

Bus Riders Union Calls On TransLink Board to Immediately End the Curfew On Bus Riders!

June 25, 2003

On June 25th, members of the Bus Riders Union will take their demand for Night Owl buses directly to the TransLink board. The Bus Riders Union is a grassroots organization with over 200 members that fights for more buses and lower fares in the region. The Bus Riders Union rejects the TransLink decision to provide limited late night bus service on Fridays and Saturdays, and is demanding a full restoration of the 7 day/week Night Owl service cut on October 15th, 2001.

"The Night Owl cuts in particular were an indefensible attack on the rights of transit-dependent people," says Bus Riders Union organizer Beth Grayer. "For night workers, who are majority women and primarily from immigrant and refugee communities, the Night Owl cuts have meant huge increases in transportation costs, longer wait times, and even the loss of work and livelihood. Riders are telling us that they are spending hours at their workplace or on the streets waiting for a bus. We've talked to people who are spending a third of their nightly earnings on cab fare just to get home from work. And we know that people have lost jobs, friendships, and possibly even their lives because of these cuts. Transit-dependent people are forced into taking rides with people who have been drinking and into other unsafe situations because they don't have access to transit at night."

In order to develop a vision of transit that meets people's needs, the Bus Riders Union is engaged in ongoing organizing work on the bus and in the community. "In our organizing work on the bus and in the streets we've talked to literally thousands of bus riders over the last year," Grayer explains, "hundreds of whom have been directly affected by the night owl cuts. This is grassroots research, but the fact is we're the only ones who are asking riders how they have been impacted by TransLink's poor planning."

When the TransLink Board voted to cut the Night Owl buses in March 2001, it became apparent to Bus Riders Union organizers that TransLink didn't keep accurate figures on how many people relied on Night Owl service for employment purposes. Even TransLink staff spoke out against the cuts at the TransLink public meeting March 31, 2001. "It's just another example of this Board's unaccountability and complete disdain for bus riders," Grayer comments.

"Bus riders are majority low-income people: we are low-wage workers, the unemployed, immigrants and refugees, students, seniors and people with disabilities. We are mostly women and disproportionately people of colour. When TransLink funnels billions of public dollars into SkyTrain while Vancouver's 225,000 daily bus riders are left out in the cold, it's an attack on people already politically and economically marginalized in this region. So we're taking our demand directly to the TransLink Board and we're not just going to sit quietly while TransLink continues to violate our rights."

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