

Pilon, Janet

Subject: Support changes to transit fare assist program

From: Joshua Weresch

Sent: November 2, 2023 2:03 PM

To: Office of the Mayor <Officeofthe.Mayor@hamilton.ca>; Danko, John-Paul <John-Paul.Danko@hamilton.ca>

Cc: clerk@hamilton.ca

Subject: Support changes to transit fare assist program

Dear Councillor Danko and Mayor Horwath,

Good morning. I hope this finds you well. I write as a resident in Ward 8, regarding the CBC Hamilton article written by Samantha Beattie, People with disabilities will soon have to pay Hamilton bus fare as new program slated for 2024 (2 Nov 2023 [<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/hamilton/hsr-fare-assist-1.7015114>]; accessed 2 Nov 2023). I ask that this letter be included on the public agenda of the Council meeting to be held on 8 November 2023.

I am appalled that the price of more transit for the poor, to which I am not at all opposed, is the disenfranchisement of low-vision users of public transit, users who are, according to advocates, members of a historically vulnerable population. The only just solution to pitting one group of vulnerable users against another group is free transit for all users, beginning with the adoption of the C.A.R.E.-free transit programme proposed by the district labour council. Moreover, I would like to know how many members of council even use public transit and what makes them more qualified to speak to and vote on how public transit is enacted than the very communities that will be deeply impacted and disenfranchised by this decision.

I have been using public transit through the week and week-end since 2011 and have seen only fares increase in the past decade. The increases at the fare-box serve only to make transit more and more unaffordable for those who most rely on it to enjoy freedom of mobility, a right guaranteed under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. According to Hamilton Citizens at City Hall (hamiltoncatch.org), in an article published in October 2020 (see <https://hamiltoncatch.org/articles/2020/10/05/gasoline-drop-will-hit-city-1>), the city has long relied on the flawed methodology of the Association of Municipalities of Ontario to under-fund systematically public transit; under that methodology, the provincial gasoline tax revenue, all of which is to be directed to public transit directly, is siphoned off so that 90% of that revenue is directed to road maintenance and repairs and 10% to public transit. If 100% of that revenue were directed to public transit, more buses, perhaps even electric ones, and unionized drivers for them, would be on the roads decreasing wear and tear on the roads themselves and reducing the need for maintenance.

I urge you and Council as a whole to support changes to this fare-assist program so that the voluntary pay program can continue and to re-consider their decision to support the fare-assist program altogether. Please extend the voluntary pay programme so that low-income users can also ride for free and continue to pressure the province to fund fully all forms of public transit so that it can be made free for all users, a step that would certainly help address the growing problem of climate change in the city.

I look forward to your actions in these regards.

Power to the people,

Joshua Weresch