

Dear Members of Parliament

I wrote this blog post on January 22, 2016 to express the importance of Rapid Transit to the success of my business and the attraction and retention of millennial workers. I submit this as part of the budget consultation process in support of federal infrastructure dollars being allocated to London, Ontario with the purpose of building a Rapid Transit system in our city.

The ask from our city council is for federal and provincial funds of under \$400 million in the 10 years to support the project. I believe that having a rapid transit solution in our city is critical to the economic growth of the city.

Below is my original blog post. Thank you for your consideration!

Case for Support: London Rapid Transit

About a year and a half ago, I spoke to the [City Council about the importance of the London Plan](#). In that speech, I requested that the City Council provide the vision and ignite a spark that already exists in our city.

An election gone by, I believe our City Council is attempting to do just that. It's time for London to begin its renaissance. A key part of the London Plan has been the rapid transit plan. The City created the [Shift London initiative](#) to collect feedback and distribute a plan to improve the accessibility, efficiency and experience of transportation in our community.

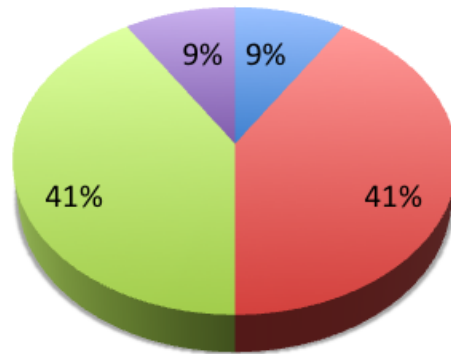
I said in 2014, and I have said in 2015 and 2016, that rapid transit is a key issue for the millennial demographic that we need to engage to keep our city growing. I have also made mention that my team wants or needs rapid transit systems. I have held the belief for some time that the next generation of worker does not have the same relationship with cars and transportation that those only 10 years older have.

I realized, of course, I may have my own bias, so I decided to actually survey my staff to reflect on my public opinion of rapid transit. We had 80% staff participation (illness and vacation meant not everyone could respond). Here are the results:

We asked for age ranges to illustrate the importance of transit considerations across generations, as well as the relative representation of Millennials on our team.

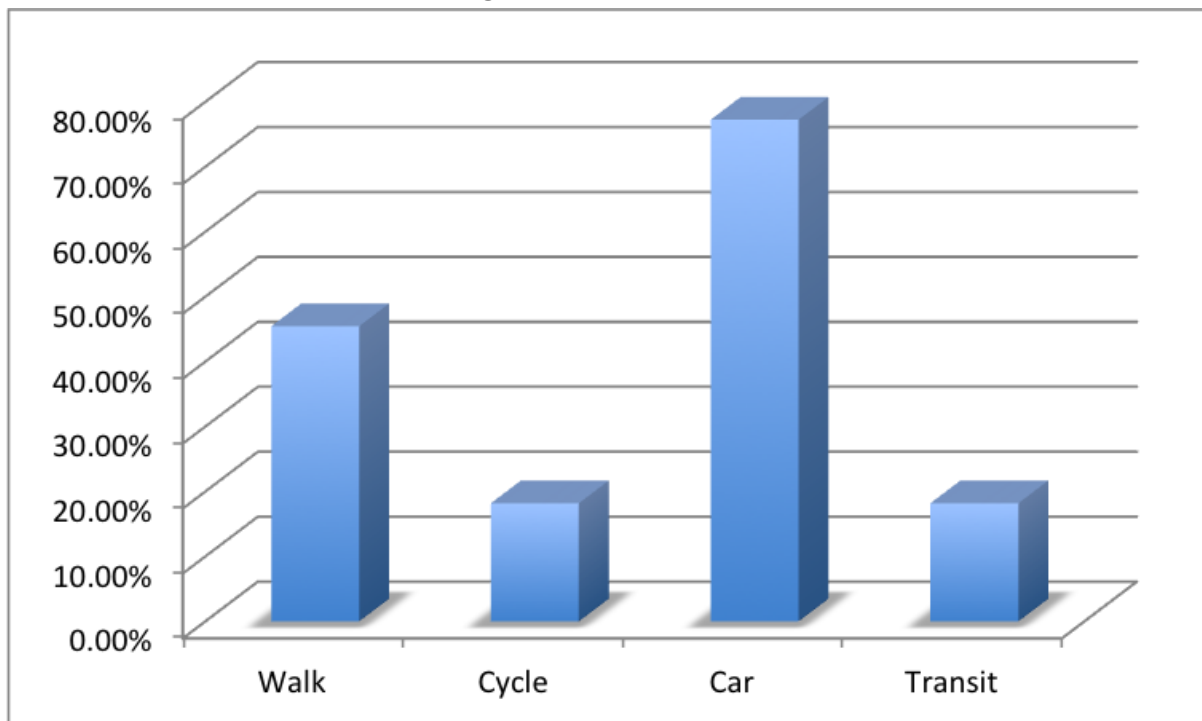
Age Distribution

■ 18 to 24 ■ 25 to 34 ■ 34 to 44 ■ 45+



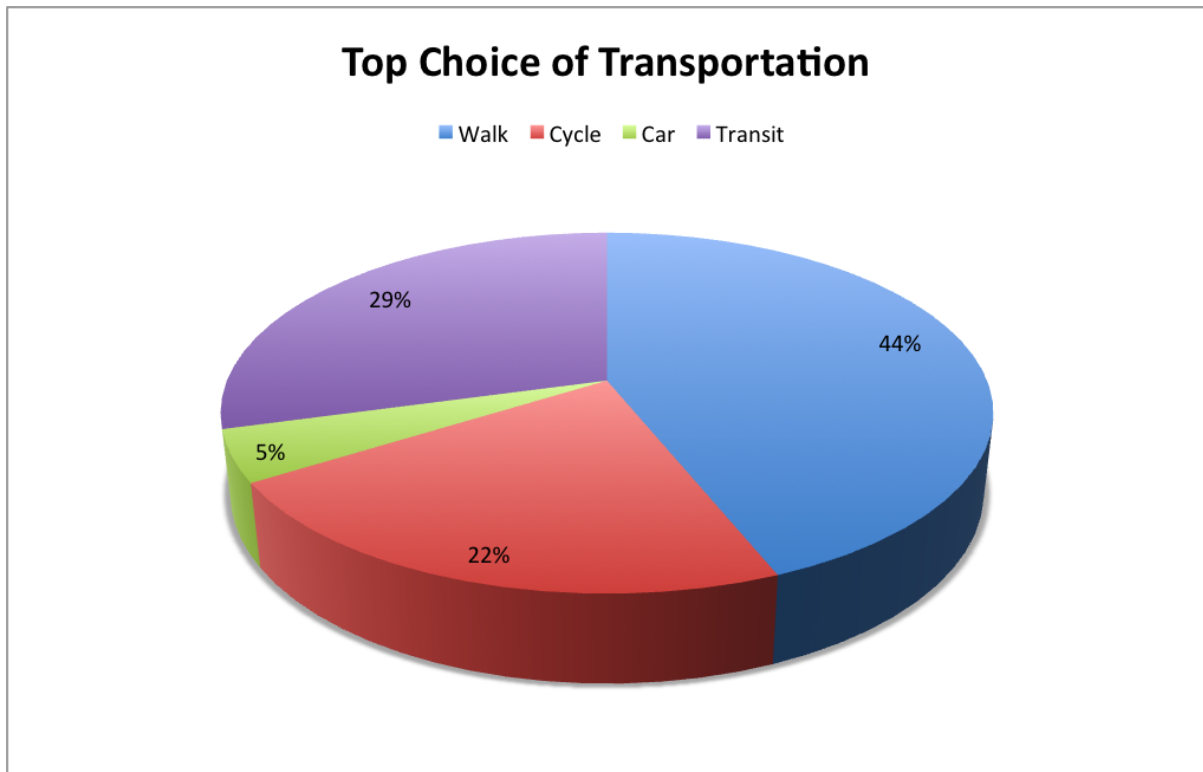
We then asked them to mark all the ways they currently get to work. The chart shows the percentage of people who use a particular method of transportation as part of the way in which they commute.

Existing Transportation Routes



We then asked them to rank how they would like to get to work in an ideal world (if there were no barriers). We asked them to rank on a scale of 1 to 4, with 1 being the top choice.

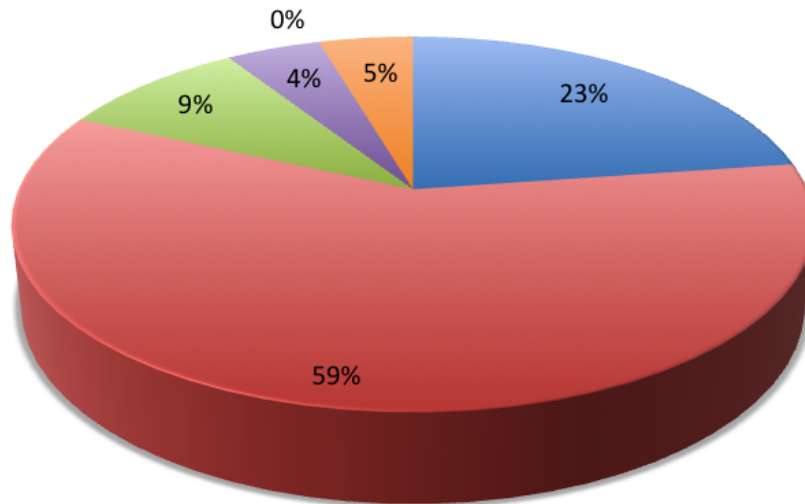
Here is a chart of the #1 choice per option.



The option that fared the worst and was in the 4th spot for 57% of the respondents was Car.

The current transit system in London is practical for my personal/commuting needs

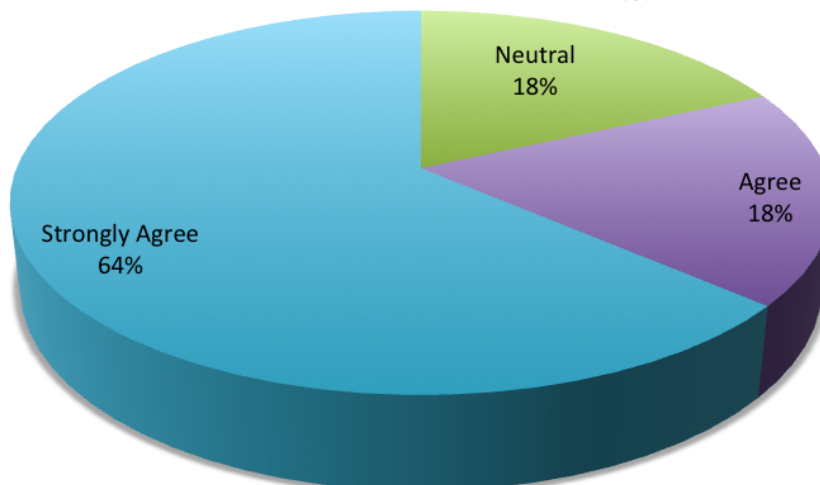
Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree N/A



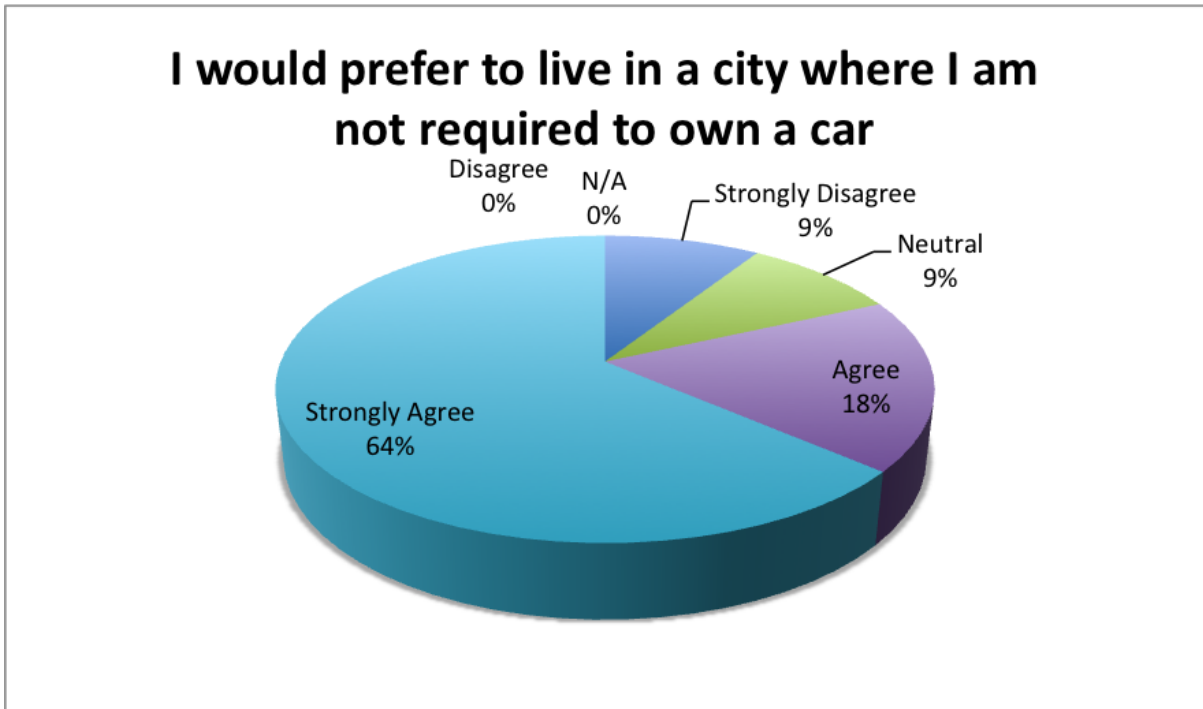
82% of folks responding disagreed or strongly disagreed that the existing system met their needs.

I would use transit more if it was more convenient

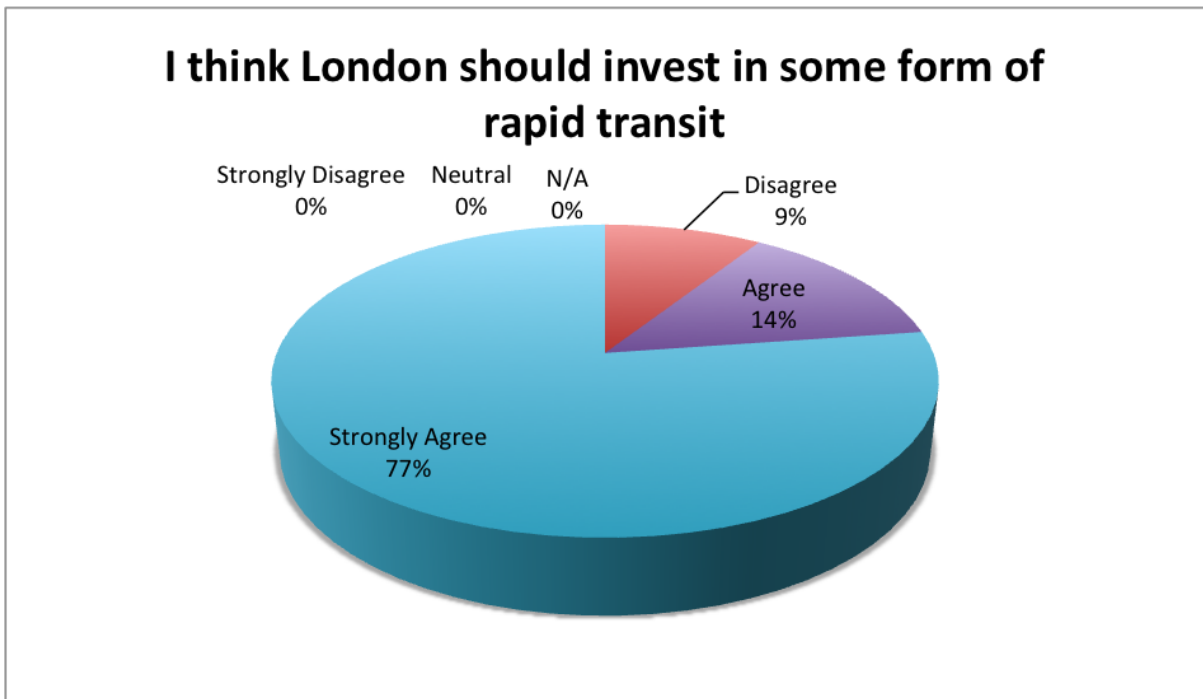
Disagree 0% N/A 0% Strongly Disagree 0%



82% agreed or strongly agreed they would use transit if it was more convenient

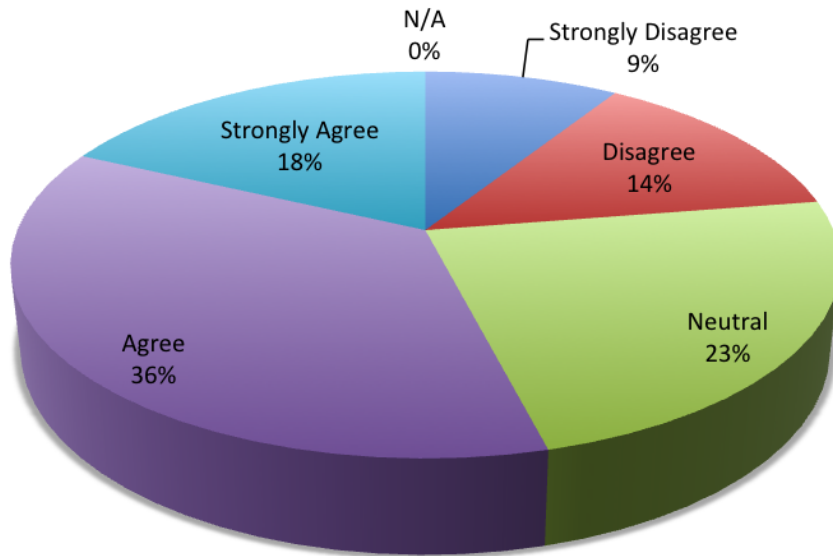


82% agreed or strongly agreed they would like to live in a city where a car is not required.



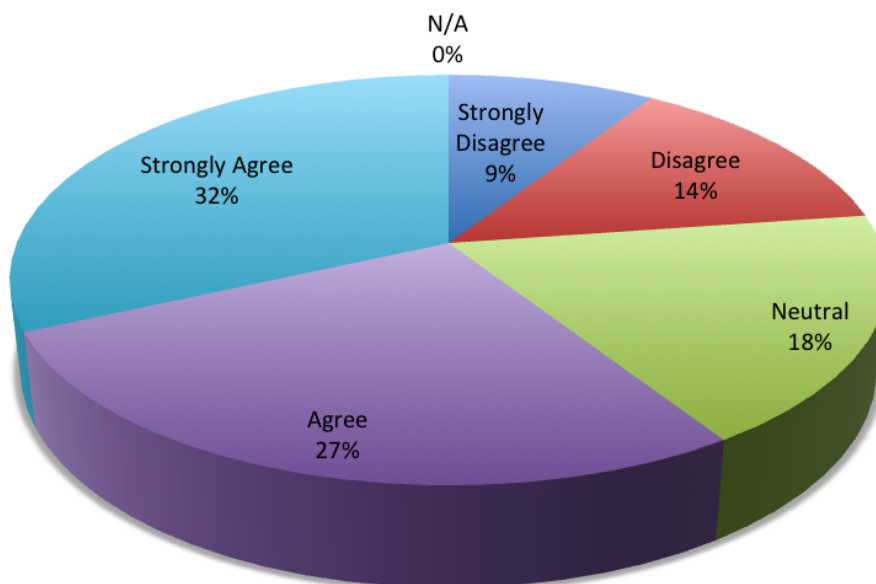
91% agreed or strongly agreed that London should invest in some form of rapid transit

The transit system of a city will be a key factor in whether I decide to stay in/relocate to that city



54% agreed or strongly agreed that transit will be a key factor in deciding to stay or relocate to a city.

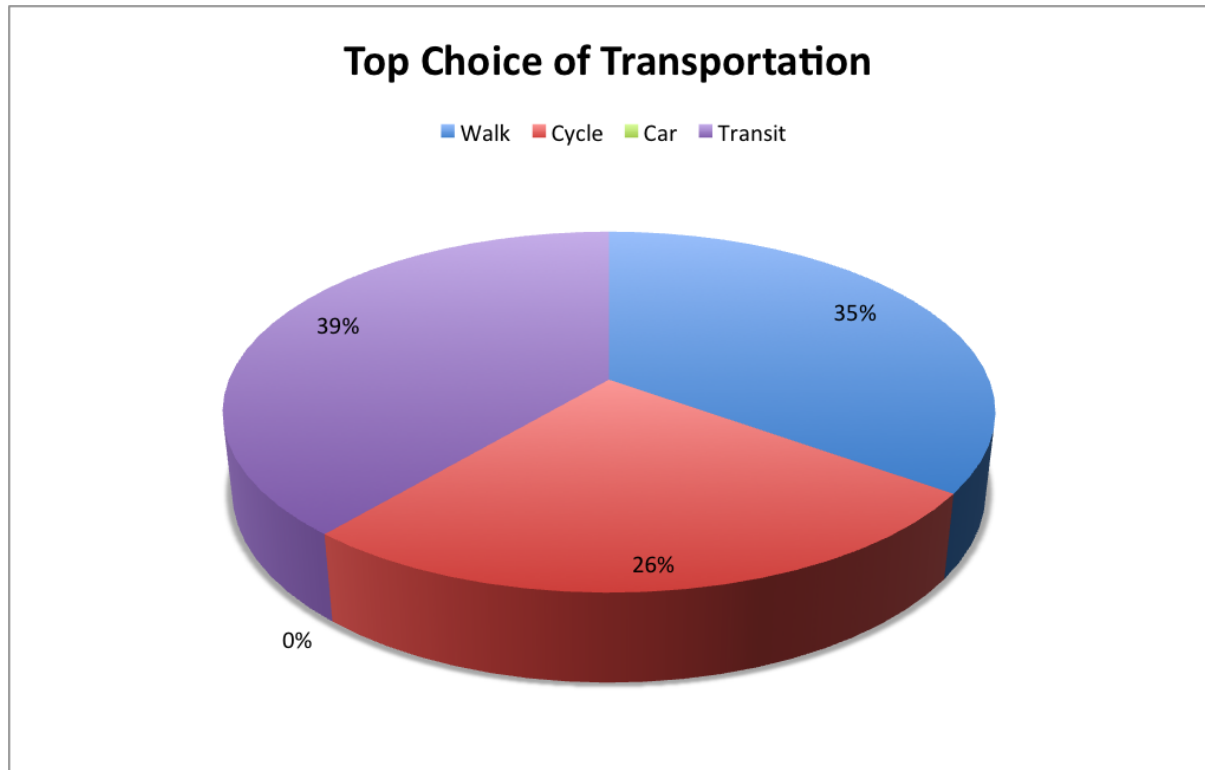
The transit system of a city will be a key factor in whether I recommend a friend relocate to a city



59% agreed or strongly agreed that the transit system would be a key factor in whether they recommend a friend relocate to the city.

Overall, this builds a fairly strong case for rapid transit within our relatively small sample size. However, I became curious - what happened if we changed the sample to only those 34 and under (representing exactly half the respondents)? Are you curious, too?

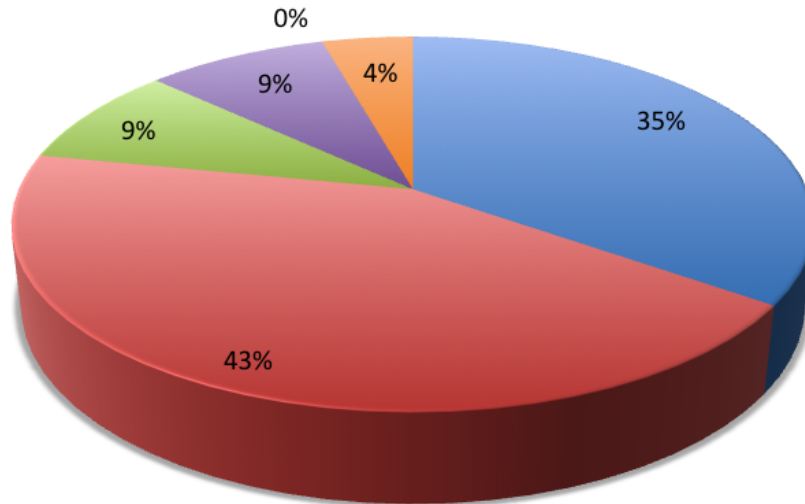
Wonder no longer:



When it comes to an ideal scenario, the choices differ - with no one placing Car in their #1 spot and 40% looking to transit vs 29% of the main group.

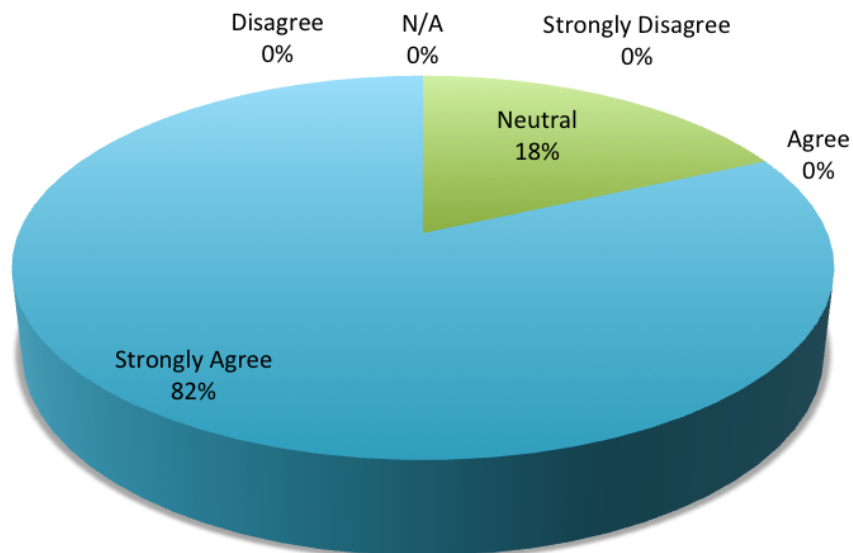
The current transit system in London is practical for my personal/commuting needs

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree N/A

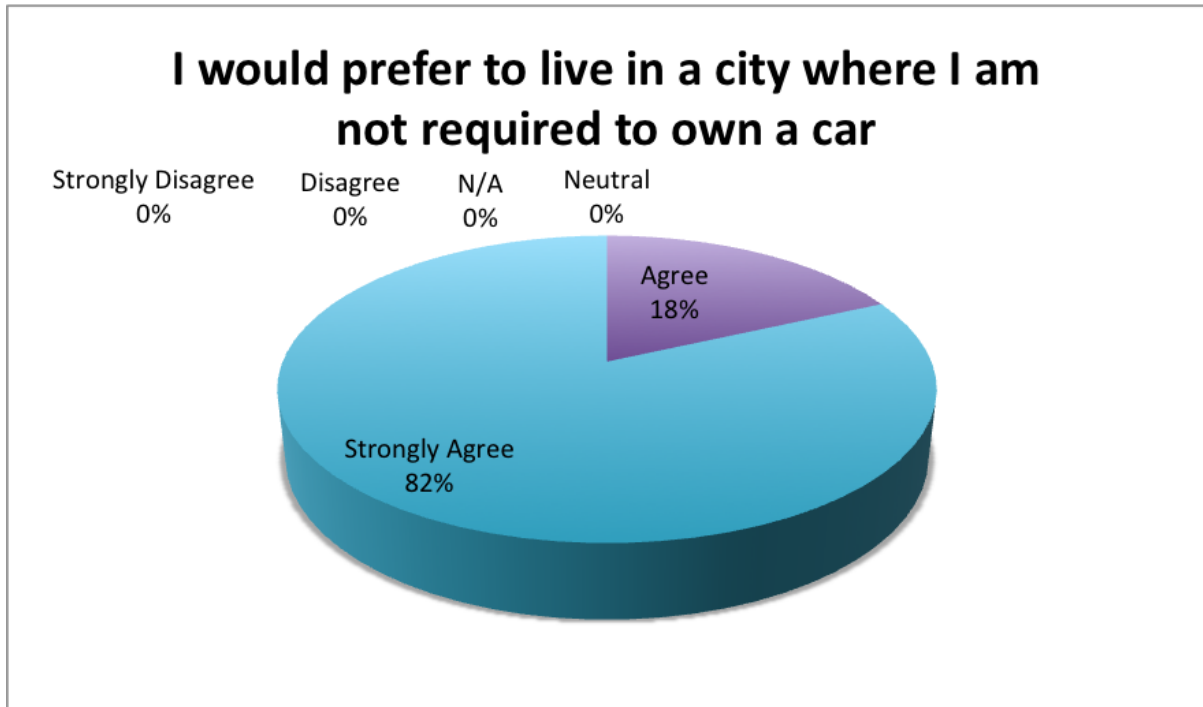


78% disagree or strongly disagree that the transit system meets their needs (a slight improvement from 82% from the main group)

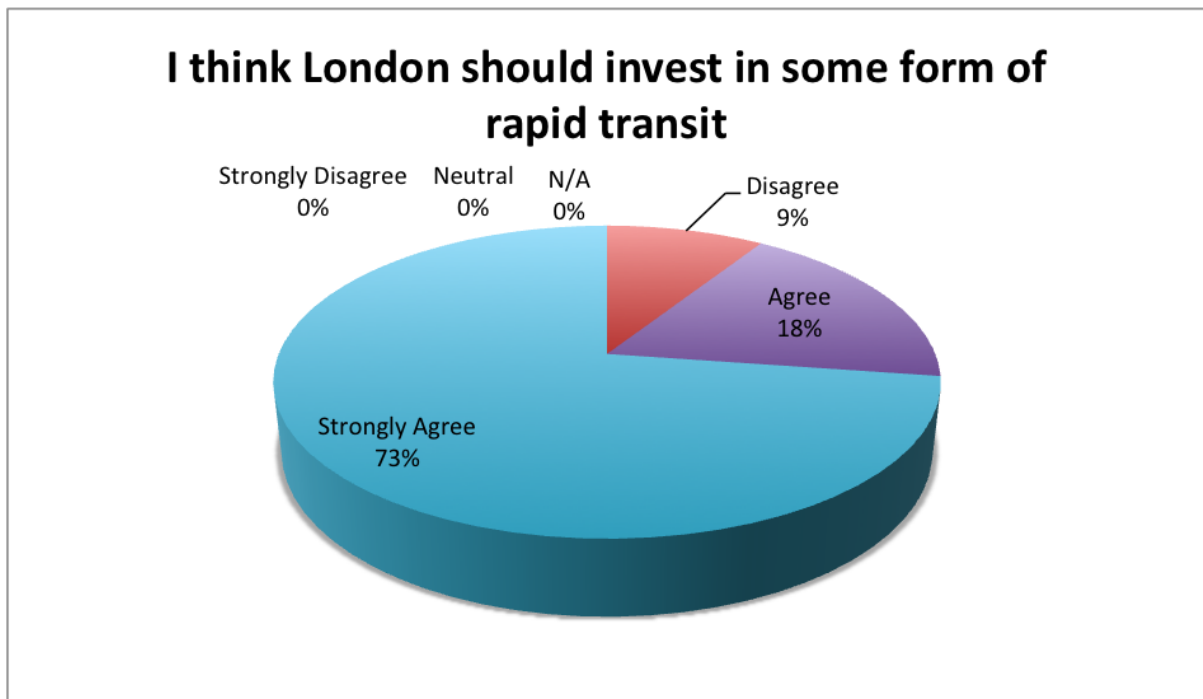
I would use transit more if it was more convenient



82% strongly agree that they would use transit if more convenient (up from 64% from the main group)

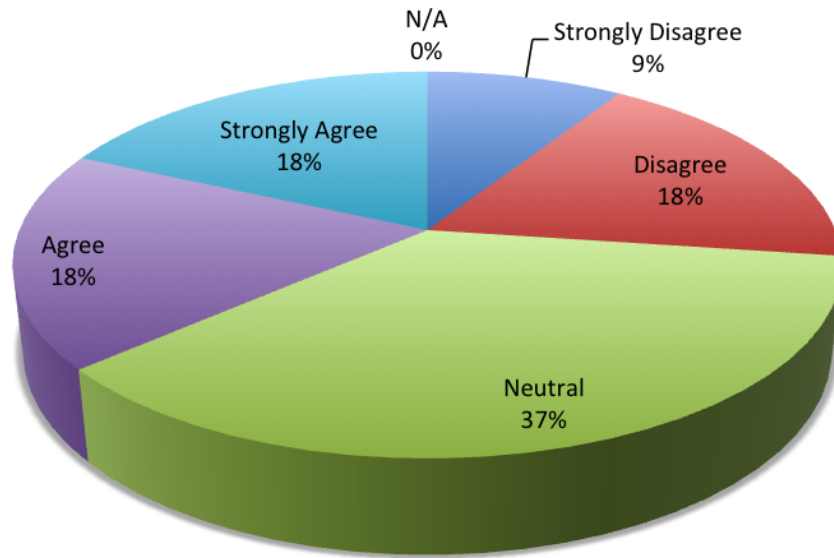


100% agree or strongly agree that they would like to live in a city that does not require car ownership (up from 82% from the main group)



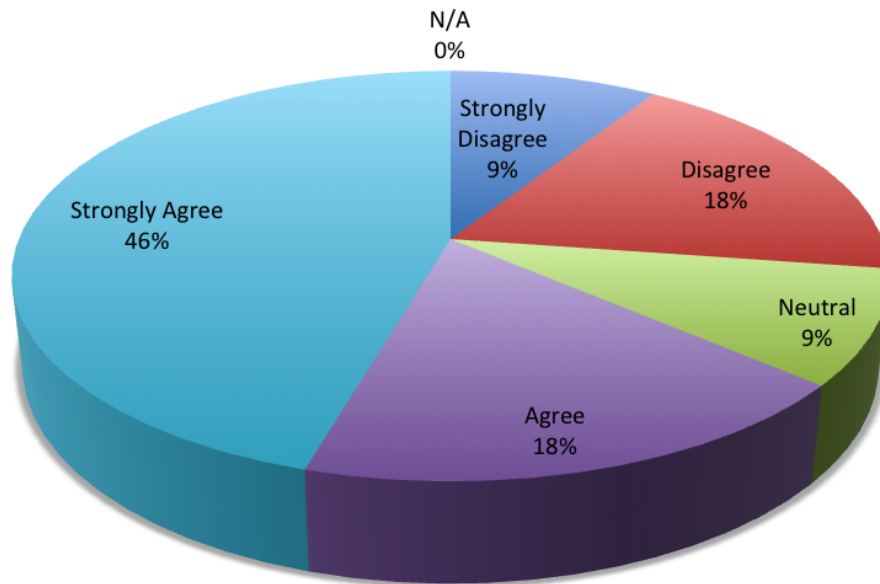
91% agree or strongly agree in investing in rapid transit (same as the main group)

The transit system of a city will be a key factor in whether I decide to stay in/relocate to that city



36% agreed or strongly agreed that the transit system would be a key factor in the decision to stay or relocate (down from 54% of the main group).

The transit system of a city will be a key factor in whether I recommend a friend relocate to a city



64% agreed or strongly agreed that the transit system of a city would be a key factor in recommending relocating to a city to a friend (up from 58% in the main group).

Looking at the results from our internal survey, I believe it is fair for me to say that as a business owner, the ability for my business to attract and retain talent is going to significantly depend on our city's ability to accommodate a non-car based commuter. Transit, cycling and the "walkability" of our city will be key factors for mobile, highly skilled, future generations of workers.

Our local government has done its part with Shift, and now we need support from our federal and provincial governments to mobilize our local rapid transit initiatives. This is a once-in-a-generation opportunity, where governments at all levels have committed to investing in transportation. The federal and provincial governments have committed more than \$50 billion for public transit. London is asking for less than 2% of this funding, and we're the largest city in the country without a rapid transit system.

Other cities have already received much larger investments. I want to see significant investment in London. As the heartland of Southern Ontario, we are positioned to be a significant economic driver. In the past 50 years, our city has seen its dominance in financial industry relocated to other cities and our manufacturing base gutted with passing recessions, yet we are a city that continues to thrive. In an economy based on resourcefulness of its citizens, I encourage you to look to the population of London as a shining example of Canadians and Ontarians who prove time and time again that we are resilient, resourceful and passionate about our community and our country.

I've started a petition on Change.org. Please consider adding your name to send a strong message that rapid transit is key to the future health and development of our city.