



Supporting Transit-Accessible Child Care in the Twin Cities

Recommendations from 2016 Study

Metro Transit's Office of Transit Oriented Development (TOD) contracted with Wilder Research in the fall of 2015 to conduct a study on transit-accessible child care, particularly the ability of families to access child care via public transportation. The Advisory Group for this project generated the following recommendations for Metro Transit, child care agencies, partner jurisdictions, and other stakeholders to consider moving forward to support parents who rely on public transportation to access child care.

- Designate priority seating or dedicated space for pregnant women, parents and young children.
- Consider adjusting fares.
- Keep doors open longer to give parents time to get on the bus or light-rail and get their children settled in to a seat.
- Consider revising the stroller policy such that strollers must be out of the aisles, but can remain open if there is enough space to keep the aisle free and clear for riders getting on and off the bus.
- Develop some additional communication materials, in multiple languages, to communicate with parents about how to ride the bus with children, stroller policy and the guaranteed ride home program. Partner with Think Small, an organization working to advance quality care and education of children in their early years, to distribute communication to providers within ¼ mile radius of high-frequency routes and their families about transit-related issues.

Additional long-term considerations

- Conduct additional market research to determine the need for additional child care along the existing Hi-Frequency Network.
- Consider the location and proximity of child care in planning future transit routes and as a factor in competitive development grant programs, along with job access and housing density.
- Educate operators on the needs of transit users travelling with young children.
- Use advertising space on the bus for games or activities parents can do with children that both keep them entertained and contribute to child development.
- Renovate or build new child care with considerations of how pedestrians can access it via transit.
- Partner with child care providers along high-frequency transit routes to provide discounts or priority space for transit users.
- Research the possibility of locating a child care center within Mall of America or MSP International Airport.
- Co-locate child care centers with residential neighborhoods, schools, or job centers to reduce the number of stops parents have to make during their commute.

Background

The study included a literature review, interviews with 20 parents who use transit and child care, and the creation of four maps overlaying the location of existing child care providers (in-home and centers) and high-frequency transit routes with 1) the Census tracts where young children live, 2) the Census tracts young children can travel to in under 30 minutes, 3) regional job centers and 4) Areas of Concentrated Poverty.

Results indicate the number of child care spots is lower than the number of children under age 6 whose parents work, though up to 40 percent of parents choose to use relatives and friends to care for their children. It is difficult to know the extent parents want relatives and friends to care for their children, or have few options because of the costs or lack of accessibility of licensed providers.

The market analysis found that licensed child care providers are fairly well distributed along high frequency transit routes and concentrated near job centers and in areas with high concentrations of children in residence, indicating the market has largely been responsive to parents' needs. Despite that, the parents that were interviewed indicated their commute time is about twice what they believe is reasonable and noted challenges to bringing children on buses.

For more information

This summary presents highlights of the Transit-Accessible Child Care Study. For more information about this report, contact Jennifer Valorose at Wilder Research, 651-280-2654.

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