

Thompson, Holly

From: City Council
Sent: Monday, June 3, 2024 3:03 PM
To: Thompson, Holly
Subject: FW: Email - Communication - Colleen Christopherson-Cote - Saskatoon Poverty Reduction Partnership - Saskatoon Transit – Implementing Free Child Fare - CK 1905-4
Attachments: Safe Attachments Scan In Progress

From: Web NoReply <web-noreply@saskatoon.ca>
Sent: Monday, June 3, 2024 2:09 PM
To: City Council <City.Council@saskatoon.ca>
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--- Replies to this email will go to SPRPcoordinator@gmail.com ---

Submitted on Monday, June 3, 2024 - 14:07

Submitted by user: [REDACTED]

Submitted values are:

I have read and understand the above statements.: Yes

I do not want my comments placed on a public agenda. They will be shared with members of Council through their online repository.: No

I only want my comments shared with the Mayor or my Ward Councillor.: No

Date: Monday, June 03, 2024

To: His Worship the Mayor and Members of City Council

Pronouns: She/her/hers

First Name: Colleen

Last Name: Christopherson-Cote

Phone Number : 306 [REDACTED]

Email: SPRPcoordinator@gmail.com

I live outside of Saskatoon: No

Saskatoon Address and Ward:

Address: [REDACTED] Pohorecky Cove

Ward: Ward 10

Name of the organization or agency you are representing (if applicable): Saskatoon Poverty Reduction Partnership

What do you wish to do ?: Submit Comments

What meeting do you wish to speak/submit comments ? (if known):: Standing Policy Committee on Transportation

What agenda item do you wish to comment on ?: 7.1.1 Saskatoon Transit – Implementing Free Child Fare [GPC2023- 0703]

Comments:

Please find attached a letter supporting the recommendations for free child fares

Attachments:

Will you be submitting a video to be vetted prior to council meeting?: No

June 03, 2024.

Chair Dubois and members of the Standing Policy Committee on Transportation,

I'm writing on behalf of the Saskatoon Poverty Reduction Partnership (SPRP), to support the recommendations outlined in item 7.1.1 "Saskatoon Transit – Implementing Free Child Fare [GPC2023- 0703]"

The SPRP has a long-standing relationship with the City of Saskatoon centered around poverty reduction through public policy and practical, local implementation of programs and services. Prior to COVID the SPRP launched the [12 Bold Ideas to Eliminate Poverty](#) which included a working action team to **look at the role that public transit plays as part of a poverty reduction strategy**. During this work, the team was collectively discussing innovative strategies about fares, affordability and **process to make the system "free to use."**

Across sectors, people living in low income circumstances are routinely asked to "prove their level of poverty" to be eligible to access services and supports. Creating free-to-use public transit for youth is a step in the right direction to not only create equitable access but also to build capacity in ridership and demand for public transit in Saskatoon.

The SPRP, as part of the community dialogue in creating these recommendations, agrees with both recommendations:

*"That the Standing Policy Committee on Transportation recommends City Council direct the Administration to pursue Option 1A Children in **Grade 8 and under ride free.**"*

*"That the Standing Policy Committee on Transportation recommends City Council direct the Administration to pursue Option 2A Children **self-verify to ride free.**"*

Community dialogue with riders, community advocates and community agencies clearly indicated that the implementation of this process needs to be barrier-free AND avoid additional implementation costs to the City of Saskatoon. We believe that adopting these 2 recommendations are the most effective, barrier-free and cost effective options.

"Free to use" systems are popular all over the world. Creating barrier-free access to young riders grade 8 and under creates opportunity to build a culture of public transit use in Saskatoon, and creates a cost-effective transportation option for low income families with children to access other activities, school, civic events and appointments.

In reading the "Saskatoon Transit - Implementing Free Child Fare What We Heard Engagement Report April 2024." report, we urge the committee to consider the implementation and equity risks of being guided by the concerns raised about fare evasion and adult accompaniment.

While SPRP understands there are ongoing implementation processes that need to be developed, we find the risk of widespread fare evasion to be limited. While some evasion may occur, existing policies are in place to handle and track evasion, limiting impact. The costs associated with implementing a bus-pass/card system would be expensive. In the first year of implementation, the SPRP would recommend that the City track the number of evasions associated with this change to determine if that cost is larger than what would be incurred with a bus card system.

Secondly, implementing additional parental accompaniment requirements for youth would create unnecessary barriers and would likely limit uptake for youth usage. This creates the required adult pass to be paid (more expensive than youth fare) and, in the case of older youth, parents don't have the time or allowance from their kids to "escort them to school." While it may be hard to conceptualize young Saskatoon residents accessing transit alone, this is a common occurrence in other urban communities. The SPRP supports the City's focus on good barrier-free public policy and we believe the recommendation illustrates that focus.

Finally, the SPRP would like to encourage the City of Saskatoon to build an impact evaluation framework into the implementation plan to ensure that evidence-informed decision making is used as this investment is rolled out. Should the City of Saskatoon require community support for this evaluation process, the SPRP Transit Action Team is willing to collaborate.

I am grateful for the opportunity to share our thoughts. We look forward to seeing increased ridership and demand for public transit, and we are encouraged by this step toward free-to-use transit in Saskatoon.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Colleen Christopherson-Cote', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Colleen Christopherson-Cote
SPRP Coordinator
306.491.8502
SPRPcoordinator@gmail.com