

From: Brendon Samuels
Sent: Thursday, May 2, 2024 2:31 PM
To: SPPC <sppc@london.ca>
Cc: Franke, Skylar <sfranke@london.ca>
Subject: [EXTERNAL] SPPC May 7

To whom it may concern,

I am writing with respect to item 4.1 "Request for Implementation of a Fare Free Day - Councillor S. Franke" on the agenda for the upcoming meeting of the Strategic Priorities and Policy Committee on May 7, 2024. Please note that I provide consent for this submission to appear on the public added agenda.

I urge London City Council to support the request from Councillor Franke to allocate \$17,000 from the Community Investment Reserve Fund to provide funding to the London Transit Commission to offer a Fare Free Day on Sunday September 22nd 2024, in alignment with the international Car Free Day event and to encourage Londoners to choose sustainable transportation options.

Enabling the public to use transit and active transportation is paramount to fulfilling several areas of focus in the 2023-2027 Strategic Plan, including Mobility and Transportation, Economic Growth, Culture, and Prosperity, Climate Action and Sustainable Growth and Reconciliation, Equity, Accessibility, and Inclusion.

It is no secret that London is experiencing myriad challenges with transportation. While this one-time investment will not alleviate these challenges, it will have several positive effects on our City and create value that far exceeds the cost. Ultimately, this is about shifting behaviour and getting more people to care enough to try something new. It is an opportunity for the City to demonstrate its commitment to mobility and celebrate its transportation investments made to date.

There are indeed many Londoners who already depend on public transit for their daily transportation needs. There some who will likely never use public transit for various reasons. Then there is a large proportion of the general public who are open to being persuaded to use transit more regularly and depend on personal vehicles less. I believe the subsidy of public transit fares on Car Free Day, and accompanying promotions by the City and its partners, are an effective way to engage this target audience.

The City has carried out extensive research on transportation needs as part of the development of the Mobility Master Plan. From my personal point of view as a student and specialist in community engagement in climate action, I perceive that a lack of familiarity with transportation alternatives is a key barrier for many Londoners. Despite extensive ongoing communication efforts by the City, many Londoners still don't know about how to get around on bus or bike; they are less likely to be familiar with new transit routes and cycling infrastructure, leading to hesitation and defaulting to using a car because of its perceived convenience and familiarity.

How can we get more people familiarized with the LTC's services and actually taking the bus? First they need to go through the motions and try it, even just once. A simple way to facilitate this is by dedicating a day to positively reinforcing public transit and removing cost as a barrier to entry. While subsidizing a \$3.50 fare for one day might seem trivial, for many Londoners taking the bus to and from their destination on Car Free day, saving \$7

could impact how much they're available to spend on supporting a local business. For instance, a family of five people taking the bus together instead of driving could save \$35.

People respond positively to communications when there's something tangible in it for them, like a giveaway or a limited-time offer. In this case, they're being granted an opportunity through free bus service to maybe try a new experience and participate in a social movement larger than themselves, reflecting a priority of their community to share access to better ways to move around. If the City wants residents to give something – namely, to try changing up their commute – then investing in a fare subsidy is symbolically important as the City gives them something back in return.

Personally, if this plan goes ahead and transit fares are subsidized on Car Free Day, I'm looking forward to visiting the downtown core to browse goods at Covent Garden, check out the progress being made at Harris Park and dine at a local restaurant. The money I will save on transit that day will be fed right back into the local economy. I'll be able to proudly share on social media that the City where I live is celebrating public transit by inviting more residents to get on board.

Thanks for your consideration,

Brendon Samuels

Chair, Environmental Stewardship and Action Community Advisory Committee