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For Immediate Release

Transit Riders to Premier: Build and Fund the “Better Way” Now!

Toronto: This evening hundreds of transit riders gathered in Toronto City Hall Council Chambers to express their frustration with the Premier who cut promised funding for Transit City. From Scarborough to Etobicoke, North York to East York, the message was clear: Mr. Premier, we want more support for public transit and we won't wait any longer!

"People are tired of waiting for the public transit system they deserve and they are ready to take action," said Jamie Kirkpatrick, member of the Public Transit Coalition and campaigner with the Toronto Environmental Alliance. "The Transit City plan gave riders hope. When the Premier cut promised funding to build Transit City, riders' frustrations grew. The crowd at City Hall tonight showed that we've become a force to be reckoned with."

The Public Transit Coalition (PTC) is a non-partisan alliance of community and environmental organizations, labour unions, and transit riding residents. This evening -and on www.publictransitcoalition.ca- the PTC revealed a pledge which was signed by hundreds at the event. The pledge reads: "I agree that the TTC must be kept public, be properly funded by all levels of Government, and that the Transit City Light Rail Plan be completed by 2020."

"If you look at where the Transit City lines run, they're largely in working class, politically dis-empowered areas," said Coalition member and Scarborough resident Ashwin Balamohan. "The Province believes that they can cut the funding here because they don't expect political outcry. We hope our elected officials see tonight as a wake up call."

Beyond securing broad community support, the Public Transit Coalition called on City Councillors, MPPs, other elected officials, and candidates for public office to sign the pledge.

"We need more public transit, we need investment in our community and we need the jobs that go with it now," said Barbara Stone, President of the Weston-Mount Dennis Community Association.

Getting funding restored for the Transit City Light Rail Plan is the first of three key demands of the Public Transit Coalition. Supporters of the pledge want to see the Province contribute its fair share of operating funding for the TTC, about \$250 million per year. The Coalition is also calling for the TTC to remain a public service and avoid foolishly going down the road of selling off or privatizing portions of their public transit system.

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