

Dear Mr. Roach and Mr. Stewart,

We write with great disappointment following the service cuts that took effect earlier this week. We understand the great challenges that you've faced in hiring and retaining operators, and that those challenges are ones that are faced by transit systems across the country. On May 22, 2023, we wrote to share our concerns about current bus service as part of our feedback about the proposed Northside/Southside MetroLink expansion. In that letter, we wrote "While we commend any effort to expand public transit in St. Louis, MetroLink alone is not sufficient to serve the needs of St. Louis residents...we **must** have a robust bus system, with frequent, consistent service that people can rely on, in order for public transit to be successful in St. Louis."

For ridership numbers to rise, reliable transportation to critical connections like employment, groceries and wellbeing resources is required, with frequent service and a network of bus stops. We are concerned that this round of cuts will *still* not result in a schedule of buses that can be successfully run, as we understand from our members that previous rounds of cuts have still resulted in many missed trips. The combination of missed trips and reduced service is likely to continue a downward spiral of decreased ridership, which we must push back against. In the short-term, we request that you publish the missed trips from recent months and going forward, publish the parameters you use to make decisions about route modifications, and produce maps that document who is being impacted by these changes.

We also expect to see continued work to build partnerships that can fill the gaps in our current transit system. Other services across the region, including Via, Downtown Link, Bird, taxis, and rideshare, can help fill this gap as you build back up the operator force. We would like to see increased partnerships and awareness of how people can access these resources to help them get where they need to go.

We hear how much you are doing to increase recruitment and we applaud this work. It's wonderful to hear that your recruitment numbers have improved in recent months. However, running a transit system is not just a business: it is a critical public service that impacts people's lives and their ability to access jobs, education, healthcare, childcare, and work. We expect to see the new contract with ATU raise the wages for operators so they are competitive not only with other transit agencies but with other jobs in our region. The starting wage for our operators should be competitive with transit agencies in other municipalities.

We also expect to see investment to improve the experience of operators, including:

- reconsidering fare collection,
- safety issues,
- work/life balance, and
- other changes to workplace culture that would make being an operator an enticing role, matching the importance of bus operators to our region.

As a region, we cannot thrive if we do not have a strong, reliable transit system. We are relying on you.

Thank you,

Voting Members of the Community Mobility Committee

*Aamna Anwer
Denis Beganovic
Matthew Bernstine
Bobbie Brantley
Aubrey Byron
Noah Hart*

*Liz Kramer, co-chair
Kaleena Menke
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