



John Di Nino, President
ATU Canada
61 International Blvd, Suite 210
Etobicoke, Ontario M9W 6K4

March 12, 2022

Creating a National Task Force for Safe Public Transit

Dear John Di Nino,

Transport Action Canada shares ATU Canada's concerns about the upsurge in disorderly conduct in public spaces, which has impacted public transit systems across the country.

Passenger and employee safety is paramount in ensuring that transit systems can meet the mobility needs of our communities, and in particular of citizens who might feel vulnerable due to gender, ethnicity, age, or disability.

We fully support ATU Canada's call for the creation of a National Task Force for Safe Public Transit and immediate actions by all levels of government to ensure public transit systems are a safe space for everyone.

Transit vehicles, shelters, and stations become one of the few spaces in which people in crisis can obtain protection from the elements when no other options are available in the community due to inadequate resourcing of housing, counselling, and addictions services. Transit employees therefore often find themselves thrust into the role of first responder. Ensuring staff receive training in de-escalation and mental health first aid is vital, yet not sufficient to address these issues.

Other recent incidents appear to be related to the destaffing of transit stations and systems. Not providing a visible and welcoming customer service presence makes transit system less accessible to visitors and new passengers, while emboldening anti-social behaviours and increasing fare evasion and vandalism. Cutting back on "operating costs" in this way is fiscally irresponsible, suppressing revenues while incurring much higher costs in the policing and criminal justice system and devaluing the significant capital investment that transit assets in our communities represent.

Sincerely,

T.W. Johnson

Terence Johnson, President
Transport Action Canada

cc: Tamara Rudge, Director General, Surface Transportation Policy, Transport Canada