



Friday, November 10, 2023

Subject: Urgent Call for Comprehensive Support and Swift Action on Transit Investments

Dear City Council,

On behalf of the Transit Action Alliance of Guelph (TAAG), I am writing to urgently advocate for immediate and unwavering support for transit investments. The delay in committing to these essential investments could have detrimental consequences for our community across various dimensions.

As our city stands at the crossroads of growth and progress, investing in transit emerges as a pivotal choice. This letter outlines the interconnected economic, environmental, social, and cultural benefits, emphasizing the urgency of supporting and implementing transit initiatives.

Economic and Environmental Benefits of Transit Investment:

- **Economic Growth:** Every dollar invested in transit can generate multiple dollars in economic returns, creating jobs and stimulating local businesses.
- **Affordable Transportation:** A well-functioning transit system offers an affordable alternative, reducing transportation costs and enhancing financial well-being.
- **Reduced Traffic Congestion:** A robust transit system reduces traffic congestion, saving time, reducing stress, and minimizing wear and tear on our roads.
- **Environmental Benefits:** Public transit is more environmentally friendly, contributing to a decrease in greenhouse gas emissions and air pollution.
- **Improved Accessibility:** Transit investments enhance accessibility for all residents, including those with disabilities and those who cannot afford private vehicles.
- **Health Benefits:** Promoting active transportation and reducing car dependence contributes to improved public health, reducing healthcare costs.
- **Traffic Safety:** An efficient transit system reduces the number of cars on the road, leading to fewer accidents and related expenses.
- **Economic Efficiency:** Transit investments lead to fewer road repairs and maintenance costs, saving the city money in the long term.

- **Parking Minimums:** Transit is a key solution to reducing parking minimums, promoting efficient land use and mitigating congestion in our city.

Social Equity and Quality of Life:

- **Social Equity:** An efficient transit system promotes social equity, providing affordable and accessible transportation options for all residents.
- **Quality of Life:** Residents benefit from reduced stress during commutes, more leisure time, and an overall enhanced quality of life.

Business Attraction, Innovation, and Cultural Benefits:

- **Business Attraction:** A well-functioning transit system makes our city more attractive to businesses and skilled workers, contributing to economic growth.
- **Innovation:** Transit investments can incorporate innovative technologies, showcasing our city as forward-thinking and adaptable.
- **Cultural and Community Benefits:** Transit connects residents to cultural and community events, fostering a sense of belonging and community engagement.

Future-Ready Transit Plan: We express deep concern about the potential delay in implementing the Future-Ready Transit Plan, essential for economic, environmental, and social reasons:

- **Economic Standpoint:** A modern transit system enhances workforce productivity, attracts businesses, and delays may hinder economic opportunities, impacting our city's competitiveness.
- **Environmental Impact:** A robust transit system reduces carbon emissions, contributing to our sustainability goals. Delay contradicts our commitment to environmental responsibility.
- **Ridership and City Growth:** Current transit infrastructure is near capacity. Delays risk losing ridership, leading to increased congestion and decreased quality of life.
- **Addressing Growth and Housing:** Transit is vital for sustainable urban development, facilitating movement and reducing congestion. The plan is crucial for keeping pace with city growth.

Expanding Routes vs. Increasing Frequency: The suggestion of choosing between expanding routes or increasing frequency overlooks the possibility of pursuing both simultaneously:

- **Diverse Needs of Commuters:** Expanding routes and increasing frequency cater to a wider range of the population.
- **Economic Growth:** Both strategies can stimulate economic growth. New routes open opportunities for businesses, while increased frequency attracts more riders and revenue.
- **Studies Support Both:** A comprehensive planning process is needed now to determine the right balance.
- **Encourage Modal Shift:** Combining both strategies can make public transit more attractive, encouraging people to shift from private vehicles.

- **Call for Comprehensive Planning:** Rather than an "either-or" approach, it's time for a comprehensive discussion on the ridership-coverage spectrum to find the optimal balance.

Immediate Allocation of Funds for Active Transportation and Transit: Addressing concerns about a higher-than-normal tax increase:

- **Environmental Urgency:** Delaying investments exacerbates the climate crisis, causing greater costs in terms of environmental damage, health consequences, and lost opportunities.
- **Economic Growth and Sustainability:** Transit investments yield up to five times their value in economic returns, providing a boost to local businesses and stimulating economic activity.
- **Long-Term Financial Implications:** Postponing initiatives risks greater expenses in road maintenance, repair, and expansion, straining the city's finances.
- **Affordability and Financial Stability:** Affordable and reliable transit services reduce transportation costs, providing an economic boost to households and promoting financial stability.

In conclusion, we fervently urge you to prioritize transit investments for the betterment of our community. The advantages extend beyond economic gains, encompassing environmental responsibility, public health, accessibility, safety, social equity, and cultural vibrancy. Delaying these investments, or further elongating the timeline, is shortsighted and detrimental to our city's future. City staff have emphasized that delaying the plan will incur greater costs than proceeding as is.

We steadfastly call for immediate action in creating an informed and more efficient plan around frequency-coverage levels, eliminating bureaucratic silos between transit, fleet, transportation services, and tourism. This also extends beyond infrastructure to encompass operational strategies, ensuring we meet our climate commitments with frequent, affordable, and accessible transit.

Let us seize the opportunity to invest wisely, ensuring a more prosperous, sustainable, and accessible Guelph for all residents.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. We trust that your decisions will prioritize our city's long-term well-being and prosperity.

Sincerely,

Steven Petric, Chair

On behalf of the Board of Directors

Transit Action Alliance of Guelph

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