Subject: Request to Speak - Jory Vermette - Saskatoon Transit Full-Fleet Zero Emission Bus Implementation Plan
Attachments: Hub May212025 Bus Letter Template.pdf

From: Web NoReply <web-noreply@Saskatoon.ca>
Sent: Monday, May 19, 2025 4:24 PM
To: City Council <City.Council@Saskatoon.ca>
Subject: Request to Speak - Jory Vermette - Saskatoon Transit Full-Fleet Zero Emission Bus Implementation Plan

--- Replies to this email will go to saskatoonclimatehub@gmail.com ---

Submitted on Monday, May 19, 2025 - 16:21

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, May 19, 2025

To: Her Worship the Mayor and Members of City Council

Pronouns: He/him/his

First Name: Jory

Last Name: Vermette

Email: saskatoonclimatehub@gmail.com

I live outside of Saskatoon: No

Saskatoon Address and Ward:
Address: [redacted] Churchill Dr
Ward: Ward 5

Name of the organization or agency you are representing (if applicable): Saskatoon Climate Hub

What do you wish to do ?: Request to Speak

If speaking will you be attending in person or remotely: In person

What meeting do you wish to speak/submit comments ? (if known):: May 21 2025 CITY COUNCIL AGENDA - REGULAR BUSINESS MEETING

What agenda item do you wish to comment on ?: 8.2.5

Comments:
I am submitting the attached to speak on behalf of the Saskatoon Climate Hub.

Attachments:

- Hub May212025 Bus Letter Template.pdf197.07 KB

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

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May 21, 2025

222 3rd Ave North
Saskatoon, SK S7K 0J5

Dear Mayor Block and Councilors,

The report and recommendations from City Administration in front of Council today will determine our City's Transit and Climate strategy **for the next ten years**. For both the *City's Transit 10-Year Fleet Renewal Strategy* (Transit Strategy) and the *Climate Action Plan*, it is absolutely crucial that Council makes the right decision on these strategies today.

Unfortunately, the Administration's report to Council focuses almost purely on fiscal matters while ignoring and undermining other critical factors necessary in understanding the situation.

We challenge this simplistic approach, and suggest that Council's decision today should be based on a full understanding of all critical factors and reach the outcomes which allow us to address our ongoing Climate Crisis. Examples of these are:

- **Environmental Benefits**: Despite the current carbon intensity of Saskatchewan's power grid, battery electric buses (BEBs) produce zero tailpipe emissions. This contributes to improved air quality, particularly in areas with high transit activity such as those along the future Bus Rapid Transit lines or at the University. It also positions the City to capitalize on future emissions reductions as the power grid becomes greener and provides a significant step towards our community's net-zero emissions goal.
- **Health Impacts**: Diesel exhaust is a known carcinogen linked to "significant and substantial population health impacts and societal costs"[1]. A shift to ZEB would enhance air quality and contribute to long-term health improvements, with an ease in public healthcare costs and enhancing quality of life for residents and wildlife.

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1 https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/publications/healthy-living/human-health-risk-assessment-diesel-exhaust-summary.html

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- **Noise Reduction**: BEBs operate more quietly than diesel buses. This results in reduced noise pollution for both residents, transit users and wildlife, contributing to more livable neighborhoods and an improved rider experience.
- **Costs of Delaying**: The broader economic impacts of climate change—ranging from insurance costs due to extreme weather events to increased food prices—underscore the value of reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Investing in BEBs is a proactive strategy to reduce emissions and, in turn, contribute to reducing the impacts of climate change.
- **Social Equity**: The appendix to the report highlights the potential for BEBs to benefit vulnerable communities disproportionately affected by air pollution and noise, aligning with the City's triple bottom line approach.
- **Long-Term Cost Efficiency**: Although initial capital costs for BEBs are higher than diesel buses, advancements in technology have been proven to reduce maintenance and lifecycle costs for BEBs over time in comparison, such as those noted in the Saskatchewan Research Council's Report on the *Saskatoon Transit Battery Electric Bus Trial Performance Results* to the City on May 6, 2022. The City can take full advantage by beginning adoption now.
- **Climate Leadership and Public Trust**: The transition to BEBs is identified as a priority in Saskatoon's Climate Action Plan. Moving forward with a clear implementation strategy would position Saskatoon as a leader in sustainable urban transportation and ensure that it aligns with prior public commitments while building confidence for completing other climate commitments. It would also signal to the provincial government, who have jurisdiction over the electricity supply, the necessity of shifting our electricity grid further to renewable energy.
- **Report Discrepancy:** we would also like to flag that the CUTRIC report includes conflicting data and assumptions on cost and emissions which require further scrutiny such as pages 13 and 26 on estimated per kWh costs.[2] We urge Council to examine the report in further detail.

[2] On page 13 there is a chart indicating typical energy consumption for battery electric buses being 1-2 kWh per kilometre driven. On page 26, the report estimates that part replacements will cost $500 per kWh for zero-emission buses. If part replacement costs are $500 per kwh and it takes 1-2 kwh to travel one kilometre, that would mean part replacement costs are estimated at $500 to $1000 *per kilometre*. That's $1 million every 1000 to 2000 kilometres driven. Statements such as these require scrutiny

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Desired outcomes require appropriate policy, especially those that provide a public service and a path to climate action. We suggest that Council's policy-directive to Administration regarding the upcoming Transit Strategy be based on effective ways for the City of Saskatoon to fight this Crisis that is, at the minimum, inline with its Climate Action Plan.

If Council adopts the current document in front of you today they will have made a decision based only on partial information. They will have failed to consider the significant factors that are ignored at the cost of our community and climate. They will also fail to meet commitments made to all of us in 2018. Not only do we expect the City to adhere to its commitments to climate and transit, we expect ambitious goals and outcomes from them - it is time for Council to take this issue seriously - **we can no longer afford to delay!**

We urge that Council motion to reject the report and recommendation presented to them today. We urge Council to instead pursue expanding the current pilot program and developing and implementing a phased transition to ZEBs. For example, a target of incorporating a defined percentage of BEBs—such as 50%—in each fleet renewal cycle would align climate goals and transit goals.

Thank you,

Jory Vermette on behalf of the Saskatoon Climate Hub