

**Project title:**

## Ottawa Transit Riders start-up

**Collaborating Organizations (if any):** Healthy Transportation Coalition, Free Transit Ottawa, OPIRG. We also consider the following to be allies (some have sponsored us): CRIAW, Vanier Community Association, Ecology Ottawa, Ottawa Acorn, Ottawa Disability Coalition and others

**Anticipated project timeline:** April - December 2019

**I am/my group is a member in good standing of the Healthy Transportation Coalition for the year of 2018.** Yes

**What neighbourhood is your work focused on?** The Ottawa Transit Riders is a city-wide group, but we plan on having chapters in specific neighbourhoods. We already have active Facebook groups in Vanier, Bay Ward, Bridlewood, and Stittsville, and Blackburn Hamlet.

**Project Description: In 300 words, Give us your best description of what this project is. What will you “do”?**

Ottawa Transit Riders (OTR) is a grassroots, volunteer-run, non-politically affiliated group of transit users who want to make Ottawa's public transit system more accessible, reliable, safe, and useful to riders.

We are having our founding meeting on April 27th where we will elect a Board of Directors and provide a forum for people to offer ideas, suggestions, and proposals.

The Board of Directors will then create several sub-committees that will tackle a range of transit issues, including but not limited to accessibility on regular buses, issues concerning ParaTranspo, reliability, cost of using transit, improved communication between OC Transpo and bus riders, more accurate GPS tracking, safety, and neighbourhood-specific issues (e.g. Vanier needs better coordination between routes and fewer cancellations on the 9, 12, and 14; Bay Ward is seeking consultations regarding the cuts to route 11; and Blackburn Hamlet would like to re-visit the cuts to route 28 for safety reasons).

**Planned Outcomes: What are the deliverables of this project?**

We plan to set specific performance indicators for transit where we want to see improvements. Although it would be inappropriate to set goals until the Board is elected, there are certain 'targets' that we are likely to aim for in the first year:

1. Implementation of online booking for ParaTranspo (key demand of users for at least 10 years)
2. Improved accuracy of GPS tracking (or a commitment on OC Transpo's part to improve GPS accuracy by a specific date)
3. Fewer cancellations of buses, especially on key routes
4. Restoration of specific key routes (e.g. 11, 12, 28)

5. A task force set up between OTR committees/membership, other advocacy groups, city councillors, OC Transpo planners/schedulers, and relevant City of Ottawa committees (e.g. accessibility)
6. A commitment by OC Transpo to consult with communities/riders before making changes to routes

### **How is your initiative important to healthy transportation in Ottawa or Gatineau?**

Public transit benefits everyone and is a key part of any strategy to combat climate change and develop a cleaner, healthier community.

Public transit in Ottawa is in decline and, until now, there has been no effective way to mobilize disaffected riders or to influence policy decisions. Many people complain to OC Transpo but issues are often dealt with as isolated incidents rather than as systematic problems.

Councillors are more likely to listen to a group that represents transit riders than to individual riders. We can also be more efficient when working as a group (e.g. using specialized committees). Transit commission meetings are held once per month during work days, which makes it difficult for most people to attend. The OTR can represent people who are unable to attend in person and can present a unified front with clear, well-considered demands.

### **After funding, what are the steps in your project?**

The OTR has already started:

1. We have a website (thanks to the support of HTC) and an email address.
2. We have Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram accounts, with a combined audience of almost 1,600 people.
3. We have an extensive mailing list.
4. Several OTR representatives have already communicated with media to raise awareness of our concerns (approximately 25 media appearances since fall 2018).
5. We have petitions on our website (e.g. to restore route 11 and 12).
6. We are reaching out to organizations with similar interests to work together.
7. In future, we plan to hold protests and various fundraising activities.

### **What are key needs that must be met in order for your project to be a success.**

The next step is the founding meeting where we will elect nine members to the first Board of Directors. After that we will set up committees to address specific issues and plan campaigns based on agreed upon priorities. We will also encourage people to sign up as members and volunteers for specific projects.

Ottawa Transit Riders has to develop a Board that is effective at working together. We need significant numbers of people to sign up as members so that we can approach city councillors with evidence of support. We will need to reach out to councillors to discuss specific issues and request their support.

### **What do you anticipate will be some challenges you will encounter in your project?**

1. Developing an effective, cohesive Board is a high priority. At this point, we do not know who will be on the Board and we will have to develop a code of conduct and certain standards in order to develop strong working relationships with everyone. Several potential candidates have expressed concern about workload and commitment, which will have to be managed to avoid burnout.

2. Finances: We will need money for regular start-up costs. I am looking into online project management software to help us organize our workload (this will help avoid the burnout mentioned above). We will also need to budget for banking fees, printing, translation, and event functions.

3. We also plan to be fully accessible so we will explore options for webinar software, microphones, captioning software, etc.\

**How can coalition members (individuals or groups) get involved in this project?**

Please join as members to reinforce our argument that people across Ottawa want better transit. Donate money if you are able and volunteer for specific campaigns if they interest you. Advice on effective tactics is also appreciated.

**Anticipated Budget (including existing funding from other sources)**

1. Website costs (\$30 / month).
2. Banking costs (\$10 / month).
3. Project management software (\$30 / month).
4. Purchasing accessibility aids such as a microphone to improve sound quality on live broadcasts or group teleconferences (cost TBC but approximately \$200).
5. Closed captioning (more than \$100 per event).
6. Outreach such as printing, copying, or setup fees for fundraising merchandise (cost TBC but will be kept low).

| Expense Item  | Type | Notes | Amount Requested / Confirmed |
|---|------|-------|------------------------------|
| Website costs   |      |       | \$30/month                   |
| Banking costs   |      |       | \$10/month                   |
| Project management software   |      |       | \$30/month                   |
| Purchasing accessibility aids such as a microphone to improve sound quality on live broadcasts or group teleconferences |      |       | Approximately \$200          |
| Closed captioning (more than \$100 per event).  |      |       | \$100+ per event             |
| Outreach such as printing, copying, or setup fees for fundraising merchandise (cost TBC but will be kept low).          |      |       | TBC                          |

Total = \$1,400

**If you are receiving funding from other sources or anticipate needing to fundraise further, please tell us who and why.**

We will be asking people for membership fees when they join up. We may (depending on the Board's capacity) consider fundraising campaigns, possibly selling OTR-themed items.

**What kind of non-financial support would you look for from the coalition? (Volunteers, publicity, website space, etc?)**

We hope that members of the Coalition will support us publicly – participate in campaigns, spread the word among friends, volunteer if possible. The Coalition has already provided us with support to host a website on Nationbuilder and we hope to continue that arrangement.

**Will you be able to meet the reporting requirements?**

Yes

We are looking for start-up costs, not long-term funding.