



September 9, 2021

Dear party leaders,

On behalf of transit systems and their riders, it is with disappointment that I write about the absence of operating support for public transit in your platforms.

Each platform speaks about the importance of building public transit. Some include commitments to electrify transit fleets to maximize their contributions to climate action. These promises are welcome. In normal times, your public transit proposals would represent significant steps in the right direction and would be celebrated. These are, however, not normal times.

Pre-pandemic, more than half the cost of operating public transit was covered by the farebox. Pre-pandemic, transit systems enjoying significant ridership increases—from 2009 to 2019, it grew by 20%. Pre-pandemic, the top priority for transit systems was dependable, predictable capital support to help attract new riders by building new lines.

But Covid has turned transit's economics, and priorities, on their head. Ridership is now less than half pre-pandemic levels—and for every 10% drop in ridership, transit systems lose \$470 million in revenue a year. Last year's Safe Restart Agreement largely filled this gap and allowed public transit to continue to operate. We currently move more than two million Canadians a day.

This funding is about to expire, and unless extended will almost inevitably lead to service cuts. The people hardest-hit will be workers and students who live too far from work or school to walk or cycle, but who don't earn enough to drive. They will make daily life harder for many seniors and people living with disabilities. And they will make cities more congested, and climate targets harder to reach.

In the United States, the federal government recognizes that Covid will create a multi-year drop in ridership. Its second round of support for public transit extends through 2024. Canada should extend operating support, too.

We should keep expanding public transit. But building new transit while cutting existing service doesn't make sense. Helping systems buy electric buses they can't afford to run also doesn't make sense. Just as we wouldn't build a house without a way to keep the lights on or the water running, we shouldn't build new transit without also keeping today's buses and trains moving.

Transit systems welcome your support of capital investments, but to maximize their benefits the other side of the coin also needs support. Governments of all stripes supported transit's inclusion in the Safe Restart

Main Office / Bureau principal  
Suite 1401, 55 York Street,  
Toronto, ON Canada M5J 1R7

Ottawa Office / Bureau d'Ottawa  
Suite 200, 440 Laurier Avenue West,  
Ottawa ON Canada K1R 7X6

Telephone: (416) 365-9800

Transit@cutaactu.ca    www.cutaactu.ca

Telephone: (416) 365-9800

Agreement because of the essential role it plays in the lives of millions of people each day. The reasons we received unprecedented operating support last year remain unchanged, and so accordingly we ask that before election day you commit to adding operating support to the ambitious transit expansion plans you have released.

We look forward to working with whichever party, or parties, form government to improve public transit. By expanding it, certainly, and by supporting existing service so it's there for the millions of Canadians who rely on it every day.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Marco D'Angelo". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Marco D'Angelo  
President & CEO