



Dear Mayor O’Connell, Vice Mayor Henderson, and members of the Metropolitan Council of Nashville and Davidson County,

Nashville has been a place of prosperity, hope, and connection since the Ryman opened in 1892. It has served as a bridge for the Middle Tennessee region and a place where the American Dream can be achieved. For Nashvillians to continue to enjoy prosperity, hope, and connection, we need the freedom to move. But, as it is now, we are stuck in a citywide traffic jam.

According to a [report](#) by Inrix, a transportation company focused on collecting and compiling traffic data, Nashville ranks 131st among the most congested cities worldwide. At this rate, commutes in Middle Tennessee are expected to [increase](#) by up to 60% within the next 20 years. Today, congestion [costs](#) Nashvillians approximately \$1,500 yearly between time, money, and gas. If no action is taken, Nashvillians can expect this cost to rise by nearly \$1000 per capita, given Tennessee’s growth rate.

Our city needs more public transportation options that can truly benefit its people. Transportation is the great connector to everything we need in life. With it, there is room for upward socioeconomic mobility and the ability to defeat concentrated poverty. Nashvillians need transportation options to connect to healthcare, education, good-paying jobs, other communities, and more.

We need better transit, and we need it now. Without additional funding—and a dedicated funding source—services could be forced to scale back. Pedestrian infrastructure for bike riders, walkers, and other multimodal mobility options will remain limited.

The cost of improving our transit options is rapidly escalating to jaw-dropping numbers that seem unreachable to residents. In 2018, the Let’s Move Nashville plan was expected to cost \$5.2 billion to build. That figure could be at least \$6.3 billion today. It is also crucial to note that this plan focused solely on adding Light Rail and Bus Rapid Transit lines to our city. It did not include improvements to our pedestrian infrastructure, such as building more sidewalks or bike lanes and making safer pedestrian crossings. These improvements cost less than the light rail and will have a direct, positive impact on residents; we need to start somewhere.

Mayor O’Connell, you said you plan to bring a referendum to the voters to support a dedicated transit funding source during your first term as Mayor. As members of the community who come from all parts of the city and represent diverse communities, each with their own needs, we write to you today to discuss the need for this referendum and how to execute it.

Referendums can be successful. On Nov 3, 2020, 18 cities and local municipalities held [transit referendums](#). They allowed their voters to approve



tax increases to spur further investments in public transit and pedestrian infrastructure. Fifteen of those referendums passed, an overwhelming number. Nashville ranks last in annual average funding per capita for transportation...spending a measly \$217. The most sustainable and effective solution to fixing this is a referendum.

We have learned through the Transit Citizens Leadership Academy that successful transit campaigns include extensive outreach to voters and communities. But that may look a little bit different for us here in Nashville.

Outreach starts by explaining to our citizens why our transit options are limited and difficult to improve. The average Nashvillian is unaware that we do not have a dedicated funding source for transit. They are also upset with our lack of transit options, which has led to a cycle of frustration and inaction. Making the case to the voters for raising taxes in support of transit starts with explaining how our lack of dedicated funding is hurting us as a city...even causing us to lose out on federal transit funding opportunities...and then showing what our city could look like if we have dedicated transit funding (and put it to good use).

About 100 people [move](#) to Nashville daily, including more than 35,000 people in 2022. People moving from other areas of the country, especially those from cities with abundant transportation options or more rural areas, may not know that we need a dedicated funding source to spend on transit. Still, they will indeed feel the effects on our population growth when they get here.

Community Engagement shows voters that the City listens to their individualized needs and is willing to cast aside the “one size fits all” approach. The needs of families and individuals living in Green Hills differ from those living in Antioch, which differ from East Nashville and Sylvan Park or Bordeaux. The engagement approach must keep equity at the forefront. Just as needs differ from one neighborhood to the next, so do communication preferences and capacities for civic involvement. It will be crucial to work with established community partners to build trust and create relationships that allow the city to truly understand the needs, challenges, and opportunities each individual, family, or neighborhood faces.

Community engagement also means visibility/transparency. In this vibrant city with ample opportunities to interact directly with voters, there are innumerable chances to be seen and prove to the voters that the local government is listening. We envision pop-up booths at Nashville’s most popular public events like East Nashville’s Tomato Fest, the Nashville PRIDE festival, Earth Day events at Centennial Park, the Tour De Nash, etc. A visible presence at these events would enable our city government to hear from diverse constituents. Transparent engagement also means setting realistic and clear expectations of what the city is trying to accomplish and what kind of



feedback is needed to move forward. Simple language and visuals (like maps) will be essential to communicate the impacts and importance of a robust transit system.

Public transit and multimodal mobility options provide economic, psychological, and physical benefits to those who can reach them. As our public transit, protected bike lanes, and greenways are still limited and yet to be connected, it is important to tout these quality-of-life benefits for everyone to see.

First, a connected region is a strong region. Increasing transportation connections can sustain a higher quality and standard of life by improving access to medical services, recreational facilities, schools, jobs, leisure activities, and community centers. Also, connecting transportation services from surrounding Middle Tennessee counties to Nashville provides residents significant access to more resources. It also helps to improve access to our downtown business community and entertainment and sporting events, bringing in sales tax revenue and supporting our economy as the capital city.

Second, Nashvillians will have the freedom to move. Bike lanes, sidewalks, and more efficient bus routes will give residents a choice for how they want to interact with our city. While those who prefer to drive their cars will continue to be able to do so, those without a car—or those who do not wish to drive often—will have options. On top of that, as Nashville seeks to build more mixed-use and transit-oriented developments, and as the City has abolished parking minimums, residents will need alternative transportation options to access and support businesses.

Finally, investments in transit benefit the economy. According to the American Public Transportation Association, public transit offers a 5-to-1 [economic](#) return. As noted in the previous two paragraphs, transit options will not only help to expand our Nashville economy but will draw in residents from the surrounding region who will spend their money here in Nashville, providing an even better return on investment.

In conclusion, Nashville is a vibrant, lively city and has attracted people from all over the world. We must recognize our transit challenges as we have done for so long. As you said on the campaign trail, “Doing nothing is not an option.” It is time to make sure citizens are connected to what they need the most and to build a thriving and productive society.

Sincerely,

The 2023 TCLA Class



OUTLINE

I. Intro / Context

**A. We need better transit, and we need it quick,
because the longer it waits, the more it costs**

1. Money, time, lives



2. Even though you may drive a car, there are people that rely on transit
3. Transit touches everybody
4. You think you've got it bad? There are people that don't even have a car
5. A cost comparison of the intended product from the previous two failed referendums and what they would cost to build now. What that portends for further delay.
6. What other mkts with similar needs for transporting new residents, new business and tourists spend.

II. The Need for Dedicated Funding

- A. Benefits and Costs, how can we explain why we need it, and have some data behind it
 1. Efficiency lanes will make the benefit of public transit better
- B. This will allow regional connectivity and access
 1. Regional segregation between cities
- C. Requires communication and connection with voters
 1. Partnerships with agencies - state, local, regional
- D. Will allow multimodal options
- E. What would the Let's Move Nashville plan cost today?
- F. Memphis is kicking our butt
- G. What does Nashville need to do to get dedicated funding?
 1. Start a referendum



- H. How many people are moving to Nashville from out of state and don't know our transit rules/regulations/processes?
 - I. Transit as an affordability mechanism
 - J. Goods/services can be delivered faster?
 - K. Denser/cheaper housing
- III. **A Connected Region is a Strong Region**
- 1. Increasing transportation connections can improve access to health supporting activities, medical services, recreational facilities as well as other destinations including schools, jobs and community centers.
 - 2. Connecting transportation services from Middle TN counties with/to Davidson County provides all residents with large points of concentrated resources in Nashville.
 - 3. In order to sustain a higher quality and standard of life, Middle TN communities need connected transportation access to vital services that will ensure the upkeep of physical and mental health, employment opportunities, social and leisure activities provided from Davidson County.
- IV. **Conclusion**
- A. If we don't make it better, it's only going to get worse
 - B. It's a bigger problem if we do nothing
 - C. Nashville is becoming a very important place for a lot of people from all over the world to live and work. If we keep ignoring our transit problem like we have been doing for so long, Nashville will not be able to handle the demands placed on her by her businesses and her people and



she will crumble. However, if we can even begin to work towards a solution to keep people connected and productive with better transportation Nashville and Nashvillians will thrive more than ever. To begin to solve our transit problems, we must have funding dedicated to the solution.

NOTES PAGE:

- Due Oct 25th
- Who are we addressing? City Council, State Legislators, general public
- Get endorsements
- You drive a car because you have to. Memphis is beating you, Char is beating you etc.
- We need to hold a referendum to gain dedicated funding.
- Education over marketing
- Strike when the fire is hot.
- People don't know what they don't know
- Sustained public campaign
- Why section, how section, if we don't section
- Focus on council and mayor.
- Intro(background/context)/ Whyhow / benefits/opportunity loss (cons of doing nothing) / Conclusion/thank you



- 2 pages single space
- Title for letter?
**Equitable and Desirable Transportation Infrastructure
Appeal/Request**

Section Signup

- **Intro:**
 - **Trey**
 - **Val**
 - **Phillip**
- **Why/How**
 - **Nick**
 - **Veronica (How/community engagement)**
- **Benefits**
 - **Eric**
 - **Stephanie (A connected region is a strong region)**
- **Opportunity Loss (Cons of Doing nothing)**
 - **Zach**
 - **Kailey**
 - **Spencer**
- **Conclusion**
 - **Dee**



First Draft Intro:

Dear Metro Council,

Nashville needs transit. We are choked and clogged by traffic and our alternatives to submitting ourselves to gas-guzzling, bumper to bumper idling are underfunded and underprepared. Some 200,000 people are expected to move into the region by 2035, and the city expects them all to drive. That will not work. Building new highways will not work. We have hotels, world class music venues, thirty cranes, and no real plan to ensure that the people of this great city don't drown in swathes of cars.

We need dedicated funding for transit. We are LAST in cities of similar size by a whopping 200% below average for transit funding. Memphis is lapping us. A city cannot be healthy without dedicated funding for transit. Somewhere along the way we decided that Nashville will be great, that we will build, double our population, attract fortune 500 business, and in all that blaze of glory we neglected to give the citizens something that we need, that will bring us closer, that will get us to where we need to go.



Transit touches everybody. This graph we could do a cost comparison, bring in some numbers. Give credit to Freddie and Council for being open to transit. Talk about 2018, provide some historical context. That being said, do we need two graphs of coming on strong? Should that set the tone for later, or should we go in a different direction?

First draft for benefits: Stephanie Tillman, 10.6.23

Dedicated funding for transit will positively impact transportation connections within the region. Connecting regional transportation services provides all residents with points of concentrated resources in Nashville.

Transportation connections can improve access to vital health supporting activities, medical services, recreational facilities as well as destinations including jobs, schools and community centers. A connected region is a strong region.

**First draft Opportunity Loss (Cons of Doing nothing),
Spencer:**

- **The 2020 Census shows 8.9% percent population growth in Tennessee, mostly middle TN. (See Session 6 deck, slide 40 for that graph of each county).**
- **Davidson County is expected to be at ~3 million people by 2040 (Session 1 deck graph).**
- **Staying the same is a step backwards**

Zach:



- Need to get the figure from Jess - it was a ~400mm referendum in 2018 - she had a figure for what it might cost ~5 years from now. Cost opportunity. Waiting will make the cost grow exponentially

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Kailey:

- According to a report by Inrix, a transportation company focused on collecting and compiling traffic data, Nashville ranks 131st in terms of most congested cities worldwide.
(<https://www.newschannel5.com/news/absolutely-horrendous-nashville-traffic-is-ranked-131st-most-congested-worldwide>)
- At this rate, commutes in Tennessee are expected to increase by up to 60% within the next 20 years.
(<https://www.wkrn.com/news/tennessee-politics/studies-show-traffic-in-tn-will-continue-to-grow-in-coming-years-officials-promise-action-to-address-it/amp/>)
- Today, congestion costs Nashvillians approximately \$1500 each year between time, money, and gas. If no action is taken, Nashvillians can expect this cost to rise by nearly \$1000 per capita given Tennessee's growth rate.
(<https://www.tn.gov/content/tn/tdot/build-with-us/congestion.html>)