



Mayor Sutcliffe,

We, representatives of the students of Ottawa, the University of Ottawa Students' Union (UOSU), Carleton University Students' Association (CUSA), and the Amalgamated Transit Union (Ottawa Local 279) are writing to express our deep concerns regarding the recent decision to slash the frequency of LRT service during off-peak hours. These cuts, effective August 26th, 2024, are far more severe than first communicated, and this decision was made without regard for the thousands of students, workers, transit drivers and other community members who rely on this vital service.

The reduction in service from every five to six minutes to every ten minutes between 9 a.m. and 3 p.m., as well as from 6:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. on weekdays, is not just a minor inconvenience—it is a blatant disregard for the needs of our nearly 80,000 students who make up a significant portion of this city's population. By timing these cuts to coincide with the start of the new academic year, you have effectively placed an unnecessary burden on thousands of students whose schedules do not align with the traditional 9-5 workday.

The University of Ottawa, located in the very heart of our city, depends on reliable and frequent LRT service for all students. At Carleton University, safe and reliable connections to Ottawa's LRT service are vital for student employment and well-being, and will become ever-more relevant with the expected opening of the Trillium Line into the next year. For many of our students, particularly those living

off-campus or juggling part-time jobs, the LRT is a lifeline—one that ensures safe, affordable, and accessible transportation across Ottawa. The reduction in frequency will lead to longer wait times, overcrowding, and increased uncertainty in daily commutes, especially as it relates to connections. These impacts will not only disrupt academic performance but also pose a fundamental risk to student safety, especially during evening hours when many students are returning home from late classes or work.

We are outraged by the complete lack of consultation with student groups during this decision making process. The University of Ottawa and Carleton University are home to vibrant communities of nearly 80,000 students who live, work, learn, and actively contribute to the culture and economy of this city. Ignoring our voices in discussions about public transit—something that directly affects our daily lives—is unacceptable. It is inconceivable that such significant changes could be made without even a cursory attempt to involve student representatives.

At the University of Ottawa, over 38,000 students use U-Pass services generating an estimated \$19 million in revenue for OC Transpo annually. At Carleton University, last year saw over 25,700 collective student rides using U-Pass. Continued student engagement is a highly significant factor for OC Transpo's year-over-year operating budget.

Given the substantial and far-reaching impact of these cuts, we are requesting an immediate meeting with you and relevant OC Transpo staff to discuss the rationale behind this decision and to explore alternative solutions. The voices of students must

be heard and respected in shaping a public transit system that serves all Ottawa residents, including the substantial student population at the University of Ottawa and Carleton University.

We stand in full solidarity with the membership and executive of the Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU Local 279), who are our valued partners, and whose operators are not given the proper tools and ability to produce the quality and standard of service expected from the City of Ottawa. These decisions are short-sighted and severely impact the over 1,800 unionized staff who are the backbone of Ottawa's transit system.

Coupled with the impact short notice has in addressing significant work-life balance matters, daycare, vacations and family logistics for many were already in place, some members of ATU Local 279 are facing penalties and surcharges for cancelled vacations and child care. Every time someone books their work they must factor in its impact on homelife. Just as with students, these changes take a significant toll on members and their families. Among the frustrations of our transit drivers is the promise to adapt if more service is needed on other routes. That translates to forced overtime and added hours to schedules once again hampering the logistics of life balance, and consistently shows a complete disrespect of members' need to plan accordingly.



We call on all students and members of the Ottawa community who share our outrage to sign on to this open letter. Together, we will make our voices heard and fight for a public transit system that truly serves the needs of everyone in our city. We expect your prompt response and are prepared to engage in a robust dialogue to ensure that Ottawa's LRT remains a reliable and accessible service for all.

Signed,

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