

June 30, 2020

Re: Operating funding for transit agencies across the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area

Dear Premier Doug Ford and Minister of Transportation, Caroline Mulroney,

The Toronto Environmental Alliance urges the Government of Ontario to provide immediate emergency funding support for public transit operations in Toronto and across the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area.

This COVID-19 pandemic has undermined municipalities capacity to fund transit agencies and the transportation services needed by residents and the business community. Public transit in Toronto alone is facing a \$92 Million shortfall per month¹, leaving the Toronto Transit Commission struggling to provide adequate service and the City of Toronto in a very precarious financial state.

Prime Minister Trudeau's recent announcement of support for the Safe Restart Plan funding requires cooperation with the Ontario government. The Federal Government needs you as a leading partner to ensure that Ontario municipalities can continue safely operating public transit.

In addition to emergency operating funding, Federal and Provincial governments must reinvest in public transit over the longer term to ensure sustained, improved and affordable transit service. That means a return to the 50% transit operating subsidy that used to be provided by the Province of Ontario. Provincial gas tax proceeds have never been sufficient, and now these proceeds are likely to be even lower due to decreased gas prices and lower gas consumption during the pandemic lock-down phase. In 2020, the Provincial gas tax covered only 4% of operating costs for the TTC while transit riders paid 59% and Toronto taxpayers contributed 33% through the City Tax Levy².

Toronto continues to have the highest farebox recovery ratio and lowest overall subsidy of comparable North America cities, with no dedicated revenue source from a tax or levy to provide predictable, secure operating revenue to cover costs year after year³. This doesn't just impact the residents of Toronto, as the TTC is a crucial link in the entire region's mobility network.

Public transit provides affordable mobility for essential workers, youth, seniors, people with Disabilities / Disabled people and many people surviving on low-incomes across the GTHA. Before the pandemic, Toronto's transit riders were experiencing lower service levels, higher fares and less reliability and accessibility than they deserved. During the pandemic, things have gotten much worse.

Transit riders have experienced service reductions and caps on how many riders could board a transit vehicle, and have continually put themselves at higher risk of exposure to COVID-19 because for many people in our city the TTC is their only mobility option. As the Province and the GTHA opens up and transit

¹ <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto/ttc-finances-covid19-1.5569867>

² <https://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2020/bu/bgrd/backgroundfile-145312.pdf>

³ https://coderedto.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/CodeRedTO_MixedSignals.pdf



ridership increases once again, it is essential that people are provided with safe, socially distanced, reliable transit service.

The reality is, even those who continue working from home or chose to drive personal vehicles depend on the functioning of our public transit systems during the pandemic because so many essential workers in critical care and service industries rely on transit to get to work every day. The more transit riders we have taking buses, streetcars, LRTs, subways and regional rail, the less we are all affected by the health and environmental impacts of transportation-related air pollution and climate change, as well as the economic and social impacts of traffic congestion.

All levels of government must work together to help our communities recover from COVID-19. We are asking that you help break this deadlock by publicly committing to contributing to the emergency relief funding to transit agencies, and further commit to sustainable transit funding to ensure the long-term operational viability of public transit in Ontario.

We are requesting that you respond, in writing, with your government's commitment.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Heather Marshall". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Heather Marshall
Campaigns Director