

Friday, April 26th, 2024

Your worship Mayor Morgan, and all Councillors as members of the SPPC:

Three days ago on April 23rd, London reached the fifth anniversary of London City Council's Climate Emergency Declaration. There were seven motivating observations, including the following: "*Whereas recent international research has indicated a need for massive reduction in carbon emissions in the next 11 years to avoid further and devastating economic, ecological, and societal loss...*"

In response, the City set up a Climate Emergency Action Plan (CEAP) to respond to its Declaration, which it called "a fundamental and required response". The very first of CEAP's three stated goals is "Net-zero community greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by 2050"; it also calls for a 55% reduction below 2005 levels by 2030. These challenging undertakings require a massive and ongoing response by the City administration, our corporations, and the community. They are also what motivates our Working Group.

Just this month, the City set itself Mode Share Targets seeing a reduction by 2050 in personal car use from 61% to 52.5% of trips taken, and an increase from 23% to 32.5% in the number of trips taken by transit or active transportation. What recurring occasions present themselves for the City to engage Londoners about this task it has set for itself?

International Car Free Day (CFD), held annually on September 22nd, has been around for thirty years. In 2000, the European Union adopted it as a European initiative. The UN Environment Program observes that "The event (Car Free Day) highlights the numerous benefits of going car-free to citizens...". We suggest that Car Free Day is an ideal time, annually and publicly, for the City and Londoners to take stock of where we are at on the road towards the Mode Share Targets.

Our Working Group has taken upon itself the task of enabling an ambitious Car Free Day by working with partners interested in a better environment and better health for the population. We hope that the City will journey with us on that day. In London, we will be highlighting two alternatives to personal car use on CFD: increased active transportation, and transit use. We foresee facilitated bicycle rides along the Thames Valley Parkway's three branches, and a festival in Wortley Village. Regarding transit, we envisage a Fare-free Day on London Transit buses on Sunday September 22nd, to provide, among other things, the chance for Londoners to use their transit service for free on Car Free Day, on a Sunday when most people have the time to try it out.

We are motivated by concern for the recent state of the environment in Canada, which has seen floods, extreme weather such as high winds bringing down trees and causing damage to infrastructure, and in particular a fundamental shift in the level of fire activity in our nation. (We note in passing that last year saw the previously-unimaginable amount of 18.6 million hectares burned, representing 5% of the forest cover in Canada. This devastation represents over 250% of the previous **record** level over the preceding 40 years of 7.1 million hectares burned in one year.) We believe that many, if not most, Londoners feel the need to respond to this environmental situation in some way.

Our efforts to enable an engaging Car Free Day on September 22nd will provide just such an opportunity for the City and its citizens to respond. We ask the city to partner with us by covering the anticipated \$17,000 cost of providing a Fare-free Day on its London Transit service, as proposed by Ward 11 Councillor Skylar Franke. We see this as a measured investment towards achieving the City's own GHG reduction goals.

Sincerely yours,  
David Stanford and Marian Robinson, Co-chairs,  
Working Group for Car Free Day 2024