

The Regional Municipality of York
17250 Yonge Street
Newmarket, ON L3Y 6Z1

March 3, 2021

RE: G.2 2021 to 2022 Budget - Transportation Services

Dear York Region Council – Committee of the Whole,

I am a Vaughan resident and Executive Director of A Voice for Transit, an advocacy group focused on transit equity in Toronto and York Region. I would like to see increased service in York Region Transit (YRT) bus service on routes that have experienced cuts in service, but not in demand since April 2020. Essential workers and low-income individuals continue to use bus service. When schools are open, students are also regular riders. In October-December 2020, I rode YRT about 15 times. Women and BIPOC made up the majority of passengers. Intersectional women, who were also BIPOC or elderly, accounted for a large percentage of these riders. (Crenshaw, 1989) They are more exposed to cold weather and walking alone at night over long distances.

One of the affected routes is the 5 Clark, which used to run on Glen Shields Ave. from 5:10 am to 11:06 pm on Monday to Friday. It now runs from 6:52 am to 7:59 pm at the Clark stop. That is a roughly 27% service reduction. Nevertheless, there has not been a 27% drop in demand from essential workers employed in health care, grocery stores, warehouses and service work. This has also led to these individuals having to walk more than one kilometre late at night or early in the morning to reach their homes or bus stops. Therefore, I ask that York Region Council request that a portion of the proposed \$389 million Transportation Services operating budget be dedicated to restoring pre-pandemic service hours on the 5 Clark bus route.

In my capacity as a citizen, I ask that York Region Council consider instituting a Parking Sales Levy to help with YRT operating funding strictly. TransLink has a 21% Parking Sales Tax in Metro Vancouver since 2007 that funds transit and road infrastructure maintenance and improvement projects. It generated 4% of TransLink's revenues in 2009. York Region Council may consider implementing a similar measure to help fund YRT's operating revenues as high-income groups can help fund transit operations used by low-income individuals. In FY2019, 63% of YRT's operations were funded from tax levies meanwhile roads received 77% of funding from tax levies.

Thirdly, I ask that York Region Council prioritize walking and cycling infrastructure and safety be in road and intersection projects in this budget. The February 25, 2021 budget presentation, p.29, highlights numerous automobile-oriented road improvement projects. I would specifically highlight pedestrian safety and cycling improvements at the following intersections: Dufferin Street and Clark Avenue, Dufferin Street and Glen Shields Avenue, and Dufferin Street and Steeles Avenue. The latter was the top pedestrian intersection in 2015, according to York Region's own data. I spoke with staff at the Regional Municipality of York in 2017 about pedestrian safety along Dufferin Street close to Steeles Avenue, but there were no visible improvements made. Protecting pedestrian and cyclist safety also protects essential workers, who are often members of BIPOC communities.

Lastly, I ask that York Region Council request the prioritization of porous pavements and reduce the usage of concrete in its road and sidewalk infrastructure projects. According to [Jeremy Gregory](#), executive director of MIT's Concrete Sustainability Hub, cement accounts for 8% of global emissions. Cement is an essential ingredient to concrete. By including specifications in requests for proposals on construction projects to include substitutes to concrete, there would be reduced carbon emissions. It would also lead to less wasteful usage of concrete being placed in road and sidewalk projects.

Thank you for considering my concerns regarding the 2021 budget.

Best,

Jean-François Obregón