March 17, 2020

Mayor and Council,

I am writing this submission to EPC as part of the 2020-23 budget process as a citizen of Winnipeg, and member of Functional Transit Winnipeg, to tell you I want you to fund our public transit to make it a world-class, frequent system that any Winnipegger would choose to use over a car.

The proposed operating funding cuts of $3.2 million to Transit in 2020 are unacceptable. While the proposed Transit 4-year budget is being described as an increase overall, the increases are based on future-year projections, and we have seen from previous years that future-year projections are often not adhered to, and there is a substantial cut in 2020. Cuts to service on 14 routes, axing the very popular U-Pass program as well as the Downtown Spirit are huge steps backward in fostering increased ridership in the face of the climate crisis.

We must implement a frequent service network across the entire city with buses arriving every 10 minutes, seven days a week and into the evening, on all 22 rapid, direct and frequent transit routes proposed in the Transit Master Plan. This plan must be funded by the city without cuts to feeder route service, and implemented in the next four years. Frequent service implementation on the new Blue line is meaningless if frequent service is not implemented city-wide. Implementing it only in a suburban area ignores the majority of bus riders and favours only suburban commuters.

The proposed cuts must be taken off the table completely.

I've been a regular transit rider for the past 17 years, because I happen to hate driving. But whether I take transit or not doesn't matter. Whether YOU take transit or not doesn't matter – what matters is that you reflect on when and why transit does not work for you, and others, and act accordingly as an elected official, to make the system good enough that anyone would choose it over a car.

That's what we need in the face of the climate crisis. We need a system that gets people out of their cars, not on some sense of moral obligation, but because it's going to get them to work, to the doctor, to the store and to their evening leisure destinations faster and more conveniently than their cars will.

If you read the news you'll see constant articles about the urgency of the climate crisis. That we need to triple efforts immediately just to avoid the WORST effects of climate change. I can't even read those articles anymore honestly – it causes me so much anxiety and frankly, a deep sense of despair-- for me, for my 1 year-old daughter, for everyone. It's terrifying to me and it should be terrifying to every human on this planet because our survival is at stake here, nothing less. It's especially terrifying when we see inaction on the part of elected officials in the face of this emergency. Here's something you can do: fund transit, right now. Take bold leadership on the climate crisis and give us a viable transit system: it's your responsibility. The alternative, inaction, is not just suicidal – it will impact all of us.

On top of climate change, the benefits to our city that a world-class transit system will provide are significant. For one, more people traveling by bus means less road infrastructure needed to transport

more people. This will save money by preventing road expansions. Good transit will encourage density. Good transit will support infill. It will support more productive land uses, generating more tax revenue.

And if we want to be a world-class, growing city of 1 million, a great transit system is imperative. We need metro-level service. Imagine a bus transit system with metro-level service that is world-renowned. If we want to get ourselves on the map for more than cold winters, let's do it this way.

The proposed Transit Master Plan frequent network is a plan with a lot of potential. That's IF it's funded properly. It needs to have 10-minute frequent service in order for it to be good. In a plan like this, where transfers are going to be a given on most trips, frequent service is ESSENTIAL to ensure this system is better than our current one, which as you know has many issues. As a regular bus rider, I know very well how awful it is to miss your transfer and then not have another bus come for a half hour. As a mom bussing with a little baby, this is especially scary considering how cold our winters can get. We cannot let this happen with the new system. It impedes our ability to get to work on time, to get to medical appointments, to drop our kids off at daycare, to get to the theatre before the doors close. We need a system that can allow all Winnipeggers to lead full, robust, professional and family-oriented lives, all by bus. That's the only thing that will get people out of there cars en-mass.

Creating the system I'm describing will also, importantly, provide world-class transit to those Winnipeggers who do not have the luxury of CHOOSING transit, who depend on it out of necessity. It will be amazing service, for everyone.

Where I live, near Portage Avenue, we enjoy very frequent service. I don't even have to look at the schedule, I know a bus will be coming within 5-7 minutes at any time. It's amazing. I want everyone to know what it feels like to have effortless, convenient frequent service. It's far better than being chained to your car. (the Portage buses, by the way, are regularly packed to standing room only, at all times of day and night, not just rush hour).

In the 2019 budget consultations, public transit came out as Winnipeggers' top priority. You've received hundreds of emails this month alone telling you it's our top priority. Please listen to us.

We are asking you to fund the Transit Master Plan proposed network to have 10-minute frequencies on all rapid/frequent/direct routes, with no cuts to feeder routes. Please take bold leadership here. We are telling you this is what we want you to do. You have a mandate from your constituents. You have a responsibility to the future of the planet. You have an opportunity to make Winnipeg an amazing, world-class city. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Sandra Klowak