

From: [A Voice for Transit](#)
To: [Budget Committee](#)
Subject: Comments for the Budget Committee
Date: January 16, 2023 7:56:59 PM

Dear Budget Committee,

A Voice for Transit is an advocacy group focused on delays and overcrowding. We also prioritize transit equity, which seeks to understand the ways in which transit systems are fair and accessible among the needs of different populations. AVFT was founded by Toronto Metropolitan University students in March 2019. We have published two reports: *Inequitable Transit in Toronto* (May 2020) and *Taking the TTC During COVID-19* (August 2021).

As we embark on a post-COVID-19 recovery in Toronto, we want to see a strong TTC emerge. Not only does Toronto's economy depend on a reliable public transit system, but so, too, does Canada given our city's significant contribution to the national economy. We are concerned about proposals in the TTC's and the City of Toronto's 2023 budgets.

Financial Tool Alternatives to Fare Increases

The TTC's total budget is increasing by \$53 million in 2023 to \$958.7 million, which will be mainly funded through passenger fares (including a fare increase), increased property taxes, as well as provincial and federal funding. While there are good relationships between all levels of government, a change of government can make provincial and federal subsidies less predictable. To encourage increased public transit ridership, the City of Toronto should consider using its taxation powers under the City of Toronto Act to provide other financial sources to subsidize the TTC. In particular, proceeds from a parking levy and a personal vehicle tax can be dedicated towards subsidizing the TTC. (1)

Concerns Surrounding Increased Funding for Toronto Police Service (TPS) and Special Constables

To the general public and community members with families, priorities remain community safety, accessibility, and affordability. Toronto City Council proposes to increase residential property taxes by 5.5%. The 2023 Tax-Supported Operating budget (\$14.12 billion) has plans for allocating 16.9% to transit and 15.4% to emergency services. (2) Within the budget for emergency services, the Toronto Police Services Board has approved a \$48.3-million increase for their \$1.16-billion police budget, a 4.3% increase from 2022. (3) How can we ensure using \$40 million towards hiring 200 police officers will prevent safety incidents?

Additionally, the TTC budget proposes hiring 50 more TTC Special Constables. Among the

service's many users are members of equity-deserving groups in Toronto. What will the TTC do to ensure that the riders from these groups are not disproportionately targeted by TTC Special Constables? How will the TTC measure increased safety on the system as a result of increased TTC Special Constables?

Standing up for the Ten Minute Network

The bus is leading the COVID-19 transit recovery, especially in the suburbs. It is relied upon by equity-deserving groups residing there. We are concerned that proposed service reductions in 2023 may come at the cost of increased crowding on bus lines. Service cuts may subsidize costs like operating Lines 5 and 6. We are concerned that the Ten Minute Network may be put at risk, as a result of these cuts. If bus overcrowding occurs, it will give riders more reason to avoid transit at a crucial time when the service needs to win back riders. The Ten Minute Network makes transit reliable in the suburbs. We ask that the TTC and the City preserve it.

Winning Back Riders

In our 2021 report, we interviewed essential workers who were using the TTC regularly during the pandemic's lockdowns. A woman from North York shared concerns about her safety while using the service. She even said that she wished she had a car. Winning back riders means making the service feel safe for all riders, including women. Increased bus overcrowding as a result of service cuts can put women at higher risk of being groped. The TTC and the City must consider and anticipate the risks for all riders when approving the proposed service cuts.

Increased Supports For The Unhoused

We applaud the proposed doubling of the Streets to Homes presence on the system. Members of our team have witnessed an increase in unhoused individuals using the TTC during COVID-19. We have also witnessed harassment of these individuals by TPS and Special Constables. How will the unhoused be treated by an increased presence of TPS and Special Constables on the TTC?

We propose a more imaginative use of the TTC's unused retail spaces as temporary locations for case management for unhoused individuals. This proposal may contribute to a more humane approach to interacting with unhoused individuals on the system. Many have fallen on hard times during the pandemic. The TTC and the City can work together to help get them back on their feet.

The TTC was supported by all levels of government during the worst stages of the pandemic. We are at a delicate moment. Costs of living are increasing. The TTC is an affordable and reliable mode of transportation for many. We hope that Council considers

our ideas to ensure a less delayed, overcrowded and more equitable TTC for 2023 and beyond.

Sincerely,

Faizan Ahmed

Sherwin Lau

Jean-François Obregon

1. <https://www.toronto.ca/city-government/budget-finances/city-finance/long-term-financial-plan/city-revenue-fact-sheet/>
2. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto/toronto-police-board-budget-review-1.6707656>
3. Ibid.

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