

Transit rebate still in works

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While mechanics prepare to get buses rolling by Monday, Feb. 9 – 61 days after they were parked – the question of transit pass refunds and possible tax rebates still linger.

“I do support getting taxpayers back their money because I don’t believe that residents should have to pay for a service that they didn’t receive,” Orleans Coun. Bob Monette says.

Although council has decided to defer the tax due date by one month, Monette argues that “isn’t enough of a payback for asking our residents to suffer through the last 51 days of hardship.”

Whether some form of tax rebate is an option, though, remains to be seen. While the city undoubtedly saved millions each week of the strike, funds were spent to “mitigate” the impact. Monette says he’s asked staff how much money was spent on the strike and how much was saved. Once that information is available, councillors can make a decision on how to proceed.

“I would definitely like to see money go back to where it came from,” Monette continued. “If we can lower the tax rate or have some sort of rebate, I would fully support those options.”

Monette adds he could also see any savings go toward expanding and improving transit service. Reduced bus rates to spur on ridership could be another option, he says, noting the city has already formed a committee that will come forward with a plan to get riders back on buses.

Meanwhile, the city is working to get refunds to ECO-pass holders.

“Getting people back their money is very important,” Monette says. “Many people can’t and couldn’t afford the extra money they were expending on extra parking, fuel and time.”