



**University Students' Council Standing Policy on
Student Transit in the City of London**

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INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

The University Students' Council (USC) of Western University is committed to enhancing the quality of life of our undergraduate students. In achieving this goal, the USC will continually work to better transit access for Western students in the City of London. Through continued support of vehicle rideshare programs, cycling, improvement to public transit, and the development of rapid transit, the City of London has the ability to vastly improve the everyday lives of students and Londoners alike.

In coming years, we hope the City of London's continued relationship with the USC will include the incorporation of student-focused transit initiatives. The USC's stance on Platform-based rideshare programs, cycling in the city, London bus transit and the development of rapid transit will serve as a framework for continued success of the city. It is an exciting time to be a Western undergraduate; upcoming initiatives will keep students connected with the London community like never before. The USC hopes to play a significant role in the future of student transit in the City of London.

Recommendations

The University Students' Council proposes the following recommendations in an effort to improve transportation within the City of London

1. The City of London should continue work to collect data on a variety of measures concerning the safety and efficiency of vehicle hire, as they pertain to private rideshare programs.
2. The City of London should continue to support mandatory Police record checks for individuals participating as drivers in a rideshare program.
3. The City of London should set a maximum fare for surge-pricing models seen in private rideshare programs.
4. The City of London will work to develop a cycling-sharing program, through a public-private partnership funding model, using Hamilton's *Social Bicycles* as a framework.
5. The City of London will invest in the development of physical infrastructure (i.e. bike racks, designated bike lanes, centrally located shower and change room facilities, etc.) in downtown and near-campus areas.
6. The City of London will increase the maximum carrying capacity of London Transit routes to and from campus, while minimizing impact on traffic congestion, through increased use of trailer buses and articulated buses.
7. The City of London will extend the acceptance of physical bus passes into early September, to allow upper-year Western students adequate time to obtain their new bus pass.
8. The City of London will work to increase the rider experience of Western students by increasing amenities available (IE Charger stations, heated seats, etc.) at bus stops on campus.
9. London Transit Vehicles should be allowed on campus at a low frequency in order to service the southern and university hospital portions of Western University.
10. Western University and the City of London should replace the Med-Syd bridge to allow for only transit, affiliate college bus shuttle, service vehicle, cyclist, and pedestrian travel during University business hours.

11. Rapid transit on campus will follow the route outlined by Western University administration, and peak time frequency should be at a minimum of every 5 minutes
12. The City of London will maximize the frequency of Rapid Transit around peak transit times for Western students.
13. The physical construction of rapid transit infrastructure should be designed and timed to minimize the impact on the impact of interim transit efficiency on Western University.
14. Hubs of rapid transit should be placed on the peripheries of campus, so as to minimize on-campus traffic congestion and bus stand-still time.

PLATFORM-BASED RIDESHARE PROGRAMS

PRINCIPLE Platform-based, for-profit rideshare programs should continue to provide a cost-effective, efficient, and well-regulated method of transit for Western students.

CONCERN The safety and insurance coverage of student rideshare passengers in the city of London is largely unregulated.

CONCERN The surge pricing model for rideshare programs in London is largely unregulated, and often leads to ambiguity in fares.

RECOMMENDATION The City of London should continue work to collect data on a variety of measures concerning the safety and efficiency of vehicle hire, as they pertain to private rideshare programs.

RECOMMENDATION The City of London should continue to support mandatory Police record checks for individuals participating as drivers in a rideshare program.

RECOMMENDATION The City of London should set a maximum fare for surge-pricing models seen in private rideshare programs.

Recent years have seen a vast increase in the demand for private rideshare programs in Canadian cities. The USC believes these programs (such as Uber, Lyft, etc.) provide a cost-efficient and eco-friendly means of transport around the city for Western students. In the City of London, proper enactment and oversight of vehicle rideshare programs has the potential to significantly decrease traffic congestion and carbon emissions, while providing an affordable means of transit for Western students and Londoners alike¹.

The enactment of platform-based ridesharing programs in the City of London is an indicator of the city's continued success as a modern community. The USC sees such programs as opportunities for the City of London to set an example as a leader in progressive transit solutions, and the development of public-private partnerships. Stimulating competition in the vehicle-for-hire industry will lead to more competitive pricing and service for Western students.

The USC recognizes the efforts of the City of London to address potential issues with private rideshare programs, through the recent amendments to the vehicle for hire bylaw². A primary concern to the USC is the surge-pricing model, used by a large majority of private rideshare companies. This pricing model often results in unexpectedly high fares for Western students. Moving forward, the USC hopes to see set maximum fares incorporated into the city's vehicle-for-hire bylaw³. We believe such an amendment has the power to keep control of fares in the hands of London citizens, while allowing Uber to operate safely in the City of London.

The USC understands and shares concerns on the safety and insurance coverage of rideshare programs and their passengers. Many private rideshare programs have taken steps to increase the safety of their

¹ <https://www.actcanada.com/docs/act-resources/report-on-canadian-alternative-transportation-programs.pdf?sfvrsn=0>

² <https://www.london.ca/city-hall/by-laws/Documents/taxicabL129.pdf>

³ <https://hbr.org/2015/12/everyone-hates-ubers-surge-pricing-heres-how-to-fix-it>

service, including removing any cash exchange, and requiring criminal record checks on all employed drivers. The USC looks to the City of London to perform a thorough and complete data collection process on the safety and other impact factors of ridesharing programs.

The largest priority of the USC in any endeavor is the safety and security of Western undergraduate students. Any plan to develop a successful, multi-modal transit system for the Western campus and surrounding area would be incomplete without a fallback system for students uncomfortable with the lack of transit services that can sometimes arise late at night. The USC hopes to see the designation of a waiting space for London Taxi and Private Rideshare vehicles, incorporated onto campus, for use during non-transit hours.

CYCLING IN THE CITY

PRINCIPLE Cycling is an eco-friendly, cost-effective, and efficient method of transit for Western students.

CONCERN Many London residents and Western students alike do not have access to a low-cost, efficient means of cycling transportation.

CONCERN Current physical infrastructure in the City of London does not adequately support safe cycling practices.

RECOMMENDATION The City of London will work to develop a cycling-sharing program, through a public-private partnership funding model, using Hamilton's *Social Bicycles* as a framework.

RECOMMENDATION The City of London will invest in the development of physical infrastructure (i.e. bike racks, designated bike lanes, centrally located shower and change room facilities, etc.) in downtown and near-campus areas.

Cycling is a cost-effective, eco-friendly, and healthy means of transit for Western students and Londoners as a whole. The USC is a strong supporter of cycling as a method of transit for members of the Western community. With the long-term goal of a car free campus, the USC is committed to the development of a cycling-focused London. We believe concrete steps can be taken by the City of London to support cycling as a means of transit.

Currently, the City of London has much room for improvement in its development of cycling infrastructure. There are numerous benefits to supporting cycling as an alternative means of transportation in London, including decreased traffic congestion and overall carbon footprint⁴. The USC looks to the City of London to invest in the development of a cycling-sharing program, similar to that of the *Social Bicycles* program found in Hamilton, Ontario. The USC also hopes to see increased, tangible support of those choosing cycling as an alternate means of transportation, through the physical development of dedicated bike lanes on arterial roadways, secure public bike racks, public showers and change rooms, and other physical infrastructure. In accordance with the Ontario Cycling Strategy⁵, we hope to see the City of London reaching out to the provincial government to collaborate on cycling development.

The *SoBi* bike-sharing program in Hamilton, Ontario is the result of a well-operated public-private partnership between the City of Hamilton and the non-profit Social Bicycles based out of New York City, USA⁶. This specific case used funds from an Ontario Meterolinx grant to fund the physical infrastructure required for this program; all infrastructure is owned by the city, and operated full time by Social Bicycles. The non-profit nature of this network results in all membership funds being diverted back into the maintenance and further development of the program itself. It is to be noted that municipal taxpayer money was not used to for the purpose of developing or implementing this program whatsoever. The USC is excited to continue work with the City of London in enacting a similar program

⁴ <https://www.london.ca/city-hall/master-plans-reports/master-plans/Documents/Bicycle-Master-Plan.pdf>

⁵ <http://www.mto.gov.on.ca/english/publications/pdfs/ontario-cycle-strategy.pdf>

⁶ https://d3fpllf1m7bbt3.cloudfront.net/sites/default/files/media/browser/2015-06-05/bikeshare_integrated_functional_analysis_final_2013-jan-18.pdf

within this region. We hope to see this process begin with a thorough Public Engagement report⁷, centered around developments on the Western University campus.

⁷ https://hamilton.socialbicycles.com/assets/pdf/Social_Cyclist_Bike_Share_Report.pdf

BUS TRANSIT

PRINCIPLE Student satisfaction should be of high priority in the development of London transit infrastructure and planning.

CONCERN Physical bus passes currently have no overlap period, leading to students needing to pay regular fare at the beginning of September, despite owning a bus pass.

CONCERN The current state of the London Transit Commission's service does not adequately support the transit needs of Western students.

RECOMMENDATION The London Transit Commission will increase the maximum carrying capacity of London Transit routes to and from campus, while minimizing impact on traffic congestion, through increased use of trailer buses and articulated buses.

RECOMMENDATION The London Transit Commission will extend the acceptance of physical bus passes into early September, to allow upper-year Western students adequate time to obtain their new bus pass.

RECOMMENDATION The London Transit Commission will work to increase the rider experience of Western students by increasing amenities available (IE Charger stations, heated seats, etc.) at bus stops on campus.

The USC strongly values its partnership with the London Transit Commission, and is constantly striving for ways to ensure value for our student body in the mandatory bus passes, purchased by each Western undergraduate annually. In 2011, only 6.9% of Londoners used public transit for their daily commute to work⁸. The USC believes increasing the quality of London Transit will result in a higher commuting via public transit rate.

The concerns and satisfaction of Western University students should continue to be of high priority in the planning and development of London Transit bus routes and schedules. At present, London Transit planning often leaves students unable to find space on a bus during peak hours. With the use of trailer buses, articulated buses, and/or increased frequency, the USC hopes to see significant improvements in the service provided on routes frequently serviced by Western students. Together, the USC believes we can work to increase the overall student satisfaction rate with London Transit.

The USC is committed to easing the transition for Western students into a new academic year. At current, physical student bus passes expire on August 31st and bus passes for the new year take effect September 1st⁹. Logistically, it is unreasonable for Western University staff to distribute new bus passes to all LTC frequent-users within the time students arrive for a new school year, and September 1st. This discrepancy in processes often leads to Western students needing to pay regular fare or walk large distances during the early weeks of September. The USC looks to the City of London to help extend the

⁸ http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/nhs-enm/2011/as-sa/99-012-x/99-012-x2011003_1-eng.pdf

⁹ <http://westernusc.ca/transportation/>

expiration date of physical bus passes into early September, in order to better facilitate this annual transition for all remaining cohorts of physical bus pass users.

The USC looks to the City of London for the continual bettering of the London Transit service as a whole. London Transit provides the means for Western students to become engaged with the London community, outside of the campus environment. With an overall update to the physical infrastructure of London Public Transit, the USC believes ridership of London bus transit by Western students will increase, leading to a higher degree of community engagement. Adding amenities such as wireless device charging stations and heated seats to buses and bus stops in areas frequented by Western students have the potential to increase ridership.

RAPID TRANSIT

PRINCIPLE Student satisfaction should be a high priority in the *Shift* initiative to develop a rapid transit network in the City of London.

CONCERN The removal of London Transit Commission vehicles on campus will create service interruptions and hindrances for students living in the neighbourhoods immediately south of campus.

RECOMMENDATION London Transit Commission vehicles should be allowed on campus at a low frequency in order to service the southern and university hospital portions of Western University.

RECOMMENDATION Western University and the City of London should replace the Med-Syd bridge to allow for only transit, affiliate college bus shuttle, service vehicle, cyclist, and pedestrian travel during University business hours.

RECOMMENDATION Rapid transit on campus will follow the route outlined by Western University administration, and peak time frequency should be at a minimum of every 5 minutes

RECOMMENDATION The City of London will maximize the frequency of Rapid Transit around peak transit times for Western students.

RECOMMENDATION The physical construction of rapid transit infrastructure should be designed and timed to minimize the impact on the impact of interim transit efficiency on Western University.

RECOMMENDATION Hubs of rapid transit should be placed on the peripheries of campus, so as to minimize on-campus traffic congestion and bus stand-still time.

RECOMMENDATION: Affiliate-College bus shuttle routes should be re-mapped so as to increase efficiency of service with the integration of Rapid Transit.

The development of a well-planned and efficient rapid transit network in the City of London is a very exciting prospect for Western students. As such, the USC looks to the City of London to represent the needs of the Western community in the physical building, implementation, and operation of London Rapid Transit. In the long-term effort of creating a car-free campus core, the USC has a set of concrete recommendations for the upcoming stages of the *Shift* initiative.

The development of a rapid transit network in London has the potential to cause significant disturbances in the everyday flow of traffic on and around campus. The USC strongly believes in adhering to strict maximums on the number of traditional transit busses allowed on campus per hour. The USC recommends the continuation of these London transit busses allowed on campus, in an effort to service the southern and University Hospital components of campus, which will not be covered by London rapid transit. We believe in the importance on establishing a transit network (through multi-modal aspects of transit) which will best service the maximum number of Londoners and Western students possible, in as efficient a method as possible. The USC also recommends minimizing the standstill time of busses on campus – which can be achieved by the City of London through creating all major hubs of rapid transit for the University outside of the campus core.

In congruency with the development of a rapid transit network, the USC believes physical upgrades to the municipal regions surrounding campus can significantly improve the current peak-time traffic congestion which affects campus and the surrounding area. The USC looks to London and Western University to construct a second Thames river bridge, accessible only for transit, affiliate college bus shuttle, service vehicle, cyclist, and pedestrian travel during University business hours. This has the potential to decrease congestion and potentially allow the creation of designated rapid transit lanes. In the evenings, this bridge will be open for public use to ease the current strain on the single Thames river bridge.

A crucial aspect of incorporating a fully functional rapid transit system into London is the physical building of infrastructure, which will inevitably cause delays and congestion throughout the city. The USC hopes to work with Western University and the City of London to properly plan and manage the physical building of campus-related infrastructure to minimize interim transit efficiency on the Western campus. Blocking necessary roads during off-hours and over academic breaks (such as the summer months and spring reading break) will allow for minimal impact on the Western community.

Overall, the integration of rapid transit onto campus is an exciting way of continuing to create modern and direct transit solutions for Western students¹⁰. With Western University acting as a major hub of incoming academic and innovative talent from around the globe, the USC is proud to help in the effort to create a rapid transit system to better integrate our campus with the London community.

¹⁰ <http://www.uwo.ca/ipb/publicaccountability/documents/RapidTransit%20Backgrounder%20Feb2016i.pdf>