

Wednesday, December 16th 2020

The Honourable Chrystia Freeland  
Minister of Finance  
House of Commons  
Ottawa, Ontario  
K1A 0A6

**RE: Budget 2021 recommendations on public transit**

Dear Minister Freeland,

We hope this letter finds you and your family healthy and safe.

We appreciate your government's leadership during the COVID-19 crisis and your support, in particular, for public transit funding.

As a coalition of Canadian organizations concerned with transit, we are pleased to provide you with recommendations for Budget 2021.

The Keep Transit Moving coalition brings together dozens of riders' associations, unions and environmental groups from across the country. Founded in the spring of 2020, the coalition seeks to win affordable and efficient public transit for all Canadians. We believe transit contributes to the country's economic vitality and to the fight against climate change and inequality.

**Recovery and Rebuild: An Opportunity to Seize**

Sustainable mobility has gained much public attention in recent years, and it is now time to seize the opportunity. When the pandemic is tamed, it is crucial that we see a rapid and robust return of ridership. To facilitate this, government must commit substantial funding to public transit. Please remember that transit investments are just that: investments, not expenses.

To achieve the goals we all share -- particularly regarding air quality and greenhouse gas reductions -- we must prioritize public investment in transit over more energy-intensive forms of transportation. Transit tackles congestion, boosts the economy, creates jobs and promotes economic justice. Paratransit for seniors and people with disabilities is critical to the quality of life of our most vulnerable citizens, as well as the functioning of the health care system.

The pandemic has also highlighted the importance of public transit as a social safety net: essential workers such as PSWs, nurses and doctors rely on transit to get to work.

**Pre-budget Submission**

Having outlined transit's vital role, we would like to submit the following recommendations as you prepare Budget 2021:

**1) Establish permanent funding for transit *operations***

While we applaud your government's support for transit infrastructure, it is important to remember that infrastructure projects create additional financial pressure on transit agencies. To ensure quality service and to maintain services' affordability, we urge you to also provide funding for *operations*.

**2) Maintain previously-announced investments in transit infrastructure**

**3) Increase investment in transit infrastructure**

This would include high-return investments such as bus priority lanes and transit signal priority, as well as maintenance and power-supply facilities for rapidly-growing e-bus fleets. Asset maintenance is crucial so existing infrastructure is optimally maintained and its useful life maximized.

## **Conclusion**

When your government announced its Climate Plan earlier this month, we were very encouraged to see the Prime Minister's renewed commitment to permanent transit funding. Thank you for this. We very much look forward to further details in the new year.

In sum, given the climate emergency and the vital need to promote social and economic equity, increased transit investments are essential.

Should you require further detail on our recommendations, we would be very pleased to meet with you or your staff.

In any event, we would like to hear your response to our suggestions.

Please accept our best wishes for a safe and restful holiday season.

Yours,

The Keep Transit Moving Coalition  
La Coalition pour le transport collectif canadien