Mayor Sam Katz and Members of the Executive Policy Committee:

As you are well aware, the majority of my presentations throughout the years concerning public transit have related to the constant "nickle and diming to death" of transit users through yearly transit fare hikes. Today I am here to protest the "quartering to death" of transit users by the proposed transit fare hike. The number of paid ridership on transit has declined since 1986. Especially noteworthy is looking at Chart #3 in the Administrative Report, "Number of Revenue Passengers" - from 1993 there were approximately 50,000,000 paying transit users when the fare was $1.30, then it declined to 39,000,000 in 2004 when the transit fare was $1.80. This signifies a tremendous drop in paying passengers.

Not too surprisingly, in the past 2 years, the number of paying passengers has stabilized - and during this time, we have not had an increase in transit fares! One other reason for the stability of paying passengers on buses is, besides the aboriginal population, the influx of new immigrants who, for the most part are working at low paying jobs and cannot afford a car. In fact it is amazing the multiculturalism that you see on buses these days, something you wouldn't have seen 5 years ago. Often you don't even hear very much English on the bus. But please be assured that a 25 cent increase will destabilize ridership in the next year and as Councillor Gerbasi has said, "These increases will hit people very hard who can least afford it, including people with disabilities and those on fixed income."

In reviewing the Administration Report on the proposed increases, I noticed under Policy Implications they say that the recommended fare structure is not consistent with the Council adopted fare setting policy. In fact, the administration admits that they are not following the policies that Council has recommended regarding this issue, which state: "That all City fees and charges increase annually by the rate of inflation.". The proposed increase to fares is well above the rate of inflation. In fact, the proposed increase to cash fares is 12.5%. Secondly, in 1996, Council adopted a Transit Fare policy that would require the relationship to be fixed between the full cash fare and all other fare categories. Obviously, the current proposed transit increases <u>do not</u> have a fixed relationship. For example, cash fares will rise 25 cents, bus tickets will rise 10 cents, while bus passes will remain the same price. Quite bluntly, why develop policies and then ignore them? If you want to increase transit fares, then change your policies first.

Furthermore, in regards to policies, it might benefit this standing committee to remember that on June 20th of this year, Council unanimously passed a Motion moved by Councillor Gerbasi and seconded by Mayor Katz that recognized that public transit provides essential and universal mobility to residents within Canada's urban areas, thereby Council acknowledged, for the first time, public transportation is not a "ghettoized" system, but that the word 'universal' means that the public transportation system belongs to everybody, including suburbanites, as well as offering a choice to people other than the automobile. Even more significant, this Motion indicated that public transportation reduced greenhouse gas emissions and air pollution. As Tom Brodbeck of the Winnipeg Sun said, "If politicians were serious about reducing greenhouse gas emissions they would invest heavily into Transit to chop fares, improve quality, comfort and frequency of routes and turn bus terminals into retail outlets where you can buy coffee and newspapers". By increasing bus fares, you undermine the policies that you passed unanimously on June 20th regarding universality of the transit system, offering a choice between the car and the transit system, and reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

Furthermore, this committee is perfectly aware that in the Capital Budget last year there was an injection of $142 million for transit upgrades over the next 6 years. All of the increased monies were coming from increased provincial grants and federal government (10% of Winnipeg's share of the gas tax money) and Bill C-66 Government of Canada money specific to transportation. Indications were that there were to be 160 new buses - 20 of them articulated, electric, hybrid buses in the next 6 years, replacing 30 old buses each year. Please tell me, where are the articulated buses? I haven't seen a single one! Furthermore, those that are new are smaller by about 10-15 people. Yes, they are low-floor, which is good, but there's just not enough seats, making it very uncomfortable - especially if it is crowded and many people have to stand. Also, there has been no noticeable technological improvements over the past year such as bus radio system replacement so that drivers can talk to each other, electronic fare boxes, and automatic transfer dispensers. When are we going to see these changes - at the end of the 6 years - maybe never, and we just won't notice?!!

Finally, there seems to be no long term planning for Handi-Transit, according to Laurie Hunter of the Manitoba Society of Seniors. City Councillors have failed to recognize that seniors make up 13.8% of the population of Winnipeg, that baby boomers are fast approaching 65 (like myself) and account for 30% of Winnipeg's population. This will mean a significant increase in demand for Handi-Transit in the next 2-3 years. With recreational rides being denied now due to fewer vehicles on the road, Handi-Transit needs to do a lot more planning to increase their efficiency if they are ever going to meet the increased demand.

Ignoring the public, ignoring Council policy, ignoring Administrative reports that tell you the more you raise fares, the fewer passengers you will have on Transit, and the lack of long-term planning of Handi-Transit will ultimately result in the total collapse of our public transportation system.

Thank you.

Nick Ternette is community and political activist, freelance writer and broadcaster.