

Hamilton Chamber of Commerce Light Rail Transit

Issue:

The City of Hamilton's Transportation Master Plan calls for the development and implementation of 3 Rapid Transit Lines (E-W along the current "BLine" route; N-S from the Airport to the Waterfront; and, E-W along the Mountain - using the Linc or Mohawk Rd.) The Ontario Government's "Move Ontario" budget will bring in approximately \$300 million which will be given to Hamilton towards Capital expenditures in developing these Rapid Transit lines. Currently, the City is looking at both Bus Rapid Transit and Light Rail Transit (LRT) as the options to adopting proper Rapid Transit within Hamilton.

Background:

Rapid Transit is not new to Hamilton. Currently, we have a pseudo BLine bus rapid transit (BRT) route that operates from Eastgate Square to McMaster University. Hamilton's Transportation Master Plan identified the need for improved Rapid Transit lines. It was anticipated that the initial phase would see BRT implemented first, with the move to LRT as budgets allow. With the announcement of the Ontario Government's "Move Ontario" and the creation of Metrolinx, some \$300 million will be channelled to Hamilton for Capital Costs to develop Rapid Transit Lines. It should be noted that only two of the Rapid Transit Lines were identified in the "Move Ontario" program. (The E-W Mountain Line was not included as identified in Hamilton's Transportation Master Plan.)

The City is currently reviewing the costing models of LRT versus BRT, and through the PICs, have noted that LRT carries significant advantages over BRT. LRT's expansion capabilities and economic spin-offs show greater advantage over BRT, and that operational costs are relatively fixed over the term of a LRT line.

While there is still more study work to be done, it has been demonstrated very clearly that LRT carries fixed operating budgets (i.e. - fuel), the potential for increased development along the lines, and lower operating costs as the train size can be increased with use without adding additional manpower. Understanding that funding is only coming for Capital expenditures, the City should look at the long-term operating costs as they effect the tax base.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

The Hamilton Chamber of Commerce urges the City of Hamilton to:

1. Utilize LRT for Rapid Transit development, while reserving our opinion as to optimal proposed routes.
2. Include full integration of growth development, employment development and comprehensive goods movement studies in the proposal.