



July 31, 2020

The Honourable Caroline Mulroney  
Minister of Transportation  
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Dear Minister Mulroney,

Thank you for your government's leadership during these extraordinary times. On behalf of the City of Guelph and University of Guelph we are writing to draw your attention to continued financial challenges facing Guelph's public transit systems and the impacts on our riders and communities.

As you know, Transit is a critical service that enabled front-line health care workers to get to work, ensured manufacturing sector employees could keep the supply chain moving, and helped maintain access to groceries and pharmacies during the height of the pandemic. Now, as we enter phase 2, stage 3 of the recovery, we are looking ahead to the resumption of routine service and beginning to fully understand ridership and revenue impacts.

For many years, the University of Guelph student associations and Guelph Transit have had an agreement to provide a discounted transit pass (U Pass) to all University of Guelph students. This agreement allowed Guelph Transit to provide enhanced service to the University campus, and other student centric destinations in Guelph to facilitate public transit travel to jobs, off campus housing and entertainment.

On July 15, at the request of the University of Guelph student associations, Guelph Council made the difficult decision to approve the request to suspend the U Pass agreement. As a result of the pandemic, far fewer students will be required to attend in-person classes and fewer students will be able to reside in U of G's on campus residences due to public health requirements. These are not short-term impacts, these are changes to our community that will continue to have impacts for at least the next several years.

During the crisis, most transit systems in Ontario opted to forego farebox revenues in order to maintain access while protecting the health of transit operators. Now, farebox revenues are beginning to restart, however ridership has not rebounded to anywhere near pre-pandemic levels. The City of Guelph has reported transit losses of \$3.4 M due to the pandemic, and now, as a result of the suspension of the U Pass, Guelph Transit is facing an additional \$4.7M in losses. As a direct result of these financial impacts, Guelph Transit has

had to cut services reducing the level of service, the frequency of scheduled trips, and its workforce. There are additional revenue losses due to decreased advertising and decreased charter contracts.

On behalf of the City of Guelph and the University of Guelph, we are asking the Province to recognize the longer-term impacts of COVID-19 on our transit system for both operators and users (such as university students, faculty and employees), and the importance of transit in connecting our communities.

While emergency relief funding to replace lost operating revenue and support for the procurement of personal protective equipment, cleaning agents and disinfectants is important, we must also discuss longer-term support for transit operations.

As you know, the City of Guelph has limited ability to take costs out of Transit budgets. In some cases, a reduction in services will be feasible, but nowhere near 80 per cent. There are fixed costs to providing even reduced services, and these will be unsustainable.

We would welcome a phone call with you at your earliest opportunity to discuss these matters. To confirm your availability, please have your office contact [scott.stewart@queph.ca](mailto:scott.stewart@queph.ca).

Guelph is thankful for your leadership at this time. We are committed to continuing to slow the spread of COVID-19 in our communities and facilitate strong economic recovery in partnership with you and your government.

Sincerely,



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cc: The Hon. Steve Clark, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing  
The Hon. Ross Romano, Minister of Colleges and Universities  
The Hon. Rod Phillips, Minister of Finance  
Ontario Public Transit Association  
Canadian Urban Transit Association  
Association of Municipalities of Ontario