

The '15-minute city' might not be realistic for North America, researchers find

June 21 2024



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In the "15-minute city," a concept popularized in Europe, everything a

resident might need on a daily basis is a short walk or bicycle ride away. A study by Transportation Research at McGill University (TRAM) suggests, however, that this model may not be easily achieved in large North American cities such as Montreal.

Published

in the *Journal of Urban Mobility*, the study examines travel behavior and geospatial data from Montreal and finds, contrary to expectations, that only a small fraction of households can feasibly meet all their daily needs within 15 minutes of home using active transportation.

"Our study challenges the notion of a one-size-fits-all approach to

urban planning," says Ahmed El-Geneidy, Professor at McGill University's School of Urban Planning. "While the 15-minute city concept has gained momentum globally, our research emphasizes the importance of locally relevant strategies that consider the diverse needs and realities of communities."

The research suggests a 30-minute model may be more realistic for North American cities, provided appropriate urban-design changes are made. Furthermore, the researchers underscore the need for urban-sustainability strategies that address not only travel behaviors but also neighborhood characteristics, household dynamics and social equity concerns.

"Increasing accessibility to essential destinations within a 30-minute radius could significantly improve quality of life for residents," adds Professor El-Geneidy. "Our research indicates that achieving this goal requires a multifaceted approach that incorporates [public transit](#), urban design, and community engagement."

TRAM describes itself as committed to generating research and [policy recommendations](#) aligned with local sustainability goals. Other studies under way focus on the effects of transportation projects like the Réseau express métropolitain (REM) in Montreal and on the travel needs of older adults in Canadian cities.

More information: Carolyn Birkenfeld et al, Who is living a local lifestyle? Towards a better understanding of the 15-minute-city and 30-minute-city concepts from a behavioural perspective in Montréal, Canada, *Journal of Urban Mobility* (2023). [DOI: 10.1016/j.urbmob.2023.100048](#)

Provided by McGill University

Citation: The '15-minute city' might not be realistic for North America, researchers find (2024, June 21) retrieved 8 August 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2024-06-minute-city-realistic-north-america.html>

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