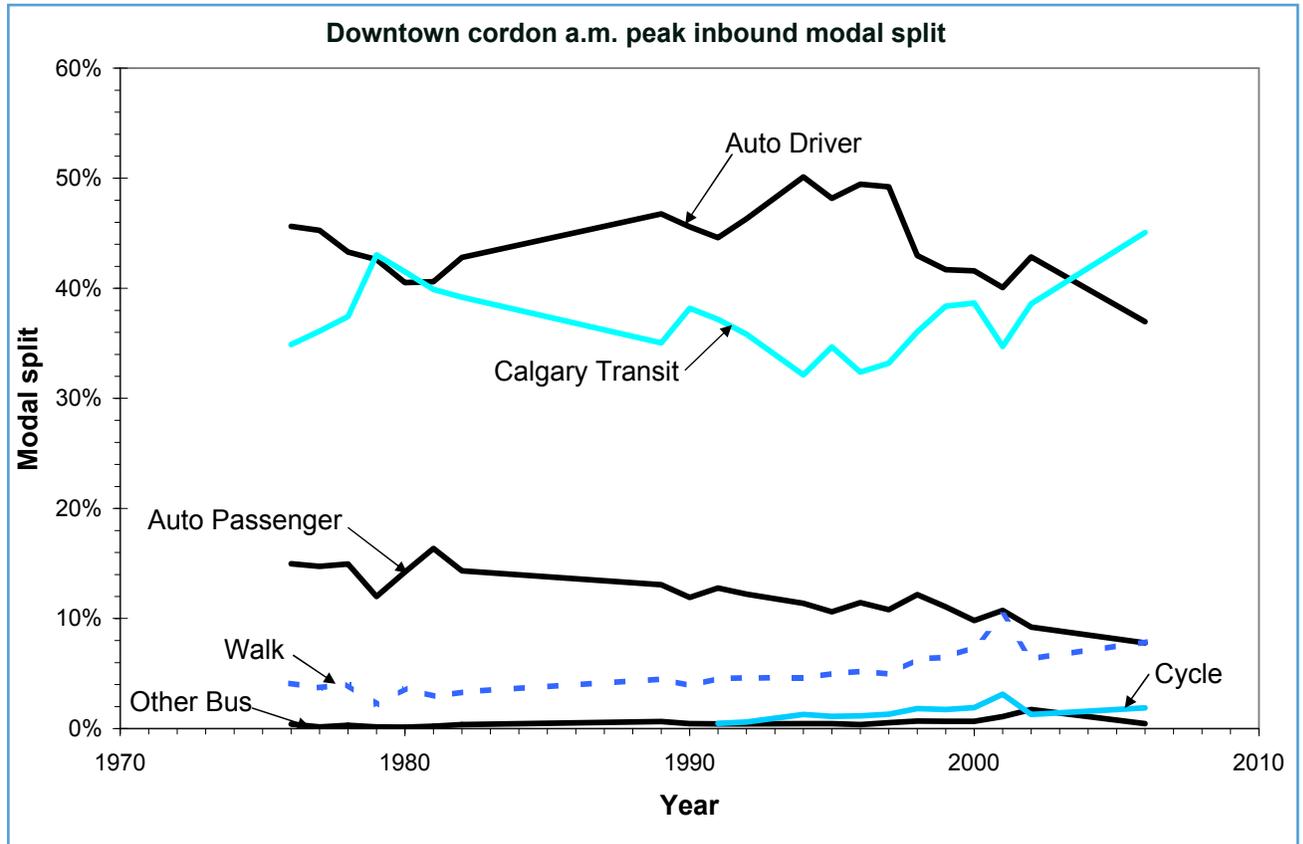


- Between 1996 and 2006 the share of auto drivers dropped from 49.5% to 37.0%, while the share of transit increased from 32.4% to 45.1%.
- Between 1996 and 2006 the share of auto drivers plus auto passengers dropped from 60.9% to 44.8%.
- Both walking and cycling have become more important components of travel into the downtown.

The Mobility Monitor is part of the Ongoing Monitoring and Implementation Program (OMIP) for the Calgary Transportation Plan (CTP). The purpose of the Mobility Monitor is to report on strategic trends and events that affect the implementation of the CTP, and to recommend future actions. The Mobility Monitor is produced by the Transportation Data Division of Transportation Planning.

## KEY FINDING

*The trend in the mode split between auto driver and transit passenger has shifted twice since the mid 1970s, with the current upward trend starting in the mid 1990s.*



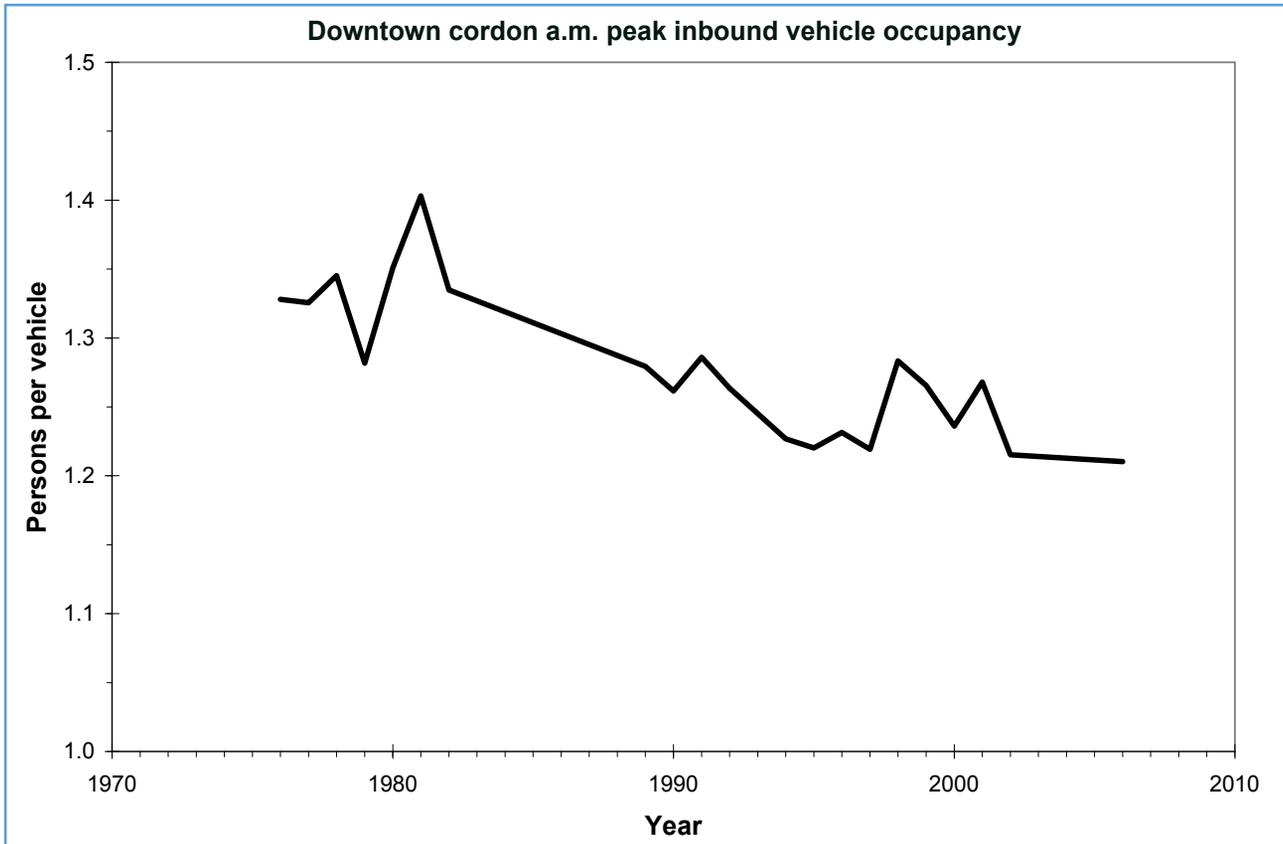
- Once before, in 1979 – 1980, transit rivaled the auto driver for dominance.
- In the last decade transit has increased its importance and now has become the mode of choice for travel to the downtown in the morning peak hour.
- Walking and cycling modes have also show growth over time.
- In 2001 a transit strike temporarily affected the general trend, pushing transit down and walk and cycle up.

## Sources of information

Data from the City's Downtown Cordon Traffic Count Program were used to track the trends in which modes are used to enter the downtown. Since at least 1958 The City of Calgary has monitored travel to the downtown by counting the vehicles and people entering and leaving the downtown.

## KEY FINDING

*The downward trend in private vehicle occupancy (a measure of car-pooling) has continued, although there is some suggestion that it may be stabilizing.*



- Vehicle occupancy is the average number of people travelling in each private vehicle. This includes cars and trucks, but excludes transit and cycles.
- In the late 1970s and early 1980s vehicle occupancy fluctuated, but remained high. During the 1980s vehicle occupancy dropped substantially
- After a brief increase in 1991, the vehicle occupancy experienced a steady slide to current levels of around 1.2 persons per vehicle.
- The four years from 1998 to 2001 saw a brief rise in Vehicle Occupancy, to almost 1.3 persons per vehicle, before declining in 2002 to pre 1998 levels.

### Why are some years missing from the chart?

Counts of the traffic entering and leaving the downtown were not done every year. During the period 1983 to 1987 comprehensive counts of traffic entering and leaving the downtown were suspended due to budget constraints. Counts done prior to 1976 were only available for years when major transportation reports were published. These may not represent all of the counts that were done.

## Implications

- The upward trends in the use of the transit, walking and cycling modes are in line with the goals set out in the Calgary Transportation Plan (CTP) to encourage use of these modes. The continued decline in vehicle occupancy is contrary to the CTP goals.
- This information suggests that policies, programs and plans to encourage transit, cycling and walking have been successful in Calgary. The picture is less clear with vehicle occupancy. Although other measures show that the City's carpooling program has been effective, the vehicle occupancy has continued to go down. The carpooling program may have slowed the decline in vehicle occupancy, but would have to be scaled up to reverse the trend.
- The success of the promotion of transit will create challenges to maintain and enhance transit use. The downtown is increasingly dependent on transit for access, and transit is becoming more vital to a successful downtown.

## Recommendations

- The Downtown Cordon Traffic Count Program should continue to be supported and operated as a valuable source of information for monitoring traffic into the downtown.
- Plans and programs for the transit, walking and cycling modes into the downtown should be reviewed in light of the increasing demand for these modes to ensure their continued viability.
- The carpooling program should be reviewed in more detail to find if there are ways to make it more effective.

## How accurate and reliable are these data?

How concerned should you be by the potential for error in the data presented in the Mobility Monitor? Traffic on a road can vary by 10% or more from one day to the next. To minimise this issue, The City tries to do the counts of traffic entering and leaving the downtown on the same day each year.

Even so, a change from one year to the next may be due to some random event, such as the weather, traffic collisions or illness. This is why it is wise to look at trends, since changes that are consistent over a long period of time are more likely to be real, and not just the result of random events.