

OTTAWA TRANSIT RIDERS

2020 ANNUAL REPORT



August 22, 2020

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INTRODUCTION

- This is the first Annual Report of the Ottawa Transit Riders (OTR) and was prepared for the 2020 Annual General Meeting scheduled for August 22, 2020.
- This report will outline the group's formation (since this was the first year of operation), some background, outreach, events attended, activities, and tentative next steps for the incoming board.

BACKGROUND

- Ottawa Transit Riders held a formal Founding Meeting on April 27, 2019, and elected the first Board of Directors, which consisted of:
 - Dan Gajewski
 - Henry Paikin
 - John Redins
 - John Woodhouse
 - Kari Glynnes Elliott
 - Sam Boswell
 - Stuart MacKay
 - Anne-Marie Roy (resigned)
 - Leyla Shahid (resigned)
- There were more than 100 people in attendance at the founding meeting, which was sponsored by ACORN Ottawa, Anakbayan-Ottawa, ATU 279, Beechwood Market, Britannia Woods Community Circle, Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women, Community Health and Resources Centres, David's Tea, Distress Centre Ottawa, Ecology Ottawa, Federation of Citizen's Associations of Ottawa, Free Transit Ottawa, Healthy Transportation Coalition, Hess' Your Independent Grocer, Immigrant Women Services of Ottawa, Little Jo Berry's, Metro Beechwood, Ontario Public Interest Research Group Ottawa, Onyx Community Services, Ottawa Disability Coalition, Stella Luna, StopGap Ottawa, Suzy Q Doughnuts, the teastore, and the Vanier Community Association.
- Since the founding meeting, OTR has worked on developing the group's infrastructure, including committees (Membership, Governance, Government Relations, Finance and Fundraising, Equity and Accessibility, Communications, and Campaigns and Political Actions), an OTR Code of Conduct, an OTR NationBuilder account and website, the building of membership data, mailing lists, and improving the group's social media presence.
- In March 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic led to a lockdown in Ottawa, which significantly redirected OTR's efforts on transit.

ONLINE PRESENCE

- [Twitter](#) (4,048 followers).
- [Facebook](#) (852 followers).
- [Instagram](#) (394 followers).
- Active [website](#).
- 75+ media interviews (tv, radio, internet, and print) on Ottawa transit.

2019- 20 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- OTR won a mini-grant from the Healthy Transportation Coalition
- OTR was nominated for a 2020 Faces Magazine Award for Best Volunteer Organization.
- OTR convinced OC Transpo to restore the route 12 to Parliament Station, providing a vital connection to the downtown core, other bus routes, and the LRT station.
- Board members met with an accessibility lawyer in early October 2019 to explore options regarding lawsuits or complaints about ParaTranspo service and accessibility issues on conventional transit. Fundraising was subsequently started to pay for a possible lawsuit.
- OTR supported the #ParaParity campaign that pushed OC Transpo to launch an online booking system for customers of ParaTranspo.
- OTR successfully lobbied to stop a planned increase in transit fees that were scheduled for January 2020 (Fight4FairFares).
- OTR participated in the Keep Transit Moving campaign, which resulted in an announcement by the federal government that it would match provincial contributions up to \$1.8 billion in dedicated funding for public transit operating expenses. On August 12, Premier Doug Ford announced that Ottawa would receive \$74.9 million in dedicated transit funding as per Stage 1 of the Safe Restart Agreement. This will help with operating expenses and COVID-19 measures, like enhanced cleaning and masks for staff.
- Board Members have also appeared as a delegation at Transit Commission meetings.

TRANSIT CHALLENGE 2020

- OTR organized the 2020 Transit Challenge (#TransitChallenge2020) in cooperation with Healthy Transportation Coalition, Free Transit Ottawa, and Ecology Ottawa.
- As a kick-off event for Transit Challenge 2020, OTR helped to plan and implement a panel discussion entitled “What should Ottawa do with public transit?” at the University of Ottawa. Board member Kari Glynes Elliott participated along with Taras Matkovsky (Free Transit Ottawa), Sally Thomas, Ryan Lythall (ParaParity), Erik Pervin (Ecology Ottawa), and Trevor Haché (Healthy Transportation Coalition).
- It was a huge success with 20 councillors and the mayor committing to use public transit to get to all work and personal commitments for seven days. The event generated significant conversation about transit issues, both good and bad, and led to ongoing engagement with

several councillors (as well as new members). OTR anticipates doing another Transit Challenge sometime in 2021.

- OTR subsequently developed a 2020 Transit Challenge report summarizing the results of the event and organized a press conference at City Hall to share the report and answer questions from local media.

TRANSIT COMMISSION MEETINGS

- Board members have attended every Transit Commission meeting held since the founding of the organization (including having an online presence at the post-pandemic online meeting).

CAMPAIGNS OVERVIEW

- OTR held their first Campaign Meeting on November 2, 2019, which helped to define campaigns, including:

Bus Detective

- OTR has started working with two software developers on the Bus Detective app, which will help to collect data on Ottawa's bus service (e.g. timeliness, reliability, safety, etc) and create a baseline by which to measure future service improvements. The app had to be put on hold temporarily due to the pandemic. OTR fully expects to restart work on the app (or develop another solution for data collection) into fall 2020 or winter 2021.

#Fight4FairFares

- A campaign to halt the planned City of Ottawa budget 2020 fare increase. Through OTR's efforts, the City temporarily froze transit fares from January to the end of March 2020 (the freeze was subsequently extended due to COVID-19).

#KeepTransitMoving

- OTR supported the #KeepTransitMoving campaign to advocate for emergency transit funding, along with TTC Riders, Trajectoire Québec, London Transit Riders Alliance, Free Transit Edmonton, and others.
- For the Ottawa area, OTR sent out press releases, did media interviews, and developed a social media campaign, as well as sending letters to the federal Minister of Infrastructure and Communities, the Honourable Catherine McKenna and the provincial Minister of Transportation, Caroline Mulroney, urging emergency funding for public transit from the federal and provincial government.
- OTR also helped run #KeepTransitMoving's May 28, 2020, Day of Action, which resulted in hundreds of Canadians signing the petition for emergency transit funding.

#ParaParity

- A campaign in conjunction with Healthy Transportation Coalition, focusing on accessibility issues for customers of ParaTranspo. This campaign helped to convince the City of Ottawa to move forward with online booking.

Light Rail Transit (LRT) improvements

- OTR has been vocal about the importance of having an operational LRT system; at the time of this annual report, the system is still not operating with all promised trains. There is currently no firm timeline on when the system will be fully operational and users often must rely on supplemental bus service.

A follow up Campaign Committee meeting was held on February 1, 2020, at the Main Branch of the Ottawa Public Library, where members began to work on the various campaigns. A follow up meeting, scheduled for March 14, 2020, was cancelled due to the COVID-19 lockdown.

OUTREACH AND MEDIA

- Despite the lockdown, OTR continued to advocate for improvements to public transit, better communication from OC Transpo and the City of Ottawa, and more accountability and transparency from OC Transpo and the City of Ottawa.
- Board member Kari Glynnes Elliott participated in a panel organized by Courage Ottawa to discuss public transit post COVID-19.
- Board member Stuart MacKay participated in a “Keep Transit Moving” panel organized by TTC Riders to discuss the COVID-19 pandemic and its affect on healthcare, public transit and childcare.
- The group continues to support the work of Healthy Transportation Coalition, Ecology Ottawa, Free Transit Ottawa, Horizon Ottawa, Courage Ottawa, and other advocacy groups with shared goals. Board members have been attending joint meetings on the COVID-19 pandemic, transit planning, the upcoming 2021 City of Ottawa budget, and more.
- Ottawa Transit Riders has also been interviewed on transit issues by a number of media: the Globe and Mail, CTV news, CBC (radio, tv, and print), the Ottawa Citizen, Centretown News, Capital Current, the Glebe Report, and others.

FINANCIAL INFORMATION IN 2019- 20

Revenue

- Won a mini-grant of \$1,400.
- Received \$1,949 in membership dues.

Expenses

- Ottawa Transit Riders NationBuilder account and website: \$325.24.
- Business cards: \$50.84.
- Posters: \$22.37.
- Transit Challenge 2020 buttons: \$69.25
- Campaign committee meeting refreshments: \$33.52
 - *TOTAL SPENT TO DATE: \$501.22.*

MOVING FORWARD

- In its first year of existence, the Ottawa Transit Riders was busy making a name for itself, building a social media presence, and sorting out administrative issues.
- Moving forward, we're hoping to channel enthusiasm from our members to fight for better transit on several fronts: bus, LRT, and ParaTranspo.
- We're looking forward to launching our Bus detective app and continuing our work with #ParaParity for more accessible transit.
- We will be continuing to support the #KeepTransitMoving campaign.
- We expect to work with OC Transpo post-pandemic to assure customers that transit is safe (e.g. rebuilding trust in public transit).
- Do you have issues? Concerns? Please join us! https://www.ottawatransitriders.ca/otr_membership

