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Rylen Clark  
Bus Organizing Fellow  
Active Transportation Alliance

To Mayor Lori Lightfoot and the members of Chicago City Council,

My name is Rylen Clark, I am from Chicago and I have lived in the Chicagoland area for most of my life. I have extensive experience in peer-to-peer nonprofit organizations though they primarily focused on at risk youth at drop-in centers such as Center on Halsted and Broadway Youth Center in the Lakeview area.

I currently work at Active Transportation Alliance as a Bus Organizing Fellow. As a Bus Fellow, I have been collecting public input on how to make bus service work better for South and West Side community residents.

The speed and reliability of CTA buses in Chicago, an ever-present problem, has been amplified by COVID-19. Active Transportation Alliance is calling for a roll out 10 miles of bus lanes before the end of 2020 as part of the city's COVID-19 response as well as funding and construction 20 additional miles by the end of 2021. We ask you members of City Council to Making bus lanes a priority for the city is instrumental in ensuring that bus trips are reliably able to connect folks to schooling, jobs, family, and healthcare.

Along with reliability of bus service which requires investment and action from you all, the next key to equity is affordability. Active Trans would like to enact Fair Fares, making transit free for youth under 19 who qualify for free/reduced lunch, and reduced for low-income individuals. Around 20% of riders make less than \$20,00 a year, which in turn makes them spend 6% of their income on transportation.

A 50% fare discount could potentially save someone \$630 a year. Bussing to and from school is not available to every district and not all students attend schools nearest them. Charging youth and essentially adding another barrier to accessing education, after school activities, doctors appointments, etc. is incredibly harmful.

Interviewing riders let us know that the issues around health and safety that plague CTA have also been heightened thanks to the Coronavirus. Universal masking is one of the simplest ways to make sure everyone riding public transit can be safe. Unfortunately, masks are not something that everyone has access to. The city could expand its program to give away "Travel Healthy Kits" at busy stops and stations by installing mask dispensers on buses and trains.

With regards to safety on transit, CTA has a contract with CPD for 10 million per year to patrol CTA. There was a recent police shooting on CTA after the Mayor announced an increased police presence back in March. Police accountability is a slow and broken process, and the time has



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passed to where alternative methods of keeping transit riders and operators safe need to be discussed and implemented.

I found that many interviewees avoided public transit because of these health and safety issues. Getting the conversation started not only prioritizes riders and drivers but makes transit a more enjoyable experience overall. Working within the South and West sides and acknowledging the disparity those communities face and implementing change to support them is the main goal of Active Transportation Alliance. We are hopeful that you, the Mayor and City Council, will address our calls for action and do everything in your power to make these changes.

Sincerely,

Rylen Clark  
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