



Original Kids Theatre Co.

A Community A Passion for the Arts A Youth Developer

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Wednesday February 22, 2017

Robert T. (Bob) Usher
General Manager, Covent Garden Market

OPEN LETTER

RE: SHIFT & RAPID TRANSIT

This letter is in response and support of your letter dated February 8, 2017 sent to the Director of Roads & Transportation, City of London.

As stated in your letter the City of London is looking at using King Street for a two-way Bus Rapid Transit Route (BRT). Original Kids Theatre Company (OKTC) is against this idea and would like to discuss this with the Covent Garden Market and City Planners to express how it would negatively affect over 70,000 Original Kids visits during the calendar year both in convenience and more importantly safety.

OKTC has been a Covent Garden Market vendor since the markets re-opening; however, we generally operate outside of normal market hours. This caused our events to conflict with Budweiser Gardens' events on over 44% of our operating days during our peak months between November 2015 and May 2016. We have come up with ways to overcome the downtown traffic concerns during these nights with the use of both loading zones and the underground parking at the Covent Garden Market. However, after reading your letter it has come to our attention that the City of London is planning on removing the King Street loading zone as well making King Street a one lane road between two BRT lanes with no access to left or right turns on Richmond Street and a dangerous turn in and out of the underground parking. Our families have expressed how Budweiser Gardens' event nights can be inconvenient coming downtown, but they make it work. It is our opinion the BRT transition will cause far too large of a safety concern for our families, and will negatively affect Original Kids enrollment and attendance.

OKTC is a performing arts organization where young people can grow and flourish without fear of taking risk. We were founded in 1991 as a Registered Charity and have called downtown London our home for close to two decades and would like to remain a part of it for years to come. We service nearly 1,000 London families with members as young as five years old up to eighteen years of age. Original Kids Theatre was not formed to create stars. Each child already shines in his or her own special way. It is hoped that through exposure to the arts, youth will more easily share in the joy of life with a heightened appreciation for themselves and those around them.

During the months of November 2015 through May 2016, we had 49 days where there was an event at Budweiser Gardens and we had over 100 people coming downtown to the market for Original Kids. Moreover, with 22 of those Budweiser Gardens events, we had between 200 and 475 people coming

downtown. A two-way BRT on King Street would not just be an inconvenience for our families; it is also a safety issue. Our Original Kids are picked up by their parents after dark, and our parents currently use the existing loading zones to safely pick up their children. By taking away the King Street loading zone, this will adversely affect our Original Kids pick-up protocol. If the City of London was to limit our parents to only using Market Lane and the underground lot, what are our over 200 patrons supposed to do for the 22 event days where there will be no parking and no space in Market Lane? It is already crowded in Market Lane during non-event days, setting aside when an event is on at Budweiser Gardens. Also, if King Street were to become one lane, we would be concerned about the dates when Dundas Street will be used as a flex street. This will make it very difficult for our families to get to the Market. If there is an event at Budweiser Gardens, it could take nearly half an hour to get three blocks as our parents will need to travel south on Richmond to York, back north via Talbot to King Street, where there will be only one car lane between the BRT lanes waiting to get into the Covent Garden Market parking garage. This will be a challenge logistically for our parents, patrons, and volunteers, which could lead to families pulling out of our program or not wanting to come downtown to see productions at our theatre.

If the City of London would like to continue getting people downtown from the suburbs of London, this will certainly hurt that plan with our over 70,000 annual visitors. We have consistently grown our organization in the downtown core and the two way BRT on King Street plan would adversely affect this.

In addition to the issues this will cause for our families, we are also concerned about loading and unloading of school busses during our over 18 afternoon school performances during the school year. It would be difficult, if not impossible, for a school bus to get through Market Lane when it is empty, let alone during a lunch hour rush when it is very busy with moving and parked vehicles and pedestrians. As well, outside of a Stantec report from 2011 which does not include this plan, we haven't been able to locate any document outlining the proposed two-way BRT route on King Street except a couple slides in a 2015 presentation deck. Is there one?

On behalf of Original Kids Theatre, we ask that the loading zone not be removed from King Street to convert it into a two-way BRT route. This will be counterproductive for getting people downtown from the areas of the city our parents and volunteers drive from. We appreciate the need for BRT in the city but not two ways on King Street.

If you have any questions regarding this letter or would like to discuss it further, please do not hesitate to contact us at any time.

Respectfully,



Jeffery Crane
Executive Director



David Pasquino
Board Chair

cc:

Director of Roads & Transportation - City of London, Director - IBI Group.