



July 20, 2020

City of Toronto - Executive Committee  
10th Floor, West Tower, City Hall  
100 Queen Street West  
Toronto, ON M5H 2N2

RE: July 21 Committee Meeting

Dear Executive Committee:

I write to you on behalf of the *Social Assistance Coalition of Scarborough* (SACS) to express our support for better bus service for Scarborough. We are a Social Assistance Recipient led group that pushes for improvements to Ontario Works (OW) and the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) so that people receiving social assistance and people with disabilities can live with justice and dignity. **Our group represents constituents across Scarborough and we are available for consultation regarding the design of new bus-only lanes in our area.**

As we continue to cope with the COVID-19 pandemic and take steps towards recovery and reopening, we want to show our support for the TTC recommendations of fast-tracked bus-only lanes, as well as advocate for increased bus-only lanes and additional bus services in Scarborough.

### **1. Support for fast-track more bus-only lanes NOW**

Reliable transit service plays a vital role in keeping our city moving. As Toronto starts to recover from COVID-19 and businesses reopen, motor vehicle traffic volume is likely to increase as people with access to personal vehicles seek to maintain physical distance from others on their journeys. Therefore, we are calling the Executive Committee to **implement surface transit priority measures on all the surface corridors especially 5 corridors approved by TTC Board on July 14th to encourage more people to take public transit instead of driving.**

By fast-tracking the bus-only lanes, it supports economic recovery, environmental sustainability, efficient mobility, and social vibrancy. And it improves access and mobility for city residents by providing fast and reliable connections to the city-wide transit network of subways, other bus routes, and GO Transit stations. Therefore, we ask Councillors to **allocate funding to speed up the study and implementation by this Fall.**

## 2. Support for more bus-only lanes in Scarborough NOW

Scarborough is transit desert and cannot continue to be last on the list when it comes to public transit. We thank you, trusting that the Eglinton East bus-only lane approved by TTC Board will be passed by the Executive Committee today. Yet, Scarborough is in desperate need of more fast-tracked bus-only lanes to solve the issue of overcrowding on some busiest bus routes to enable physical distancing. Thus, we ask the Executive Committee to **expedite bus-only lanes on Finch East to 2021, rather than 2022 or later.**

Our members are deeply concerned and disappointed that Lawrence East was taken off from the priority list for bus-only lanes. It is well known in Scarborough that the 54 Lawrence East bus is often crowded. It carries 33,300 passengers per day (pre-Covid). The Lawrence East route is in NIAs and serves low-income and racialized communities, who are often in precarious jobs and heavily rely on buses to get to work. We ask the Scarborough Councillors **to ensure Lawrence East is reinstated to the bus-only lane priority list.**

## 3. Support for more bus services in Scarborough and safety measures for buses NOW

Owing to physical distancing measures to reduce the possibility of transmission of COVID-19, **more bus services on busy routes in Scarborough are necessary to meet ridership needs.** As the economy is reopened, TTC needs to significantly increase the number of buses running on Markham Road, Sheppard East in order to keep people safe from COVID-19. Right now, there is crowding on buses and people in Scarborough often have to wait as multiple buses pass them by. Scarborough is an area that has higher numbers of Black, racialized, and low-income populations; these communities have been hardest hit by the pandemic and it is vital that the TTC take active steps to ensure these residents are safe when travelling on the TTC.

Additionally, people need **clearer guidelines for physical distancing measures** to make buses a more safe and accessible space.

Lastly, the Executive Committee should demand **a clear commitment from the TTC to oppose and address racism** in order to make buses a safer and more accessible space for all. Racialized people are the majority in Scarborough and we are home to diverse cultural communities. It is because of this that there are increased acts of racism on transit in our area, both overt and covert. For example, we know that fare inspectors are more likely to target Black riders than riders of other races. This creates an unsafe environment for many and we urge the Executive Committee to consider the emotional safety of Scarborough transit riders.

The double threats of traffic congestion and COVID-19 to transit riders are real. With traffic congestion potentially surpassing pre-pandemic levels once schools and most workplaces reopen, **it could become physically impossible for the TTC to provide enough bus service for safe physical distancing** (25 people per bus, will be increased to 35 people in stage 3). Hence, **it is important and necessary that Executive Committee approved and fast-tracked more bus-only lanes in the Fall to ensure transit riders are safe in riding public transit.**

### **Our Recommendations:**

1. Approve item EX15.1 Eglinton East Corridor and Priority Bus Lanes. Allocate funding to speed up the study and implement more fast-tracked bus-only lanes, and expedite Finch East bus -only lane to 2021.
2. Reinstate Lawrence East, which is being considered for study to be included in the implementation timeline.
3. Include Markham Road, Sheppard East and other Scarborough busy bus routes in the priority list for bus-only lanes. In the meantime, please consider, support and implement a quick or temporary bus-only lanes on each of these two routes.
4. Ensure more buses are running on Finch East, Lawrence East, Sheppard East and Markham Road so riders can be physical distanced.
5. Involve community members in consultation and include our inputs and voices in the process of designing the bus-only lanes.

Some Canadian cities like Mississauga and Montreal already have bus lanes, making bus rides faster and more reliable. And recently New York City and San Francisco also approved new bus-only lanes as an emergency pandemic response to reduce crowding on buses.

As Scarborough is far spread out, most residents heavily rely on bus service to get around. Therefore, we urge the Executive Committee to fast-track the implementation of more bus-only lanes in the city of Toronto, especially in suburban Scarborough. This will help to reduce crowding on bus routes used by essential workers and transit reliant residents, and **respect our right to ride on transit.**

Thank you for your time and we look forward to hearing back from you.

Sincerely,

**SOCIAL ASSISTANCE COALITION OF SCARBOROUGH**

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