February 19, 2009

Ms. Ulli Watkiss
City Clerk
City of Toronto
Toronto City Hall
100 Queen Street West
Toronto, Ontario
M5H 2N2

Dear Ms. Watkiss:

At its meeting on Wednesday, February 18, 2009, the Commission considered the attached report entitled, “Trolley Bus Service Review.”

The Commission adopted the Recommendation contained in the report, as listed below:

“It is recommended that the Commission forward this report to the City of Toronto and to Metrolinx, noting that:

- this report discusses the potential for re-introducing electric trolley bus service in Toronto, primarily as a means of reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions;

- trolley buses consume less energy, and produce lower emissions, than either diesel or hybrid buses;

- locally, at street level, GHG emissions from trolley bus services are essentially zero, and there are GHG-free sources of electrical energy (wind, solar, etc.) to power trolley buses, so trolley bus services could, in theory, operate with zero GHG emissions;

- trolley buses are move attractive from the standpoint of air quality, noise, ride quality, the ability to negotiate steep grades, and their ability to accelerate in heavy traffic;

- trolley buses are less attractive because they have less flexibility or adaptability for route alterations or extensions or longer-term diversionary operation due to road disruptions;

- the high cost of investment in infrastructure, including both electrical sub-stations for converting high-voltage alternating current (AC) to low-voltage direct current (DC), as well as the overhead traction power system, results in the unit costs of service delivery being much higher for trolleys than for either diesel or hybrid buses;

- the implied value (cost) per tonne of GHG emissions achievable through the operation of trolley buses (about $1,840 per tonne) is considerably higher than values currently assumed for GHG reductions in most benefits case analyses (as, for example, Metrolinx studies, which use $40 per tonne);

- if trolley bus service were to become more attractive, as a result of situations such as the doubling of diesel fuel costs and a matching increase in ridership on trolley bus routes, then the incremental cost of converting current TTC services to trolley bus operation, and the implied value per tonne of GHG emissions, would still be very high relative to hybrid and diesel buses; and

- there would be a large capital investment requirement to re-introduce electric trolley buses in Toronto, but such an investment could be considered by the City as a means of advancing the environmental objectives of the City's Climate Change Action Plan and Sustainable Transportation Initiative.

The foregoing is forwarded to the City Executive Committee for information.

Sincerely,

Vincent Rodo
General Secretary
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Attachment