



Branching Out Support Services
COMMUNITY INNOVATION ETHICS

Sept 15, 2024

Dear Mayor Post and Orangeville Councilors,

RE: FARE FREE TRANSIT IN ORANGEVILLE

I hope this letter finds you all well. Thank you for your ongoing leadership, consistency and creative thinking as you continue to support our community in a number of initiatives, changes and upgrades to our municipal processes.

I am writing to you today to advocate for a fare-free transit system in Orangeville to continue into 2025 after the 2-year pilot program comes to an end in December 2024.

Over the last 2 years, as many of you are aware, I have advocated on a number of public transit issues both in the forefront as a member of the Orangeville Access Committee, as a small business owner of a human services organization, privately as a citizen and with my clients. Transit in Orangeville matters to me because I personally do not drive, so rely on various alternatives for getting around town. Also, I work with many adults who are neurodivergent and also do not drive. They often rely 100% on public transportation and support from others to gain access to transportation, a vital human right.

I am advocating today, by way of this letter to keep public transit in Orangeville fare-free.

I have spent time and energy communicating with people with neurodiversities and disabilities to ask them why the bus should remain free for its users. Here are some of the main points of support for free transit in Orangeville:

1. Most of the people I talked to who use the bus are on a **fixed income**. These incomes as you know are not sufficient to cover rent and food, let alone transportation. Most of those fixed incomes are ODSP (Ontario Disability Support Plan) and the most you can receive monthly from this support is 1368.00/ month and this is at the TOP amount. Is a neurodiverse person still lives



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with a caregiver; they will not receive this much. As we know this amount does not even cover a safe, healthy rental situation in Orangeville.

2. Most people I spoke with indicated to me the bus system in Orangeville is incredibly unreliable. The adults from the Branching Out Day Service on 2 occasions in the recent future that they could remember and recount to me, waited for the bus for 30min or more, and it did not come. One participant said, "Why should we have to pay for a bus that doesn't always come?" This is a good point.
3. Community members don't want a 2-tier bus pass system – that being a price for "regular" passes and then an accessibility rate. This requires people with disabilities to be separate from other bus users with a different pass and encourages segregation. If the bus is free for everyone, it is equitable.
4. I have not seen the actual numbers, but I believe that you as a council will see the report from Orangeville town staff member Mr. Dulisse that outlines the cost for the town with a fare-based transit vs. a fare free transit. I am hopeful that these numbers reflect support to indefinite fare-free transit in Orangeville.

We are blessed where we live, in our town and community with excellent public services. I know there are teams of staff and council members working with citizens to solve social issues in a forward facing and transparent manner. Thank you. My appeal to keep transit fare free is one of the courageous things that can be provided within the transportation infrastructure of our town to promote equity, accessibility and inclusion to as many patrons as possible.

Thank you again,

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