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Dear Laura Dudas,

I take the liberty of offering a little history about the origins of public transit in Blackburn Hamlet with a suggestion for transit to and from Blackburn Hamlet and Orléans today.

Express bus service in the Ottawa area was invented by Blackburn Community Association and Beacon Hill Community Association in 1972. The population of both communities had grown to a size that led to many residents seeking public transit to jobs downtown. In those days, families, many with young children, generally owned only one car.

The Community Associations asked the Ottawa Transit Commission to bring bus service to their communities. The Ottawa Transit Commission declined to serve the residents of the Township of Gloucester. So the Associations working together entered into an agreement to hire school buses to run their own bus service.

The City of Ottawa then refused to allow these buses to use its roads. As President of the BCA, I appeared as a witness at a hearing of a Provincial Transportation Board to establish the need for the service proposed by the Associations. The Board ordered the City of Ottawa to allow the proposed community service to use its roads.

The brains behind this successful initiative were Air Force Colonel Bob Mortimer who lived on Bearbrook Road and Mr. Bernard Whalley, a transportation professional who lived in Beacon Hill North. In Blackburn Hamlet, the BCA's Mrs. Kay Ditto spearheaded the organisation of volunteers to collect fares and launch a highly successful service.

It took about 18 months for the City of Ottawa to come to its senses and provide a service using transit buses with connections beyond the core of the city. In Blackburn Hamlet that became route 25 with service eventually to Place du Portage. I used that service for more than a decade. It was

evident by 1990 that the transitway through central Ottawa had inadequate capacity to handle the volume of passengers in the afternoon in both directions. It has taken three decades for the City of Ottawa to begin to address that problem. And the immediate solution has significant difficulties in the links between train and bus.

It appears that all the express buses from the east converge on Blair Station, which puts an impossible load on the space available. There are 71 bus routes using Blair Station; about 30 appear to be express routes.

So let's step back.

The bus station at St-Laurent transitway station was successfully handling all the express buses from the east before the train service was launched. Today, just 29 routes are listed; none of them appear to be express routes. It has lots of space, now under-utilized.

So let's run the current #28 to St-Laurent Station rather than to Blair Station to connect to the train. It may mean that passengers from Blackburn Hamlet in the rush hour will stand for the 10 - 15 minute train ride to the core, but they're generally doing that now. If a few routes were diverted to St-Laurent, that would reduce the congestion at Blair Station, which would be better for passengers still changing there.

Just an idea from a citizen who was involved in launching express bus service in Ottawa, who still uses the system, and follows this file with interest.

Best wishes,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "John Hollins". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Dr. John Hollins