

A proposal to

# Motion to Increase Accountability in Transit Data

**Prepared by:**

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**For:**

Transit Commission Members & Interested Parties

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# The issue

As our leading transit authority, OC Transpo has poorly reported bus data for the last decade and not reported any real data for the last few years. This poor reporting has manifested itself in the amount of data, the accuracy of the data, and the selective and leading presentation of the data.

This practice has caused issues with council and the public's ability to maintain accountability of, and faith in, the services provided by OC Transpo.

All things considered, regardless of intent or design, this situation has led to a dramatic increase in abandonment rates of public transit, and very polarized discussion both online and in-person. This needless obstruction by OC Transpo undermines the efforts of various groups that constructively interact with public transit and wastes taxpayer money. Furthermore, it not only wastes council's time, it is also irresponsible and unprofessional behavior for an entity that is funded by, and supposedly under the employ of the City.

Data is critical to assessment and measurement of performance. Without data it is impossible to benchmark and monitor key performance indicators, and therefore there is no way to measure growth or success. Without accurate data and meaningful analysis, there is no way to enforce accountability, and ultimately provide residents and visitors of the City of Ottawa with the transit system it requires.

## A first solution: The amendment proposal

Coun. Gower has made an excellent motion for clear, open and measurable data of transit services. This motion was approved on November 6<sup>th</sup> by the Transit Commission. This proposed refinement is to amend that motion, expanding upon the core rationale, while adding clarity and commitments to ensure that results are achieved; and that accountability is neither self-defined or deflected onto other parties. These behaviors have been the status quo for the last 4 years, and have been arguably the source of most of the friction and inaction surrounding transit issues.

In summary, the amendment acknowledges that:

- Asking OC Transpo to self report flaws is a conflict of interest
- That to get prompt and definite answers, the best approach is by gaining unhindered access to the database core
- A trusted third party, and not OC Transpo, must be tasked with reporting an accurate state of affairs
- It is disingenuous to promote the idea that OC Transpo will provide the data that will be used to hold them to account

Attached for your review is Coun. Gower's motion, followed by the proposed amendment.

This document is a proposal and is open for commentary.

## Coun. Gower's motion

### Rationale

1. Transparency and communication are essential elements to ensure accountability in public organizations
2. In order to carry out their oversight role, Transit Commissioners need clear and measurable data on transit service
3. OC Transpo is developing a formal plan for metrics and reporting
  - a. Expected to be completed in 2020, but data and reporting is still required until that plan is in place
4. Existing metrics and targets are being tracked by OC Transpo to evaluate performance
  - i. For example on time performance standards for buses and level of service agreements with Rideau Transit Group
5. Immediate service issues exist that are affecting customer and commissioner confidence in OC Transpo

### Demands

1. OC Transpo staff provide the Transit Commission with a monthly report summarizing relevant reliability results for both the bus and train system
2. OC Transpo provide Transit Commissioners with a bi-weekly high-level summary of bus and LRT issues tracking, including details such as:
  - a. The number of open issues
  - b. The number of new issues
  - c. The number of issues resolved
3. This interim reporting remain in place until a more formal plan for measurement and reporting of OC Transpo performance is approved by the Transit Commission.

# The proposed motion

## **Rationale**

1. The aforementioned motion does not include comprehensive solutions for existing and historical bus and transit data issues
2. The suggested OC Transpo staff decided metrics for evaluation and reporting, promote value in underreporting weaknesses and promote a conflict of interest
3. Modern data is dynamic, real time and comprised of many variables that require more understanding and investigation than a simple summarization can provide
4. It is disingenuous to promote the idea that OC Transpo will provide the data that will be used to hold them to account

## **Demands**

1. That a 3rd party audit be performed on the database, process and surrounding infrastructure that collects and maintains, what is commonly referred to as the "OC Transpo transit data"
2. That this work be done unimpeded, within the scope of the law, with the access required to undertake this action and without unreasonable delay
3. That the 3rd party may perform non destructive actions relevant to acquiring a solution for reporting metrics and resolving council's historical questions about transit

# Effective proposed motion

WHEREAS the afore-mentioned motion does not include comprehensive solutions for existing and historical bus and transit data issues; and WHEREAS the suggested OC Transpo staff decided metrics for evaluation and reporting, promotes value in under reporting weaknesses and promotes a conflict of interest; and WHEREAS modern data is dynamic, real time and comprised of many variables that require a deeper understanding and investigation than a simple summarization can provide; and WHEREAS it is disingenuous to promote this motion as is, as a comprehensive solution to the taxpayer and transit customer.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that a 3rd party audit be performed on the database, process and surrounding infrastructure that collects and maintains, what is commonly referred to as the "OC Transpo transit data"; and THEREFORE LET IT FURTHER BE RESOLVED that this work be done unimpeded, within the scope of the law, with the access required to undertake this action and without unreasonable delay; and THEREFORE LET IT FURTHER BE RESOLVED that this party may perform non-destructive actions relevant to acquiring a solution for reporting metrics and resolving councils historical questions about transit.

# Addendum

## Coun. Gower's motion's original text

WHEREAS transparency and communication are essential elements to ensure accountability in public organizations; and WHEREAS in order to carry out their oversight role, Transit Commissioners need clear and measurable data on transit service; and WHEREAS OC Transpo is developing a formal plan for metrics and reporting, expected to be completed in 2020, but data and reporting is still required until that plan is in place; and WHEREAS existing metrics and targets are being tracked by OC Transpo to evaluate performance, for example on time performance standards for buses and level of service agreements with Rideau Transit Group; and WHEREAS immediate service issues exist that are affecting customer and commissioner confidence in OC Transpo; THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT OC Transpo staff provide the Transit Commission with a monthly report summarizing relevant reliability results for both the bus and train system; and THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT OC Transpo provide Transit Commissioners with a bi-weekly high-level summary of bus and LRT issues tracking, including details such as the number of open issues, the number of new issues; the number of issues resolved; and THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT this interim reporting remain in place until a more formal plan for measurement and reporting of OC Transpo performance is approved by the Transit Commission.