2026 Policy Resolution

2026-11: Restore the 50-50 Public Transit Funding Agreement

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Resolution: The Province of Manitoba should restore the 50-50 public transit funding agreement, which the previous government ended in 2017. This agreement would match all new operating spending on conventional and accessible transit across Manitoba, after subtracting service revenue, especially fares. This agreement would be available to municipalities with existing transit service (such as Winnipeg, Brandon, and Selkirk), as well as to governments and organizations that establish new transit service, including rural municipalities, regional initiatives, First Nations, and tribal councils. The province should ensure that benefiting transit agencies are publicly or community-owned, rather than contracted out to private companies, and that they prioritize providing fixed-route service.

Because: Transit in Manitoba has faced serious challenges in recent years due to sustained underfunding, with Winnipeg spending far less per capita on transit operations than other major cities in Canada. Only 8.3% of commuters in Manitoba and 11.4% in Winnipeg use public transit. Many Winnipeg Transit riders have strongly criticized the transit agency's recent bus network redesign, which contributed to a 14% decline in ridership compared with the prior year and has particularly disadvantaged people with impaired mobility. Transit service also remains sparse outside of Winnipeg, especially in smaller municipalities, rural areas, and between communities. While the provincial and federal governments provide some funding for capital projects, such as purchasing buses, the lack of dedicated support for day-to-day operations, especially hiring and retaining workers—means that service remains insufficient.

Because: Unreliable service can lead to a "vicious cycle" of ridership decline that further erodes the financial capacity of transit agencies to provide the service needed to grow ridership and revenue. The absence of high-quality transit service either mandates private automobile use or prevents people from making trips altogether, leading to social isolation and limited access to important services and opportunities. It also leads to significant greenhouse gas emissions, with passenger road transportation

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in Manitoba accounting for 3.2 million tons of carbon dioxide equivalent in 2023. By contrast, high-quality public transit can reduce greenhouse gas emissions, create good, unionized jobs, and improve access to housing, employment, groceries, healthcare, education, recreation, and community connections. The City of Winnipeg, ATU 1505 (the union local representing transit workers in Winnipeg and Brandon), and civil society organizations such as CAT have recently called for the restoration of the 50-50 transit funding agreement to provide municipalities with the necessary incentive to increase their own funding of transit operations.

Because: Municipalities and other governments and organizations in Manitoba do not have the financial capacity or political will to significantly increase operations funding for transit and improve service quality to the necessary levels. The Province of Manitoba has access to more progressive fiscal tools to generate revenue, especially income and wealth taxes. Currently, the Province of Manitoba continues to provide $42 million to the City of Winnipeg and $2 million to the City of Brandon as dedicated transit funding, an amount that has remained frozen since 2016, and inflation has significantly eroded its value. Municipalities may be spending additional provincial dollars on transit allocated under the new "basket funding approach," but this remains unaccounted for and puts transit in direct competition with other municipal priorities. By reinstating the 50-50 transit funding agreement, the Province of Manitoba would help incentivize the improvement of transit service in Manitoba and ensure that it is a viable alternative to private automobile use.

Because: Improving transit service directly aligns with provincial and municipal government priorities. While in opposition, the government frequently called for the restoration of the 50-50 transit funding agreement. The Province's *Path to Net Zero* plan committed to "work with municipalities to expand public and regional transit systems," and to explore "expansion of access to rural and inter-city public transportation." Transportation is the second-largest sector of greenhouse gas emissions in Manitoba, especially passenger transportation. As a result, any serious effort to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in alignment with climate science will require rapid reductions in the use of oil-fueled personal automobiles, a goal that transit offers the fastest and most equitable means to achieve. This policy would also advance the City of Winnipeg's climate and transportation commitments, such as reducing transportation-related emissions by 17% below 2011 levels by 2030 and increasing the mode share of transit, cycling, and walking to 50% by 2050. More generally, improved transit service helps to advance broader commitments to affordability, access to healthcare, and public safety.

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Because: High-quality transit service improves access to countless services and opportunities underpinning community economic development, such as housing, employment, groceries, healthcare, education, recreation, and community connections. Crucially, it can provide an alternative to private automobile ownership, which is often extremely costly, emissions-intensive, and inaccessible to people with disabilities, thereby expanding the autonomy and mobility of marginalized communities. Transit funding also creates direct, unionized employment in the operations, maintenance, cleaning, and administration of the service.

Because: Restoration of the 50-50 transit funding agreement is a key tool in tackling climate change, along with helping with the goals of ending poverty, sustainable community-led development, and inclusion, diversity, equity, and access.

How this Resolution will be Advanced: CAT is helping to organize a coalition of organizations to advocate for the restoration of the 50-50 funding agreement and encourage municipalities to invest more in transit operations. CCEDNet members are welcome to join the coalition or show support by attending events, signing on to letters, and sharing information about the effort through their networks.

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