



Lauren Touchant
Chair of the Vanier Community Association

Ottawa, on Thursday, September 20th, 2018

Re: Concerns related to recent Route #12 change

Letter to Stephen Blais and John Manconi,
cc Mathieu Fleury, Jim Watson

Dear Sirs,

On behalf of the Vanier Community Association, I wish to register our continuing concerns about the failure of OC Transpo to address the transit needs of the Vanier community. These concerns came to a head in August 2018 concerning OC Transpo's intention to terminate Route #12 at Rideau St. Station in support of the LRT roll out in September, as well as recent plans to reduce the number of bus stops on Montreal Road and McArthur Avenue as each street undergoes renewal. We appreciated Councillor Fleury's efforts to address the community's concerns, but the fact remains that this was a step taken without any consultation with the community and is in conflict with commitments made by OC Transpo at the public consultations held in June 2017 that focused on east end transit service to ensure passenger connectivity to the new LRT and address long-standing problems with Route 12 and other services. The consultation was hosted by Councillors Fleury and Nussbaum and was attended by OC Transpo staff, including Mr. Pat Scrimgeour.

The announcement last month to terminate service at Rideau St. Station, subsequently amended following the intervention of Councillor Fleury (and again without community consultation), was a significant change to what was presented and accepted by most residents at the public consultation held on June 7th, 2017. I cite the Ottawa Citizen article of June 8, 2017 on the meeting as an example:

"12 (Blair/Parliament): No changes planned for this route, which will continue to provide all-day service between Blair and Parliament stations via Montreal Road and Rideau Street. Buses are expected to be less jam-packed as people opt to take other routes to travel downtown via the Confederation Line."

OC Transpo staff also indicated that following the end of LRT construction, Route 12 and other services would improve, as the congestion related to construction, especially downtown would be eased. OC Transpo staff will recall comments from residents reflecting the scepticism that crowded conditions and service delays would be improved and that it was a common concern that further investments were needed to meet service standards.

The recent announcements to cut transit services throughout Vanier by reducing the number of bus stops and ending Route 12 service at Rideau St were disturbing. Given the enormous investments in the new LRT which by-passes much of the central urban core (eg. Vanier, New Edinburgh, Overbrook, Centretown, Ottawa South), it is not acceptable that these areas should be penalized by not only no improvement in service but actual service reductions. Residents' years-long patience in awaiting improvements of Route 12, with the promise that the implementation of LRT would free up buses and drivers to improve service, appears to have been rewarded with even worse service.

The fact that these plans have been made and announced without community consultation is particularly troublesome. Proposed service changes in the St. Laurent and McArthur corridors which are currently being consulted with residents on-line is the minimum one would have expected. This has not been done in the case of Montreal Road regarding the reduction of bus stops and the change in the final stop of Route 12. When the plan was announced by City staff at a meeting in early August of the Montreal Road Revitalization Project Working Group, community representatives and the Councillor were taken aback by the lack of consultation.

We welcomed the subsequent meeting with OC Transpo proposed by Councillor Fleury as part of the Working Group and appreciated OC Transpo's willingness to resume the dialogue following the June 2017 public consultation. We were, however, surprised by the statement by a senior OC Transpo representative that the end stop of Route 12 at Metcalfe and Queen was "permanent", as if any route decisions are ever permanent, but this clearly indicates that OC Transpo is not prepared in any event to address community concerns, at least in this case. The announcement that the change is permanent is even more perplexing given that no one yet knows what the effects of the LRT will be for those areas not served by the LRT and the effect on traffic congestion in the downtown core. Our understanding is that 40% of passengers travelling westbound appear to board the bus between St. Laurent and the Rideau River and that 45% of users travelling westbound get off downtown or further west. Surveys post-LRT will help clarify the picture, though we are of the opinion that services should not be cut until such information collected post-LRT, strongly supports the case to end the Route 12 prematurely.

As a follow-up to the Montreal Road Revitalization Project Working Group meeting with OC Transpo, the Vanier Community Association has submitted through the office of Councillor Fleury its comments to OC Transpo concerning the proposed changes. These

comments are attached for your information and consideration. We look forward to a continuing dialogue with OC Transpo on these comments and queries.

Considering the recent announcements from RTG leave a significant transportation gap that affects many residents in Vanier and the surrounding area, the Vanier Community Association requests bus #12 service route be restored to the pre-September 2nd service route, and if there were changes to be made to the route once the LRT goes live, we ask that OC Transpo commits to ending Bus #12 to Parliament as it was originally promised by City Staff in June 2017.

Finally, we are looking to you for your assurance that OC Transpo will commit itself to ensure on-going consultation with affected communities in the follow-up to the LRT launch and that OC Transpo is committed to invest in service improvements for those communities not directly benefitting from LRT service. On the latter, we find the comment by OC Transpo at the meeting last month that there is no new money for anything other than the LRT to be unacceptable. Given this stance by OC Transpo, we recognize that the latter commitment needs to be accordingly addressed and reinforced by the new City Council to be elected on October 22nd.

Signed Lauren Touchant

President, VCA

Attachment

Please find attached our revised comments following last week's Working Committee meeting to be forwarded to Pat S. for follow up:

General comments:

- Given our aging population, and considering accessibility issues, as well as winter snow clearing operations of sidewalks that further reduce walkability, we do not agree with reduction/amalgamation of bus stops.
- Given that the LRT will advantage users residing East of St-Laurent, it is fair to say that most users will be from Vanier; * in Westbound direction, 40% of users get on the bus between St-Laurent and Rideau River.
- We support the addition of bus shelters wherever possible. Where there is not sufficient space, bus stops should be located near buildings with overhangs and/or canopies to provide some protection. This is the case for instance at the Wabano Centre where there is no shelter but there is a recessed entrance.
- GPS displays: please confirm that they will be installed in all (if not most) bus shelters; we suggest that priority be given to transfer points, e.g. North River Rd, Vanier Pkwy, Marier Ave (for new route #19), Grandville (for new route 20), Alfred (for new route 20) and St-Laurent Blvd; it would be useful to have GPS screens at transit points display ETA of connecting buses;
- Please indicate revised bus stop locations at cross streets to facilitate transfers;

- OC Transpo's standard for locating bus stops, i.e. 400m service radius: please provide a graphic representation for Montreal Rd; are there other criteria for locating bus stops, such as proximity to seniors' residence?
- We support OC Transpo / City collaboration to address pedestrian/passenger safety at bus stops with respect to the cycling lanes.
- We would appreciate further clarification on plans for a public on-line survey of bus stops on Montreal Rd as is currently under way for St. Laurent and McArthur avenues. In addition, we suggest a public consultation to follow up the June 2017 consultation. City staff insistence that the change from the announcement in June 2017 that Parliament Station would be the #12 terminus to Metcalfe/Queen is "permanent" is neither reasonable given the need to take into account traffic changes post-LRT construction (at the June 2017 consultation it was stated that congestion affecting the #12 related to LRT construction) nor acceptable in the absence of public consultations. Also, *more than 45% of users travelling Westbound get off downtown or further west compared to 38% at Rideau Center.
- We recognize that the new road geometry and other traffic calming measures that we are advocating will affect bus transit service on Montreal Road and therefore believe that a better bus timetable (increased bus service) would better serve the community than a reduction of bus stops.
- *It would be interesting to know from postal codes which users were asking for "fewer stops east of North River Road". K1L- Vanier, K1B b-Blackburn, Sheffield, K1K-Overbrook, Manor Park, K1K- Lower Town - Sandy Hill.

* Data from the [OCT Transit Survey](#), Oct-Nov 2016, Mathieu Felury Blog #5.