To Adam Thorpe, Chair Public Transportation Advisory Commission

Mayor and City Council Members,

The Climate & Environment Commission (CEC) would like to recommend that Council establish a Transit Master Plan Task Force to develop a strategy and action steps to build a thriving public transit system in Columbia.

In 2019, Columbia adopted community-wide greenhouse gas emission reduction goals:
- 35% by 2035
- 80% by 2050
- 100% by 2060.

Transportation is the second largest source of greenhouse gas emissions in Columbia, accounting for 28% of emissions in 2019.

The Climate Action & Adaptation Plan (CAAP) identified the following transportation sector goal, strategy, and high-priority action item:
- Goal T-1. Reduce travel by car.
o Strategy T-1.2: Build a thriving public transit system.
▪ T-1.2.1 – Improve efficiency, convenience and reliability of bus service and infrastructure (e.g., increase frequency, shorten wait times, construct bus stop shelters).

The Climate & Environment Commission (CEC) Transportation Work Group selected this action item as one of its 2021-2022 focus action items because transit can significantly reduce transportation sector greenhouse gas emissions.

Columbia has long struggled to provide convenient, reliable transit service. The baseline data used in developing the CAAP showed that Columbia residents took only 1% of trips by transit, and as a result, 78% of trips were in single occupancy vehicles. In order to achieve the overall emission reduction goals set by the CAAP and approved by Council, the transit mode share must shift to 17% of trips by 2035 and 40% of trips by 2050.

This large-scale shift is feasible. The strategy of moving away from a car-centric transportation system to a transit-centric system is not new or cutting edge. But it will be a major change for Columbia.

Columbia lags behind other comparable cities that have already used transit as a tool to address climate change, equity, workforce development, and other high-priority community issues. For example, in 2019 in Champaign-Urbana, Illinois, transit accounted for 5% of trips to work, more than five times Columbia's total transit mode share. Lawrence, Kansas has a population only 79% of Columbia's size, but its annual ridership is more than six times Columbia's ridership. Because Columbia has fallen behind, we now have the opportunity to follow the path set by cities that have already successfully shifted trips away from single occupancy vehicles and towards transit.

The shift towards transit, however, will happen only with the leadership and coordination of Columbia's Mayor and City Council. The CEC is here to support the Council in facilitating this change.

In light of the need for transit to play a major role in Columbia's changing transportation

system, the CEC recommends the following major steps to Council:

1. Establish a Transit Master Plan Task Force to envision what a thriving public transit system will need to look like in order to meet the CAAP mode share goals for transit in 2035 and 2050.

2. The Transit Master Plan Task Force can then create a strategy that works backwards from that vision and establishes concrete action steps we can begin taking now to build the core of the system, with incremental growth and improvements over time to achieve the long term vision.

Columbia has a precedent for this type of long-term visioning and planning process; a similar process was carried out for the development of the Columbia Regional Airport Terminal Area Master Plan (2015-2017).

This recommendation aligns with Council's recent letter to CATSO regarding the 2050 Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP), which called for the creation of a long-range transit master plan in the next version of the LRTP.

The Climate and Environment Commission recommends the following entities be involved in this effortstructure and representation on the Task Force:

- Office of Sustainability: primary staff liaison
- GoCOMO Transit: technical staff liaison
- Representative from University of Missouri, Stephens College, and Columbia
- College
- Representative from Columbia Public Schools
- Representative from each of the five Vision Zero Priority Neighborhoods (i.e.,
- neighborhoods identified based on low-income populations, communities of color,
- and households without vehicles)
- Representative(s) from major employers
- Representative of transit drivers
- Representative(s) from nonprofit service agencies that provide private
- transportation services due to lack of public transit service
- Representative from nonprofit transit advocacy group

Liaisons from existing City commissions:

- o Public Transit Advisory Commission
- o Climate & Environment Commission
- o Bike & Pedestrian Commission
- o Disabilities Commission
- Planning & Zoning Commission

The visioning process should "wipe the slate clean" in regards to the current transit system, and not be limited by the current system structure, routes, or funding. The Climate and Environment Commission recommends that the Task Force assume an abundance mindset in considering the following topics and questions:

Ridership & Emissions

1. What scale of transit ridership does Columbia need in order to achieve our emission reduction and mode share goals?

2. What scale of transit infrastructure will be necessary to support this ridership?

<u>Community-Identified Needs</u>
3. What type of transit system has the community asked for (i.e., in community plans such as Columbia Imagined, CAAP, focus groups, etc.)?
4. What community priorities identified in existing City plans (e.g., CAAP, Vision Zero, Strategic Plan, Community Health Improvement Plan) will be achieved through improved transit service?
5. How will people in target social identity groups (e.g., low-income families, people of color, people experiencing homelessness) benefit from improved transit service?
6. How can the transit system best serve the needs of the business community?
Structure & Funding
7. What scale of funding is needed to support this system?
8. How could the City of Columbia reprioritize its existing transportation funding to support a more robust transit system?
9. What new sources of funding could help support the system (e.g., state funding, changes in federal transportation funding, federal COVID funding, student fees)?
10.What are the risks and benefits of transit being governed by the City of Columbia vs. a transit authority?
11. What pay, benefits, employment structure, etc. are needed to attract and retain transit drivers?
<u>System Layout & Incremental Growth</u>
12.How can the location of the routes, frequency, etc. be assembled into a reliable, convenient core system, allowing for incremental growth over time?
13.Where should transit service be prioritized in order to create an effective core system (i.e., high demand transit areas, high density neighborhoods)?
14.What transit features (e.g., frequency of service, distance between stops, high-priority destinations) are necessary to incentivize people to switch from driving to riding transit?
15.What does the system need to look like in order to ensure that the transportation system in Columbia is equitable and provides connections to basic needs like jobs, education, grocery stores, and health care?
16.What facilities are needed in addition to buses (e.g., covered bus stops, lighting, etc.) to create a welcoming environment for riders?
~~The CEC recommends that City Council establish the Task Force by August 2022.~~

~~2035 is close on the horizon. Much of the implementation of the CAAP has been delayed since its adoption in 2019, and in order to meet our emission reduction goals, we need to make progress quickly. The creation of a Transit Master Plan Task Force will be a major, tangible step towards implementing the CAAP and reducing emissions.~~
The CEC appreciates the opportunity for input and is open to any further coordination or help we can provide.

~~[List of Commission Members]~~,
Leanne Tippett Mosby, Chair, Climate & Environment Commission