



CITY OF LONDON
PUBLIC PARTICIPATION MEETING
MULTI-YEAR BUDGET PROCESS

Thursday, January 21, 2016

PUBLIC TRANSIT SUBSIDY PROGRAM
FOR LOW INCOME LONDONERS

Presented By
Jim Hewett, CLL Board Member
Chair, CLL Advocacy Committee



Good afternoon Your Worship and Members of Council. My name is Jim Hewett, I am the Chair of Community Living London's Advocacy Committee, Board Member of CLL's Board of Directors, and a parent of a young man who has a developmental disability.

Community Living London has actively advocated for 15 years for access to affordable public transportation for all Londoners, including those who have a disability and rely on ODSP Income Support.

Our last presentation to City Council was in 2013. We were then invited to engage with City Administration to work with other community stakeholders including representatives to develop a new proposed Public Transportation Subsidy Program. At that time, we were encouraged to focus on this process of community engagement, rather than our past efforts of presenting to City Council during the budget process. We agreed.

Fred Galloway was hired to facilitate this process, along with City Management Staff and representatives from various community groups including seniors, People with Disabilities, People with Visual Impairments (CNIB), and People on ODSP Income Support. This group reviewed subsidy programs in other municipalities and the various funding mechanisms. It was agreed that a new Public Transit Subsidy Program for London needed to be developed based on income rather than disability.

This Community Engagement process was put on hold in the summer of 2014. With the municipal election scheduled for late October 2014, it was expected that with a new council, new priorities would be identified.

After the election, we were encouraged to be patient through the development of the new Strategic Plan for the City of London with the hope that access to affordable public transportation would be identified as a priority within the plan.

The 2015-2019 Strategic Plan was approved and one of the key strategies within the plan was to "Explore a better subsidy model for transit riders so that more Londoners can benefit". Community Living London participated in the community consultation opportunities for the development of the Strategic Plan.

In follow up with City Administration, our understanding is that this project was not identified as a priority last year and additional funding has not been secured to date to support an expanded Public Transit Subsidy Program.



City staff will be developing a Subsidized Transit Business Plan that utilizes existing funding allocated to the current transit subsidy program for seniors, veterans and people with visual challenges. This has been scheduled for the second quarter of 2016.

The intent is to engage the community in the development of a new Public Transit Subsidy Program that utilizes existing subsidy funding. We understand that the proposed program will be presented to Council in October or November of 2016 for consideration and approval.

Needless to say, we are disappointed that after 15 years of advocating for access to affordable public transportation, Londoners who live below the poverty line have not experienced any increased access to affordable transportation.

We are disappointed that we have been asked to be patient through many changes with City Administration and numerous City Councils with no improvement to access to affordable transit for Londoners who live in poverty.

The Facts have not Changed:

Currently, people who rely on ODSP Income Support live below the poverty line. The purchase of a monthly bus pass in London consumes 8% to 10% of a person's monthly income. This also applies to all Londoners living in poverty.

People who receive ODSP Income Support are not entitled to any other provincial subsidy for transportation, other than a small amount on a temporary basis to search for a job and to get to specific medical appointments.

In the past, you have heard the many ways that lack of access to affordable transportation impacts significantly on a person's ability to:

- get to work,
- get to medical appointments,
- actively participate in recreation and leisure activities,
- grocery shop,
- visit with family and friends and
- actively contribute to the London community.

Denying people access to affordable transportation leads to social exclusion by restricting a person's ability to access goods, services and activities that are considered to hold high social values. Basic mobility is considered a right of each person.

People who live in poverty make difficult choices everyday such as:

- whether to purchase groceries or a bus ticket and then use the Food Bank because they cannot afford both
- if they accept a job to which they need to rely on public transportation to get to, or
- if they choose to volunteer at a local child care centre for example that is not within walking distance.

These are activities that you and I take for granted, but these choices are faced by people who live in poverty on a daily basis and therefore cannot enjoy the benefits or contribute as easily to the vibrancy of the city.

In the Municipal Scan of Public Transit Subsidies document presented by City Administration in February 2011, 11 communities were identified that provide subsidized access to public transportation to people who receive ODSP Income Supports or who live below the poverty line. This number continues to grow while London continues to provide no transportation subsidy for people who live who live in poverty.

What Needs to Happen?

Please, do not delay access to affordable public transportation for Londoners who live below the poverty line.

The need for a new Public Transit Subsidy Program in London has clearly been established.

This new program must provide access to affordable public transportation based on a person's income and ability to pay, rather than their disability or age.

To start, the implementation of the new program can be based on utilization of existing funding allocated for transportation subsidy. We understand that this is approximately \$535,000.00 annually.

Within the multi-year funding process, consideration must be given to increasing this amount of funding depending on usage.

Although this City continues to face significant financial constraints, the citizens of London believe Council would show great leadership, if it recognized the needs of this group of citizens, who are experiencing very significant hardship, as a priority that can no longer be ignored. The issue of poverty has resulted in the creation of the Mayor's Task Force on Poverty and we applaud this initiative.

By continuing to not provide access to affordable transportation for all Londoners, City Council continues to portray an image that does not value the contributions made by people who live in poverty. Numerous other municipalities ensure that affordable transportation is available and this clearly demonstrates the value held by all citizens of those communities to fully participate in community life.

We are now asking for London City Council to take action immediately.

We look forward to receiving information on what next steps and timelines we can expect towards access to affordable public transportation for all Londoners, including those who live in poverty?

Thank you.