

ACTION KEELE

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FREE



WHERE'S THE BUS AT?

Public transit connects the essential pieces of our lives. It's what takes us from home to work and brings us back again. It's how we drop our children off at daycare and pick them up. It's what takes us to the grocery store, the doctor, and our favourite place to meet friends. When it runs smoothly, public transit carries us to our destination without a hassle. But when it doesn't run smoothly--when a bus is running late or the subway won't move--it can be a real headache! More than a simple annoyance, a badly running transit system has serious consequences for our lives.

A delayed bus can put our jobs at risk, it can result in a missed dentist appointment, a detention at school, and not picking up our children from daycare on time can lead to fines racking up! But no matter how much we may suffer at the hands of the TTC, we have no choice but to keep using it. There is no Mercedes

(with a driver!) waiting for us in the driveway. As working class people, it's public transit that moves us.

And the TTC knows this. It knows that working people in this city depend on it. It thinks that we will simply tolerate the bad service, because what choice do we have? The TTC calls itself "the better way." Yet, recent studies have shown that Toronto has the longest commuting times in North America! This makes sense when we consider that, when compared with other major cities, Toronto has the least kilometres covered by public transit (shortest public transit reach) and the highest density of transit use (greatest number of people using each kilometer of transit)! On top of delivering a substandard public service, the TTC tries to convince us that its "fare is fair." But we know, of course, the fare is too damn expensive. Toronto has the most expensive monthly transit pass out of all major North American cities.

We don't have to tolerate this combination of bad service and high cost. We can choose to make public transit work for us. We can choose to come together with those riding the TTC every day. And we can use this collective strength to change a system that thinks we will keep our heads down and stay quiet. It's about time those who depend on the TTC--the working class public--take back this public transit system.

JAPAN AND AUSTRALIA: BUS DRIVERS STRIKE BY GIVING FREE RIDES

When workers are on strike, we usually expect them to stop working and walk the picket line. But that's not what happened in the Japanese city of Okayama, where the bus drivers decided to strike without interrupting regular bus service. Everything ran normally, with a twist: bus drivers refused to accept fare from riders.

Bus drivers were looking to improve their job security. When their employer refused their demands, the drivers decided it was time to take action. Thinking through options, drivers realized that going on strike would mean inconvenience to riders, who were natural allies in their fight for more secure employment. So instead, the bus drivers decided on a creative solution: refuse taking fares.

For the entire day on May 3rd, 2018, bus drivers completed their regular routes but covered fare collection boxes with sheets. Riders were able to hop on the bus and ride through their journey normally, all for free. In this way, drivers were able to pressure their employer with loss of revenue, all while ensuring that riders still had access to the vital service.

Beginning September 3, 2018, members of the Transport Workers' Union in New South Wales, Australia will refuse to accept fares on some routes in Sydney and Central Coast in an effort to pressure their employer to negotiate a new contract. If it can happen in Japan and Australia, why not Toronto?



Bus drivers in Brisbane refused fares to pressure their employer to increase their wages and improved bus safety in 2017

RIDERS AND DRIVERS UNITED

Sometimes it might not seem like bus drivers and riders share similar interests: Drivers want stable, good paying jobs. Riders want cheap and efficient transit service. In a transit system where fares cover most of the transit operating budget, it is easy to see how drivers and riders could have conflicting ideas over what constitutes a “fair fare.” However, this doesn’t have to be the case. Both drivers and riders would be best off joining together to fight for high quality, accessible publicly funded public transit.

Although it might seem like higher fares mean higher wages for drivers and other frontline TTC, that hasn’t been the case. TTC workers haven’t got a raise

since they were declared an essential service in 2011 (which made it illegal for them to strike). Over that same time the cost of a token has from \$2.50 to \$3.00 and metropasses have increased from \$121.00 to \$146.25. If the workers aren’t getting paid more, where is all that money going? Anyone who rides the 41 knows it hasn’t been used to improve service on this route. While the TTC talks a lot about fare evasion, even though TTC experiences similar rates of fare evasion similar to other comparable transit systems, we know who is really not getting away with paying their fair share: the rich, who enjoy unreasonably low taxes.

Riders and drivers have a shared interest in increasing public funding for transit and reducing the TTC dependency on fares.

JOIN OUR WEEKLY CANVASS!

Help us fight for good, accessible, and reliable public transit in the working class neighbourhoods along Keele St.

Get in touch: actionkeele@gmail.com



WHAT WE'RE ABOUT

There are two Torontos: one for Bay Street bankers and lawyers, another for working people. While the city’s wealthy elite drive by in luxury cars on their way to fancy restaurants and expensive condos, the rest of us lack access to adequate and affordable public transit to bring us to work, get our groceries, take our kids to school, and to visit our friends.

Public services of all kinds are underfunded so that Bay Street billionaires can keep their taxes low. As a result, public transit is too crowded, too expensive, and service too infrequent. This is especially the case for working class, poor, racialized, and immigrant neighbourhoods, such as those along the 41 Keele route.

We are here to say that it is time this came to an end. Better public transit means less stress in our lives and a fairer and greener city. It also means more and better public sector jobs. Access to reliable, efficient transportation is a right. As such, we demand accessible and dignified public bus service on the 41 Keele route, and for working people across the city.