



FRIENDS OF SCIENCE SOCIETY

PO Box 61172 RPO Kensington
Calgary AB T2N 4S6
Canada

Toll-free Telephone: 1-888-789-9597

E-mail: contact@friendsofscience.org

OPEN LETTER TO PREMIER DANIELLE SMITH ON GREEN LINE CONTROVERSY

September 20, 2024

Premier Danielle Smith
Hon. Ric McIver, Minister of Municipal Affairs
Hon. Devon Dreeshen, Minister of Transportation and Economic Corridors
Mayor Jyoti Gondek and Calgary City Council

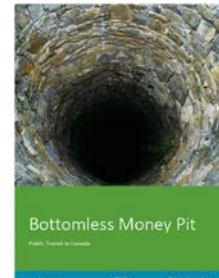
Honorable Premier, Honorable Ministers, Mayor Gondek and Councilors,

RE: Calgary Green Line Controversy

With respect to the recent cancellation in funding for the Green Line, we would like to bring three new reports to your attention, to help you to evaluate such projects as you go forward.

All three have been prepared by Robert Lyman, retired energy economist and former federal public servant of 27 years, 10 years a diplomat. Mr. Lyman served under [every form of government](#). He is factual and non-partisan in his approach to these policy matters.

Bottomless Money Pit: Public Transit in Canada <https://blog.friendsofscience.org/2024/09/15/bottomless-money-pit-public-transit-in-canada/>



Trends in Canadian Transit Ridership <https://blog.friendsofscience.org/2024/09/16/trends-in-canadian-transit-ridership/>



Money for Nothing – The Minimal Climate Benefits of Transit Spending <https://blog.friendsofscience.org/2024/09/18/money-for-nothing-the-minimal-climate-benefits-of-transit-spending/>



Though public transit is important for citizens, focussing on LRT over buses and Bus Rapid Transit, may not be the best use of public funds. The results over

years of implementation of mass transit LRT lines in Canada do not show a significant level of use, or a [decline](#).

Table 1
Main Modes of Commuting by Percentage (2016)

<u>City</u>	<u>Car or Truck</u>	<u>Transit</u>	<u>Walk</u>	<u>Cycle</u>
Vancouver	67.6	21.4	7.3	2.5
Calgary	76.8	15.4	5.1	1.6
Edmonton	82.0	12.0	4.1	1.1
Winnipeg	78.8	14.0	4.7	1.7
Toronto	67.7	24.7	5.3	1.4
Ottawa-Gatineau	71.5	18.9	6.5	2.4
Montreal	69.1	22.8	5.4	2.0
Halifax	77.7	12.0	8.1	1.0

Source: Statistics Canada

Many cities are finding it difficult to pay for operation of existing lines; how will they pay for additional lines?

The Green Line has been touted as part of the climate mitigation action for Calgary.

Reducing Greenhouse Gases

- *Each year the Green Line will reduce greenhouse gases by 15,000 tonnes.*
- *Light Rail Transit (LRT) is energy efficient. At maximum passenger capacity, the LRT is 58 times more energy efficient than driving.*
- *18 passengers riding on a light rail vehicle is the “break even” point for LRT to save energy compared with 18 automobiles.*



THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT IS ALLOCATING BILLIONS TO EXPAND TRANSIT.

"IT'S GREAT WE'RE GETTING THESE INVESTMENTS, BUT YOU ACTUALLY CAN'T MATERIALIZE THE BENEFITS OF THESE INVESTMENTS IF THE CITIES ACTUALLY CAN'T AFFORD TO RUN IT," HE SAID.

THE ANALYSIS LOOKED AT THE BUDGETS, REVENUE SOURCES AND LONG-TERM PLANS FOR EIGHT TRANSIT SYSTEMS IN VANCOUVER, CALGARY, EDMONTON, WINNIPEG, OTTAWA, TORONTO, MONTREAL AND HALIFAX.

MOST OF THEM ARE ALREADY REPORTING BUDGET SHORTFALLS.

<https://www.calgary.ca/green-line/about/benefits.html>

What is never discussed in relation to mass transit as a means to allegedly cut urban emissions is that the embodied emissions of LRT are enormous; far greater than that of conventional car/light truck use in the city. Example:

"Portland's North Interstate Rail light rail line is estimated to save about 23 billion BTU per years, while its construction is estimated to have **consumed 3.9 TRILLION BTU...it would take 172 years to offset the extra energy needed for construction.** Not only would this exceed the lifespan of the line but long before 172 years automobiles are likely to be so energy efficient that light rail will offer no savings at all"

Randall O'Toole of the Cato Institute: "Does Rail Transit Save Energy or Reduce Green House Gas Emissions?" April 14, 2008

It seems that "[Transit Oriented Development](#)" (TOD) has been an integral part of Calgary's Municipal Development Plan, attempting to orchestrate a "Building Up" form of Urban Planning, as per former Mayor Nenshi's paper for *Canada25* "[Building Up: Making Canada's cities magnets for talent and engines of development.](#)" versus a "Build Out" form (i.e. suburbs). Again, the intention of TOD is allegedly to cut greenhouse gases from car travel, by **limiting citizen mobility to transit**, something environmental groups and climate activists are quite adamant about, over the other option of **expanding the free choice of taxpaying citizens and residents** as to where to live, whether or not they choose to use a car, and how convenient city services will be for them.

This begs the question as to whether the C-Train/Green Line of today has been **focussed on creating developed properties near it**, rather than being focussed on providing maximum mass transit access from end to end of the city. It seems that the original LRT lines were not ideologically aligned with climate objectives and were more aligned with serving the maximum number of users, and they have served Calgarians well.

Are you aware that in order for a city to apply for federal funding, the city must use [Infrastructure Canada's "climate lens"](#) which employs the [implausible climate scenario known as RCP 8.5 as if the 'business-as-usual' case](#)? This may be a reason why some aspects of municipal operations or future plans are wildly budgeted; cities do not have a choice in this matter if they want federal funding, but by using this scenario, it skews common sense solutions.

We have written to [Mayor Gondek about this in the past](#). At that time, we suggested that:

*Consequently, we hope that the City of Calgary will point out to its partners in the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, and to the federal and provincial governments that it is **being forced to comply with a fraudulent representation of our climate future by being coerced into using RCP 8.5 as the 'business-as-usual' case, when it is far from it.***

In short, RCP 8.5 includes wildly impossible parameters by 2100 such as these: (plain language)

- *The burning of more coal than exists on earth.*
- *The burning of more oil than is presently deemed to be recoverable.*
- *A global population that is 3 to 6 billion more than the 9 billion the UN projects.*

These comments are meant as food for thought.

Population density is a factor related both to maximized use and tax base to underwrite the costs of mass transit.

Many of the world's best loved cities are often cited as examples of mass transit benefits but let us look at the population density factors.

Global Cities	Population	Population Density
Paris	2.1 million	20,983 people /km ²
Barcelona	5.7 million	16,000 people /km ²
London, England	9.7 million	6,170 people /km ² Greater London area
Canadian Cities		
Montreal	1.7 million	4,517 people /km ²
Toronto (GTA)	6.4 million	4,149 people /km ²
Vancouver	2.6 million	5,749 people /km ²
Ottawa	1 million	365 people /km ²
Calgary	1.6 million	1,592 people /km ²

We hope you find this information useful. Feel free to ask any questions.

Sincerely,

Ron Davison, P. Eng.

President

Friends of Science Society

president@friendsofscience.org