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Good morning to the members of the CTA BOARD,

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 well as funding and construction 20 additional miles by the end of 2021. We ask you members of the CTA board to make bus lanes a priority. This is instrumental in ensuring that bus trips are reliably able to connect folks to schooling, jobs, family, and healthcare.

A key to equity is affordability. Active Trans has proposed a Fair Fares program, making transit free for youth under 19 who qualify for free/reduced lunch, and reduced fares 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 adds another barrier as to why they cannot access a better education and is harmful. We urge the board to explore ways to make transit more affordable for low income families during this unprecedented economic crisis.

We also heard from riders that their concerns around health and safety 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 CTA should encourage universal mask wearing by expanding the "Travel Healthy Kits" program at busy bus stops and stations and by installing mask dispensers on buses and trains. The operator union ATU241 has recently launched a petition to encourage more mask wearing on transit due to their concerns around low compliance. Providing a mask for every rider is a way to combat those concerns.

With regards to safety on transit, CTA has a contract with the Chicago Police Department for 10 million per year to patrol CTA. There was a recent police shooting on CTA



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after the Mayor announced an increased police presence back in March. Police accountability is a topic that is repeatedly brought up, and the time has passed to where we must urgently discuss and implement alternative methods of keeping transit riders and operators safe . We call upon the CTA Board to review the contract with CPD and begin a public engagement process with transit riders and operators about what safety on transit means to them.

In an unprecedented move, the City of Chicago and transit agencies decided to discontinue all its services with little to no warning for thousands of Chicagoans around the city at the end of May and early June. There have also been rolling more localized shutdowns during protests. From nurses to gas station workers, to protestors and people just trying to get to the grocery store hundreds, potentially thousands have been left stranded around Chicagoland. The decision to shut down transit with little notice has prevented people from taking needed trips and shows no regard for those who rely on the system for their everyday essential needs. We call upon the CTA board to address when and how these decisions are made and to prevent future situations where riders are left stranded.

I found that many transit riders I spoke with avoided transit because of fears regarding health and safety. Getting the conversation started about ways transit can improve 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 Trans. And we are hopeful that the CTA board will address our calls for action and do everything in its power to make these changes.

Thank you for your consideration of these matters,

Rylen Clark
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