



Over-the-Rhine Community Council
P.O. Box 662
Cincinnati OH 45201

May 12, 2020
Cincinnati City Council
Sent Via Email

Subject: Reopening the Cincinnati Streetcar Post-COVID19

Dear Members of Council:

On May 11, 2020 the Over-the-Rhine Community Council Board of Trustees voted to send this letter to you regarding the reopening of the Cincinnati Streetcar:

We are writing to urge the city administration and council to reopen service on the streetcar as soon as possible.

Shutting down service on the streetcar during this crisis has had a negative impact on our residents. While Over the Rhine is a walkable neighborhood, our residents still rely on public transit service for many of their basic neighborhood needs like transporting groceries from Findlay Market and Kroger On the Rhine, getting to their healthcare appointments downtown, and picking up their medicine from CVS on 7th Street. Essential workers from our neighborhood also rely on public transit to make it to their jobs on time.

The public health crisis from COVID-19 caused the city administration to temporarily suspend service to the riding public “until at least April 30,2020” in order to prevent the spread of COVID-19 and limit public gatherings to comply with the governor’s orders. In the interim, the city administration has also directed Transdev to continue non-public service (“running the cars empty”) in order to most cost effectively avoid restart costs.

The governor has now announced a phased approach towards reopening the economy in stages: beginning May 1st, more healthcare services resumed; beginning May 4th, business in office settings also resumed; beginning May 12th, consumer retail and services resumed; and gradually restaurants, bars, and other parts of the economy will follow in reopening throughout May and into June or July. As many of our businesses reopen, workers return for jobs, and life starts to come back to our neighborhood, it is crucial that streetcar service be in place to help us get back on our feet.

We believe that now is the right time to reopen service on the streetcar to the public in some capacity and urge the city administration and council to do so as soon as possible.

At a minimum, we request that residents be allowed to ride the streetcar without payment of fares during all times that the city administration continues to operate streetcar service at these reduced levels. It makes little sense to “run the cars empty” to save on costs and then to also undercut residents, businesses, and workers as they try to reopen and get back on their feet. If the streetcars are already driving the loop through our neighborhood, at least let people on board without touching the kiosk screens.

Cities around the country and our local public transit agency – SORTA- have found reasonable ways to maintain service to the public while putting precautions in place to protect drivers, safely

space out riders, systematically clean their vehicles/surfaces, and prevent further spread of COVID-19. We have faith that the Transdev and the city administration will take similar measures until this public health crisis dissipates. Many of them were even in place before the city administration made the decision to suspend service. In fact, our sister-streetcar system in Kansas City (with the same streetcar vehicles) never stopped service to the public because the design of the separated driver cabin and of the air filtration system already limits exposure. We're fully capable of learning from their example until things return to normal and regular service levels resume.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Maurice Wagoner".

Maurice Wagoner
President
Over-the-Rhine Community Council

Cc: Mayor Cranley
City Manager Patrick Duhaney
Clerk of Council Melissa Autry