



300 Dufferin Avenue
P.O. Box 5035
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N6A 4L9

London
CANADA

April 11, 2024

Dear Colleagues,

As you know, better transit service and mode share shifts are goals on which we all agree, however, we cannot achieve these without willing partners and new approaches.

Over the past year, we have engaged with the TVDSB administration and Trustees to discuss the opportunity and value to shifting secondary school students both those utilizing yellow bus service and those who are being driven around our city both for school and other purposes, to higher transit utilization. This has been successful in other Canadian municipalities including Kingston, Halifax, and Oakville, while a feasibility study is underway in Waterloo. This has also been a focus of FCM and it's Green Municipal Fund in particular.

The TVDSB undertook it's own feasibility study in 2023. Following that, the board debated and passed the following motion in February of this year:

Motion 1. That the Chair write a letter on behalf of the Board of Trustees to engage the City of London council in discussion regarding a Memorandum of Understanding. The Memorandum of Understanding will detail the logistics of a two-year pilot in collaboration with TVDSB and the London Transit Commission to provide students entering grade nine at Clarke Road Secondary School a free bus pass effective 2024 September and grant writing associated to fulfill the cost of the pilot. The letter will be shared on the TVDSB website.

Motion 2. That the Board submit a delegation request to provide public input on the pilot to the City of London and City of St. Thomas City Councils.

Motion 3. That the Chair write a letter on behalf of the Board of Trustees requesting Province of Ontario Education Funding for one or more of the recommended pilot projects to Minister Lecce's office

While we recognize that the recent budget deliberations were difficult and that while LTC received a very substantial budget increase, it did not receive it's full funding request, we believe that council has the opportunity to provide a one-time funding commitment through the Community Investment Reserve Fund or other appropriate sources of one time funding to enable this program. In Kingston, the first city in Ontario to move in this direction, by the time students reached Grade 12, their transit use had increased 3-fold compared to Grade 9, as they became more comfortable and confident in transit use. The opportunity to measure through a pilot project the opportunity for LTC to diversify and grow its future ridership base, particularly in advance of the new permanent Federal Transit funding stream slated to begin in 2026 should be seen as a worthwhile investment by Council. Based on the current cohort projections, this would see 227 students receive transit passes in 2024 and the addition of a second cohort in 2025 increasing this number to approximately 450.

From discussions with TVDSB administration and Trustees, we believe there are benefits to be realized by the school board, by students, and by the city at large. Improved student achievement and lower absence rates, opening up wider community access to before and after school clubs, sports and part-time jobs, lower reliance on parent transportation by car and increased mode shift to transit, among the benefits we anticipate could emerge from this initiative and if successful an expansion to the program to a phased in city wide role out.



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Therefore we are asking for your support for the following motion:

That the following actions be taken with respect to establishing a secondary school student transit pass pilot project:

- a) *the Civic Administration in collaboration with the London Transit Commission BE DIRECTED to initiate the development of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Thames Valley District School Board (TVDSB), for the purpose of partnering to deliver a pilot project to provide annual transit passes to secondary school students at Clarke Road Secondary School, including the following:*
- i) *the pilot project BE LIMITED to school years beginning September 2024 for all Grade 9 students and September 2025 for all Grade 9 and 10 students attending Clarke Road Secondary School;*
- ii) *the current post-secondary student annual transit pass agreements between the City of London, Western University and Fanshawe College and the current Children Under 12 Ride Free program BE CONSIDERED as templates to establish the framework for this pilot program; and*
- b) *the Civic Administration BE DIRECTED to report back to Council with the MOU, an appropriate source of financing, and metrics reporting for the pilot program;*

It being noted that the TVDSB has written the Minister of Education to ask for consideration for provincial funding support for a bussing pilot. Additionally, continuing the program beyond the pilot project would require a permanent source of ongoing operating funding from a variety of sources, including reallocation of funding or funding from senior levels of government that would need to be investigated.

Sincerely,

Shawn Lewis
Deputy Mayor, Ward 2

Peter Cuddy
Councillor, Ward 3