

# Mobility monitor

## Transportation Data

Monitoring today,  
for tomorrow.

## This issue

How people entered the downtown during the morning peak hour - 1976 to 2008

February 2009  
Issue #33

### KEY FINDING

*In 2008 transit continued to be the top mode of choice for people entering the downtown during the morning peak hour.*



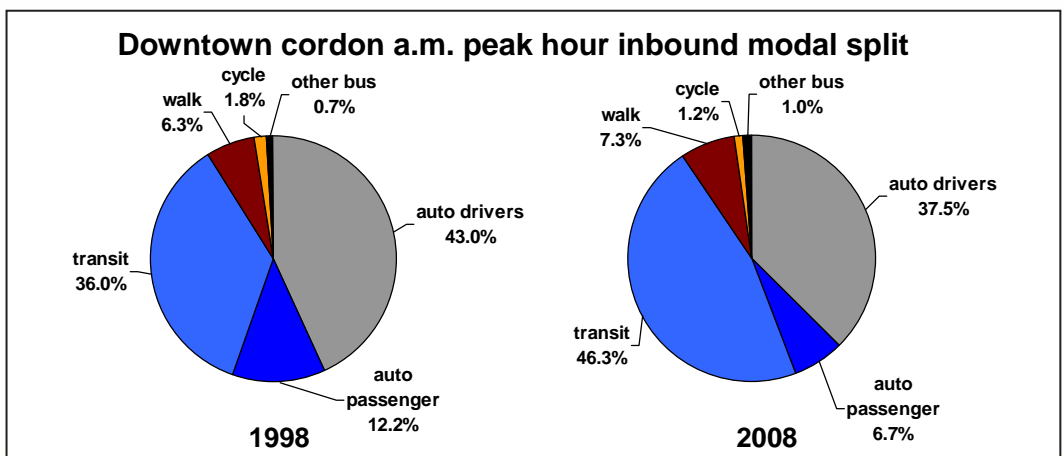
Downtown is the most important travel destination in the city, with about one in five jobs based there. The map above shows the downtown cordon.

Between 1998 and 2008 the share of Auto Drivers dropped from 43 per cent to 38 per cent, while the share of transit went up from 36 per cent to 46 per cent.

Between 1998 and 2008 the share of Auto Drivers plus Auto Passengers dropped from 55 per cent to 44 per cent.

The proportion of trips made as auto passengers in 2008 dropped to almost half of what it was in 1998.

Walking has increased in importance, while Cycling has dropped slightly.



## KEY FINDING

*Although transit mode split dropped slightly from 2007 to 2008, it remains near historic highs.*

Since 2006 transit has been the most important travel mode used to enter the downtown during the a.m. peak hour. This dominance continued in 2007 and 2008. There was a slight set back from 2007 to 2008, with a drop of less than one per cent.

The proportion of trips by auto drivers went down from 2006 to 2007, but went up in 2008 by almost three per cent to 38 per cent.

The proportion of trips by auto passengers went up from 2006 to 2007, but went down again in 2008.

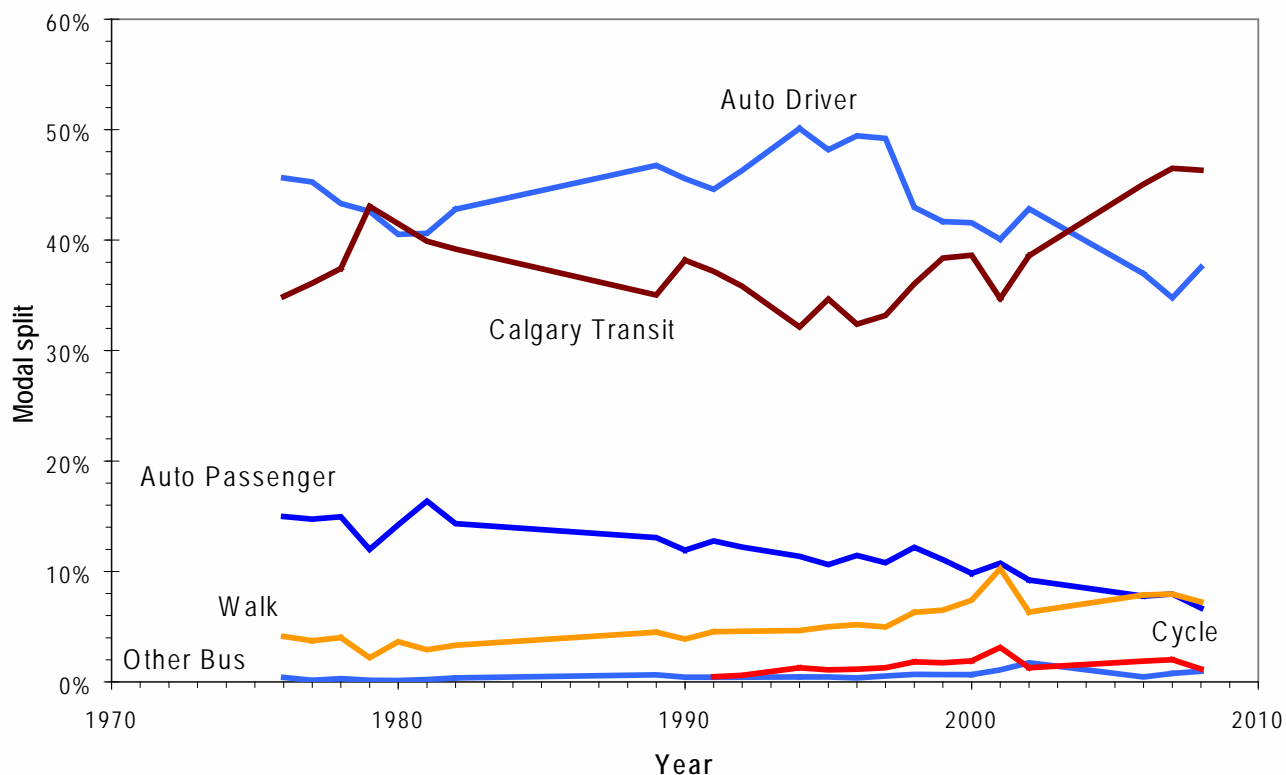
The proportion of trips by people walking went down from 2007 to 2008, but, at just over seven per cent, was still a more popular choice than auto passenger at just under seven per cent.

From 1994 to 2008 the proportion of trips made by cycling varied between one per cent and two per cent, except for 2001, when it went up to three per cent.

From 2007 to 2008 the proportion of trips by cycling dropped from two per cent to one per cent.

In 2001 a transit strike temporarily affected the general trend, pushing transit down and walking and cycling up.

Downtown cordon a.m. peak hour inbound modal split



## KEY FINDING

***The downward trend in private vehicle occupancy (a measure of car-pooling) has continued.***

The Vehicle Occupancy is the average number of people traveling in each private vehicle. This includes private vehicles, but excludes transit and cycles.

After jumping from 1.21 persons per vehicle in 2006 to 1.23 persons per vehicle in 2007, the vehicle occupancy went down to 1.18 persons per vehicle in 2008.

In the late 1970s and early 1980s the Vehicle Occupancy fluctuated, but remained high. During the 1980s vehicle occupancy dropped substantially.

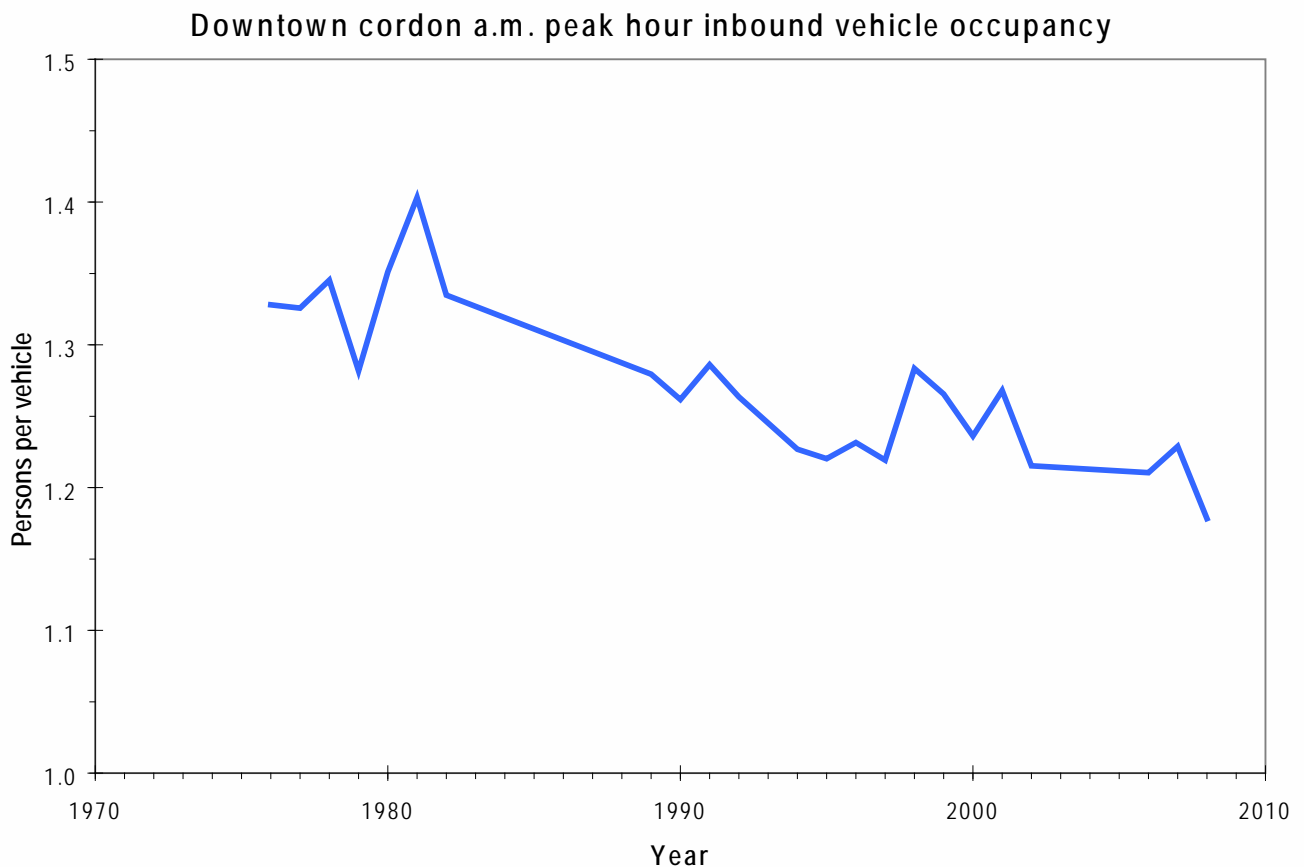
After a brief increase in 1991, the Vehicle Occupancy experienced a steady slide to around 1.2 persons per vehicle.

## Counting vehicle occupancy

In recent years it has become more difficult to count the number of vehicle passengers. Factors, such as an increase in the proportion of vehicles with tinted windows, are making it harder to tell how many people are in a vehicle.

While the Transportation Data division has changed procedures to account for these problems, it is possible that the observed decline is due to measurement error. The Transportation Data division will continue to investigate new methods and technology to improve the quality of the data.

Other sources of information such as the Federal Census, suggest that vehicle occupancy is increasing. However, these different sources do not measure the same things, and both may reflect reality.



## Implications

The upward trends in the transit and walking mode split 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 and walking have been successful in Calgary.

The picture is less clear with vehicle occupancy, since the broader downward trend may have been blunted by The City's efforts to encourage carpooling. The importance of encouraging carpooling has been increasing. However, so has the difficulty of collecting good quality data on vehicle occupancy.

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.

## 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.

## 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.

## The Mobility Monitor

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.

## 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 ten per cent or more from one day to the next. To minimize 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, accidents 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.

It must be kept in mind that no one source of information can claim to be infallible. Consideration and appropriate weighting of other sources of information is to be encouraged before making decisions.

