

July 27th, 2020

The Honourable Brian Pallister  
Premier of Manitoba  
Room 204, Legislative Building  
450 Broadway  
Winnipeg, MB R3C 0V8

Hon. Rochelle Squires  
Minister of Municipal Relations  
Room 311, Legislative Building  
450 Broadway  
Winnipeg, MB R3C 0V8

Dear Premier Pallister and Minister Squires,

Every day, thousands of Winnipeggers rely on the transit system to get them where they need to be. Whether it's essential health care workers on the frontlines of this pandemic, families taking their kids to daycare, or seniors going out for groceries, every Winnipegger deserves an affordable, accessible, and frequent transit service. A well-funded transit system keeps them, and our economy, moving safely.

As we enter Phase 4 of *Manitoba's Pandemic and Economic Roadmap for Recovery*, Winnipeggers deserve a functional transit system that allows riders to maintain physical distancing. Provincial public health orders continue to recommend "social distancing" of two metres between members of the public in order to prevent the spread of COVID-19, but packed buses and insufficient service have made that a challenge for too many Winnipeggers.

Unfortunately, a lack of investment in public transportation, including the end of the 50-50 funding agreement for transit services, has left Winnipeg Transit struggling to maintain adequate service for riders. We are also troubled that you have yet to commit to using up to \$65 million of federal funds dedicated to improving transit service during the COVID-19 pandemic ([Winnipeg Free Press, Pallister Ponders Federal Transit Money, 23 July 2020](#)).

Despite the City of Winnipeg's intention to resume Transit's regular summer schedule with full weekday service on August 4<sup>th</sup>, we know that capacity has been a longstanding issue, and more must be done to ensure public health orders are adhered to.

A 2018 *Probe Research* survey showed that Winnipeg Transit users put more frequent and reliable service as their top priority to free up seats on busy buses and make it easier to get around the city ([Probe Research & ATU 1505, Views on Transit in Winnipeg, June 2018](#)). Simply put, packed buses and a lack of service puts the lives of everyone who relies on transit at a severe risk.

Investments in transit not only help Winnipeggers safely return to work, but also help kickstart our economy. A 2010 study by the *Canadian Urban Transit Association* showed that for every

dollar invested in public transportation, we see a return of \$3.37 ([Canadian Urban Transit Association, \*The Economic Impact of Transit Investment: A National Survey, 2010\*](#)). Moving Manitoba forward requires strong, long-term investments in public transit, helping to stimulate the economy and put Manitoba on the road to recovery

It's time that we build a transit system that we can all be proud of, and provides all riders with frequent, affordable, and accessible service.

**We are calling on the provincial government to immediately use the allocated federal dollars to improve Winnipeg Transit's operations, to ensure adequate social distancing on buses, and help kickstart our economy.** By enhancing operating spending, this would help Winnipeg Transit move towards providing 10 minute frequency on all 22 rapid, frequent, and direct transit routes as recommended in the city's draft Transit Master Plan. This will help keep Manitobans safe during the pandemic, and help ensure a strong economic recovery by providing riders with better access to businesses across Winnipeg.

Now is the time for the provincial government to show leadership on public transportation, keeping Manitobans safe while helping our economy recover.

Sincerely,

Functional Transit Winnipeg Board of Directors:

Derek Koop - President

Matt Austman

Wendy Boyd

Daniel Denton

Allen Heerema

Evan Krosney

Carly McNeill

Kyle Owens

Brian Pincott

Nicole Roach