

## Community and Protective Services Committee

### Public Participation Meeting Notes

Tuesday, December 13<sup>th</sup>, 2016

# **Proposed Subsidy Model for Public Transportation**

Presented by: Jim Hewett, Member

Board of Directors for Community Living London

Members of the Community and Protective Services Committee, thank you for your consideration of this very important issue and for allowing the community to provide feedback on the Proposed Public Transit Subsidy Program. My name is Jim Hewett and I am a member of the Board for Community Living London, the Chair of the Advocacy Committee and a family member of an adult with a developmental disability.

I have been involved in many advocacy efforts to City Council for well over a decade for the creation of a public transit subsidy program that is geared to each person's ability to pay on behalf of my son and all people who live on a fixed income and do not have access to affordable public transportation.

Although Community Living London's primary mandate is the provision of supports and services for people with developmental disabilities and their families, access to affordable transportation for all Londoners is critical to ensure that all people have the opportunity to engage in their community. This improves quality of life and ensures a vibrant and diverse City. Access to affordable transportation will help eliminate isolation and increase opportunities for Londoners to engage in meaningful ways within their community.

As a member of the Community Task Group that participated with the City in the development of this proposed model, I believe it meets the intention of the group based on the parameters as determined by City Administration.

It was made clear that any new subsidy model would be implemented utilizing the existing public transit subsidy for people registered through CNIB and for seniors. Based on this, the group recommended a fair and equitable subsidy program that focused on a person's ability to pay, rather than based on disability or age.

Our goal is not to take anything away from a person, or a group of people that is needed, but it is critical to ensure that the limited funding allocated to public transit subsidy is offered in an equitable manner that will assist those most in need in our community.

That is why I am advocating for the City to approve the proposed model and not a model that solely focuses on people with developmental disabilities who live on a fixed income. This is a much bigger issue that has far reaching repercussions if access to affordable transportation is not addressed.

The City has identified access to affordable transportation and poverty as two significant areas within the current Strategic Plan. The proposed model aligns with these key areas of effort.

As you are aware, the proposed model will offer a 50% reduction when purchasing a monthly bus pass and this will be available to any person living below the Low Income Cut Off, and this just makes sense. This is a great start to an equitable public transportation subsidy program. Ideally we would like to see the City of London approve an increase in the funding that is available for the program, but we are pleased that we are moving in the right direction.

We are all aware of the many ways that a 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 which restricts their ability to enjoy the benefits, or contribute as easily to the vibrancy of the city.

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

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.

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

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.

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 based on a person's ability to pay 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 and approve the proposed model of public transportation subsidy.