

January 24, 2022

Re: 2022 Provincial Budget Consultations

Dear Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy,

TTCriders is a membership-based organization of transit users in Toronto. During the COVID-19 pandemic, frontline workers in essential services, including health care and food systems, are relying on safe and accessible transit to get to work.

Ontario transit agencies require stable, long-term funding so municipalities and our economy can recover from the pandemic. Because Ontario transit agencies rely on farebox revenues to fund their operating budgets, lower ridership has resulted in major budget shortfalls for municipalities. Yet keeping transit running at safe service levels is more important than ever. Cutting back on service will result in crowding on buses and fewer riders in the future.

We welcomed the Safe Restart Agreement, which provided emergency transit funding, but it has expired. We urge you to make the following investments in the 2022 Ontario Budget:

Operations support to keep transit moving

The 2022 COVID-19 financial impact is projected to be \$461.2 million comprising \$409.8 million in passenger and ancillary revenue losses and \$51.4 million for incremental COVID-19 expenses required to maintain staff and customer safety measures in place.¹ The TTC is predicting budget shortfalls due to lower ridership for years to come. Ongoing operations funding from the provincial government is needed to maintain safe service levels and to keep transit moving.

Will gas tax transfers to Ontario transit systems continue to decline?

We were glad to learn that your government topped up this year's gas tax transfer by \$120 million to compensate for lower revenues during the pandemic. However, we are concerned about the long-term stability of gas tax revenues, which are also affected by fuel efficiency and electric vehicle use. Will your pledge to reduce gas tax by 5.7 cents/litre further reduce transfers?

We are also concerned about the conditions that have been attached to the latest allocation of gas tax funding for Toronto. TTCriders supports fare integration, but it must be implemented fairly, such as through subsidies for free timed transfers between municipalities and free transfers

¹ Toronto Transit Commission 2022 Operating Budget:

https://ttc-cdn.azureedge.net/-/media/Project/TTC/DevProto/Documents/Home/Public-Meetings/Board/2021/Dec-20/2_2022_TTC_Conventional_and_Wheel-Trans_Operating_Budgets.pdf?rev=ea8d3ccf148c42d2ae149824f0cff364&hash=0DED0713B3FC18D9190283622B62B28C

between GO and TTC. Charging more to travel further under a fare-by-distance or fare-by-mode model will negatively impact transit users who live in inner suburbs like Scarborough and Etobicoke who have to travel further to work.²

Invest in free GO-TTC transfers to mitigate the impact of Scarborough RT closure

When Line 3 (Scarborough RT) closes, 30,000 Scarborough transit users will need to use replacement shuttle buses for at least 7 years before the subway replacement is planned to open. The TTC requires operations funding to run bus replacement service and capital funding for bus procurement and transforming the RT corridor into a rapid busway. A provincial subsidy for free transfers between GO and TTC would immediately create more travel options in Scarborough.

Under the terms of the 2019 transit upload agreement, the City of Toronto and Province of Ontario are meant to “continue to discuss responsibility for funding costs for maintaining Line 3 (Scarborough RT) and/or replacement transit service in Scarborough as a result of the change in scope and delivery” of the Scarborough subway extension.³

Expand rapid transit in Scarborough with the Eglinton East LRT

The Eglinton East light rail transit line (EELRT) is a 15-kilometre transit line that would connect Kennedy Station to Malvern via the University of Toronto-Scarborough Campus, serve seven Neighbourhood Improvement Areas, and be within walking distance of nearly 50,000 people. Toronto City Council has set aside \$1.2 billion to build the EELRT. Now provincial funding is needed. Operating new infrastructure projects creates additional financial pressure; to ensure the success of the infrastructure your government has invested in, operations funding is critical.

Strong public transit systems are essential to Ontario’s pandemic recovery. Now is the time to invest so that transit systems recover and travel is made more affordable for essential workers.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Shelagh Pizey-Allen'.

Shelagh Pizey-Allen, TTCriders

CC: Hon. Caroline Mulroney, Hon. Stan Cho, MPP Vijay Thanigasalam

² Social Planning Toronto, 2021: https://www.socialplanningtoronto.org/distance_based_transit_fares.

³ Toronto Transit Commission, 2019: [11_City_of_Toronto_Report_EX9_1_Toronto-Ontario_Transit_Upda.pdf \(azureedge.net\)](#)