

Beat: Travel

Public Transit Ridership Down

Throughout Canada

Dartmouth, Nova Scotia, 22.03.2020, 22:39 Time

USPA NEWS - With certain Canadian provinces under a State of Emergency and Prime Minister Justin Trudeau announcing today that Parliament will resume on Tuesday for the purpose of passing the Emergency Measure Legislation, many people are doing the responsible thing and staying home. Schools, universities, churches, restaurants along with many businesses are closed. Many citizens have chosen to heed warnings choosing to practice self isolation and social distancing in efforts to prevent the spread of the Covid 19 virus. All of these factors have caused a drop in ridership on public transportation systems and prompting transit operators to implement new safety measures to help keep everyone safe.

In Halifax, which is the largest city on Canada's East Coast, Halifax Transit has announced as of Monday, March 23 that service would be reduced by 30% due to lack of demand. Halifax Transit has also implemented some new safety measures which include passengers boarding and exiting the bus through the rear door, eliminating collecting fares and limiting the number of passengers permitted onboard in effort to slow the spread of the Covid 19 virus. Bus drivers are expressing much concern for safety and feel these steps are not enough. The President of the Amalgamated Transit Union Local 508, Ken Wilson, said, "As long as transit stays on the road you can't have social distancing and we're never going to flatten the curve with buses on the road". With the State of Emergency declared in Nova Scotia, this will continue to be a developing story.

In Toronto, a Toronto Transit Commission worker has tested positive for COVID-19, forcing up to 170 other employees to self-isolate. "This is an unsettling, unprecedented time at the TTC, but I want to assure you we are doing everything we can to fight the spread of COVID-19 and keep you and our customers safe," TTC CEO Ricky Leary said in a statement. Toronto Mayor, John Tory, said, "The Toronto Transit Commission is seeing a revenue decline of tens of millions of dollars per week during the pandemic". According to the Toronto Transit Commission website passengers are to follow the following boarding procedures: "If you are paying with cash, TTC ticket, token or have a paper transfer, you should board at the front door. Anyone who requires the ramp kneeling feature or is traveling with someone as a support person should board and exit the bus through the front door. All PRESTO card and PRESTO Ticket customers should enter the bus through the rear doors and tap their card or ticket on the reader beside the door when they board. All customers who do not require the ramp or kneeling feature should exit the bus through the back doors."

In Vancouver, effective on March 20th, to allow for proper social distancing in the time of COVID-19, TransLink implementing rear-door boarding on all its buses and making them free. Those with mobility issues may still use the front door. TransLink spokesman Ben Murphy said in a statement, "Stations and bus loops across the TransLink network are being cleaned at least once per day, including a disinfectant wipe down of stair and escalator handrails, elevator buttons, door handles, fare gates, Compass vending machines, garbage handles, benches, seats, emergency cabinets and emergency phones." Translink, reports that ridership has swiftly dropped 52% compared to last year at this time.

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