

Exploring Gender Differences in Mode Share through the Life Cycle in the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area (1986-2011)

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The Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area (GTHA) is currently experiencing a significant transportation challenge due to high levels of traffic congestion during peak commute hours. There is growing interest within transportation planning spheres in increasing active transportation (AT) for school and work travel to alleviate these issues; however, little attention has been paid in practice to gender differences in travel demand. This descriptive study explores gender differences in active transport and automobile use throughout the life cycle, assessing temporal changes in gendered transport over the last 25 years in the GTHA. Findings indicate a higher level of being driven to school for female children and youth than males. Males drive more than females during the years of labor force participation. Although driving remains higher for men than women during working-aged years, the gender gap in AT and automobile use appears to be lower today than in the mid-1980s. This study demonstrates the complex gender relationships that exist within transportation systems and how these relationships evolve through the life cycle and change over time and space. Transportation-related policy makers who wish to increase active and sustainable modes must consider these gender differences in conversations around transportation planning and travel demand.