

# DALHOUSIE COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION

755 Somerset Street West, Ottawa, Ontario, K1R 6R1

June 27, 2024

Ariel Troster  
Councillor, Ward 14, Somerset  
City of Ottawa  
110 Laurier Avenue West  
Ottawa ON K1P 1J1  
via email: [Ariel.Troster@ottawa.ca](mailto:Ariel.Troster@ottawa.ca)

Dear Ariel:

## **Re: Curbside Intercity Bus ‘Terminal’ on Commissioner Street**

As you know, in January this year, Flixbus Inc. began using the east side of Commissioner Street as a ‘terminal’ for its new curbside intercity bus service. Flixbus uses the curbside location (just north of Albert Street) for discharging and picking up passengers, nine times a day, operating between 1:25 am and 11:59 pm, seven days a week.

I know many residents have contacted your office with concerns about the increased traffic on an already very busy street, which provides access to at least four major current construction projects, and serves as a popular active transportation route to and from downtown.

The Dalhousie Community Association and our Mobility Committee also have been informed of these concerns, which may be summarized in three main categories.

### **1. Security**

Commissioner Street does not have a turnaround: Buses and cars picking up or discharging passengers are forced to make a U-turn to get back to Albert Street, creating a traffic safety hazard.

The situation is compounded during the working day by the machinery and delivery trucks (many of them eighteen-wheelers) travelling to and from the adjacent or nearby construction sites, including Ādisōke, Pooley’s Bridge, the federal energy shared services plant, and the reconstruction of Albert Street.

Because there is no parking reserved for Flixbus, their buses often are forced to double park in the street, which further obstructs traffic and creates a pedestrian safety hazard for passengers.

### **2. Access**

Commissioner Street is located between the Lyon and Pimisi LRT stops, about a ten-minute walk from each one. Accessing Commissioner from Pimisi is particularly difficult at this time because of sidewalk reconstruction on Albert and the temporary closure of Pooley’s Bridge.

As a result, passengers regularly use ridesharing services and taxis, or they are dropped off by private vehicles. This creates more traffic, double-parking, and U-turns. There is no designated pedestrian drop-off and pickup space on Commissioner. Flixbus has chosen, or been directed by the city to use, a curbside location where access is inconvenient, difficult to find, and dangerous for vehicles and pedestrians alike.

As for persons with disabilities, as we’ve already seen, they are at risk when attempting to access this service.

### **3. Passenger Comfort and Safety**

The curbside ‘terminal’ on Commissioner is a narrow sidewalk, adjacent to a small park. The amenities for passengers are limited to a couple of old benches in the park, and two waste baskets (often overflowing).

There is no public toilet, no canopy or shelter (thankfully, there is a large tree at this location, which provides some protection from the sun), no water, and no signage to guide arriving passengers. Because the location is relatively isolated, many potential users may be concerned about their safety.

Stepping off a bus late at night on Commissioner Street, a traveller’s first impression of the city at this location may not be the one we want visitors to Ottawa to have. And waiting in the cold, heat or rain with no shelter, toilet or drinking water is not how our city should be treating people who choose to use, or must use, the bus. And when our city is claiming to be concerned about climate change, people who make environmentally-responsible choices should be encouraged, and treated with respect.

#### **Optional Locations for the Curbside Service**

There may be other sites nearby that would address the security and access issues with the current location, and provide a better experience for travellers.

The more obvious ones are beside light rail or transitway stations with toilet facilities. Orléans Express and Ontario Northland use the Via Rail Station beside Tremblay LRT station (and Ontario Northland also uses the Terry Fox transitway station). Autobus Gatineau uses the Mackenzie King Bridge. Flixbus is the exception.

There are other potential locations, within or immediately adjacent Ward 14. The large bus parking lot at the Bayview LRT station provides direct and safe pedestrian access to the LRT. The location could be upgraded with limited cost with a canopy (similar to those used at OC Transpo bus stops), a few benches, and a chemical toilet.

Another option is to move the curbside ‘terminal’ to Bayview Station Road, north of the LRT tracks, adjacent the pathway to the station. There is more space for vehicles, there is a nearby traffic circle, and room for a few basic amenities for passengers.

#### **Conclusion**

In our research into what we’ve seen described as “the emerging curbside intercity bus industry” we’ve learned that Ottawa is not alone in trying to find an effective response to this new service. But we’ve also learned that many cities have been pro-active and found ways to address the needs of passengers using curbside intercity buses.

This can involve provincial or state governments – in Toronto, for example, Flixbus uses the GO Transit space at Union Station. However, as we know, the provincial government will not act if there is no pressure from the city.

The era of intercity bus companies building and maintaining full-service bus terminals has passed, but in Ottawa, we haven’t, apparently, identified a secure, accessible and safe location for its replacement - Flixbus. The DCA urges you to engage city staff on this issue, and to let us know the city’s plans for the curbside intercity bus service.

Sincerely,

Catherine Boucher, President.

c.c: Mayor Mark Sutcliffe, City of Ottawa.