

To: Members of Council

From: The Public Transit Advisory Commission (PTAC)

We are writing today to express our deep concern regarding the proposed nearly \$300,000 cuts in Go COMO's 2019 budget in addition to the proposed 50% increase in ParaTransit fees.

PTAC recognizes the consistent consideration the City of Columbia gives to transit through its commitment to equality, safety, economy and the environment in large part evidenced by these actions:

- **Columbia's Strategic Plan 2016 – 2019** -Columbia's strategic plan asks questions as to how the community can progress in the areas of economy, social equity, public safety and operational excellence and infrastructure.
- **Columbia's designation as a 3-STAR Community** – Seven goal areas including "Climate & Energy", "Economy & Jobs" and "Equity and Empowerment" – all areas in which a strong public transit system plays an integral part.
- **Adoption of the Vision Zero Policy** – with the goal of eliminating all traffic deaths and serious injuries by 2030
- **Formation of the Mayor's Task Force on Climate Action and Adaptation Planning** – to reduce climate pollution and create a climate action plan
- **Engaged transit consultant** Olsson Associates to study Columbia's transit system.

Columbia is dedicated and consistent in its commitment to healthy growth for our community. In a time when the city seeks to move forward in the areas emphasized in the above initiatives it's important to understand how vital a strong public transit system is to the overall success of these initiatives.

Cutting service leads to decreased ridership. As citizens see that public transit service decreases, they are less likely to use it as an alternative to privately owned vehicle usage. Other citizens, for whom public transit is the only alternative, suffer by losing transportation to their jobs and other required outings. Conversely, placing a priority on public transit as one of the most important avenues to accomplish the initiatives the City of Columbia has in place demonstrates, in a concrete way, the City's commitment to economy, social equity, public safety and infrastructure.

Transit consultant Olsson Associates recommended that we shift resources from the neighborhood loops to the Black and Gold routes and to improve frequency and service hours on those popular routes. This action serves to continue a level of service for those who are using the bus system now, while the City works on a long-term strategy to grow the system for the future as we closely link the City's goals and initiatives with a strong public transit system.

Strong public transit affects every aspect of community. A feeling of independence, safety and convenience is a profound indicator of emotional well-being for all citizens. The PTAC feels the proposed budget cuts to transit will create a true hardship and take a significant step backward in those very areas that the City is working to emphasize.

We ask that you reconsider this significant reduction of funding of Columbia's public transit system and further, to continue strong efforts to allocate needed funds to Columbia's public transit system.

Public Transit Advisory Commission