

# **City of Hamilton Light Rail Transit (LRT) Project**

Project Development and Pre-Procurement Phase

Metrolinx – City of Hamilton

Communications Protocol

**Final**

November 19, 2015

## **GENERAL**

On May 27, 2015, the Government of Ontario announced an investment of \$1.2B to build light rail transit (LRT) and a new GO Transit station in the City of Hamilton. The B-Line LRT will operate from McMaster University through the downtown core to Queenston Circle. There will also be a connection to the West Harbour GO Station along the A-Line, as well as a pedestrian corridor connecting the Hamilton Centre GO Station. Metrolinx will lead construction of the project and retain ownership of the asset once complete.

Metrolinx and the City of Hamilton (the Parties) agree to undertake joint communication activities where and when appropriate that will enhance opportunities for open, transparent, effective and pro-active communications with the public and recognize the contribution of the Parties as we work to advance these important projects.

The term of this communications protocol will extend to the pre-procurement phase of the project.

This protocol may be further revised as part of the development of a memorandum of agreement or project master agreement, whichever comes first. Should federal funding be secured, this protocol will be amended to also address requirements that may be associated with a contribution agreement or formal initiation of the Alternative Finance and Procurement Process.

Subject to any of the above occurrences, the Communications Subgroup may contribute to the development of a project management and implementation plan and/or master agreement containing a schedule that outlines all key projects, milestones, approvals and any associated communications materials requiring development and approval.

## **COMMUNICATIONS SUBGROUP**

- A Subgroup of Metrolinx and City of Hamilton staff will be established to advise and provide support for all communications and public information activities related to this project.
- The Subgroup will be comprised of at least one representative from each Party and other specialized staff as required.
  - The Subgroup will report to the Working Group.
- A designated representative from Metrolinx will chair the Subgroup.
- Each designate will update the Subgroup on related developments and communications activities.

- If required, the Subgroup shall develop templates for project-specific and broad communications about the projects covered under this protocol, which may be jointly approved.
- The Subgroup shall develop and recommend communications materials. Where appropriate, material will be shared -- for information, for input or for review and approval by the Working Group. Where approval is being sought, the request will include clear timelines and deadlines.
  - Materials will be shared with Parties for: information, for input or for review and approval. Where approval is being sought, the request will include clear timelines and deadlines.

## **PROJECT SPECIFIC COMMUNICATIONS**

- Metrolinx has overall lead and responsibility for final project communications. Where required, final review and approval is subject to the terms and conditions of the [Memorandum of Understanding \(MOU\)](#) between Metrolinx and the Ministry of Transportation and if necessary the City of Hamilton.
- Local communications are encouraged; however, for project success it will be integral for Metrolinx to discharge an overall leadership and coordination role.
  - There may be specific communication materials and issues where the City of Hamilton will assume the lead. The City will consult with Metrolinx in advance of these occasions.
- Metrolinx and the City of Hamilton may develop joint information kits, brochures, public reports, and website material to inform interest groups, contractors and the public about the project.
  - The Parties are encouraged to prepare communications products to support their local events, campaigns, meetings, etc.
  - The Master Messaging document (to be developed) should guide all messaging used about the LRT project.
  - In these situations, production costs for materials prepared for local events will be the responsibility of the Party initiating the event. Parties may also elect to leverage products created collectively by the Subgroup. Printing costs for these materials would be the responsibility of the Party initiating the event.
  - The Metrolinx Project Director, in partnership with the Metrolinx Communications Lead(s) will work with the City of Hamilton Project Coordinator and Communications lead in directing public consultation and day-to-day communication activities related to pre-procurement planning, including:

- fulfillment of environmental assessment obligations and any commitments thereto;
  - applications for third-party funding;
  - development of business cases, value-for-money assessments, procurement of advisory services; and
  - development of project specifications, and with the assistance of other agencies, preparations for procurement to identify a contractor for project delivery.
- The Subgroup will recommend how the Parties may be identified and recognized through these communication activities using pre-approved templates.
- Should local communications occur, Metrolinx and the City of Hamilton will agree on who will lead the overall coordination of communications and leverage the Parties and their respective communications/marketing and local knowledge resources as appropriate. It will be important to convey cohesive and integrated project management and delivery.
- Where elected officials (MPs, MPPs and councillors) are to be briefed on the project, or gather/attend public meetings/event where the Hamilton LRT project is either a focus or substantive item on the agenda/program, Metrolinx City of Hamilton communications staff will coordinate prior to the meeting. It is anticipated that Metrolinx will assume an overall lead role as it relates to the MPs and MPPs, while the City of Hamilton will assume an overall lead with respect to City Council.
- It is recognized that in the event that impromptu or adhoc briefings and meeting requests arise, and if the LRT project is a point of discussion, each party will keep the other apprised of these discussions and any related developments.
- The Subgroup may organize an advertising or public information campaign related to the project, if there is a determined need.
- The Subgroup will review and make necessary updates to this protocol prior to the project prior to the procurement phase of the project.
- In the event of a dispute related to communications activities, the parties will escalate the item for decision-making at the appropriate level through the City of Hamilton-Metrolinx project governance structure.

## **MEDIA/PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENTS/EVENTS**

- Metrolinx will be responsible for coordination (in cooperation with the Ministry of Transportation) of major announcements and media events in collaboration with the City of Hamilton in keeping with this protocol.

- It is recognized that not all communications related to the project can be centrally organized/coordinated. Instances will arise in which Parties to the project may feel the need to convey independent messages or perspectives. In such circumstances, the Subgroup requests that Parties inform each other of the intention to communicate.

## I. Media Releases and Events

As primary funder, Metrolinx will issue news releases for major announcements and other relevant events.

- The Subgroup will collaborate in organizing special events that are determined to be required Metrolinx and/or the City of Hamilton.
- Major media conferences, announcements and official ceremonies will be led by Metrolinx (in coordination with the Ministry of Transportation and the City of Hamilton).
- As a general principle, the Parties agree that no public announcement about the project event/activity covered under this Agreement shall be made independently by the City of Hamilton. An announcement schedule will be developed by the Communications Subgroup and reviewed periodically.
- The Subgroup will provide advice and recommendations to the Working Group; and,
- Wherever possible, the parties shall mutually agree on the use of quotes from the designated representatives of Metrolinx and the City of Hamilton, and where appropriate, any third-party funding partners or stakeholders.

## II. Media

- All media inquiries received by the City of Hamilton should also be forwarded to Metrolinx Media Relations for coordinated follow-up and response if required. Standard messaging will be developed and approved within the Communications Subgroup, which will be used as a basis for all media responses managed by both Hamilton and Metrolinx Media Relations.
  - In certain instances, Metrolinx may refer specific media questions to the City of Hamilton if the response is better suited coming from the City.
- Requests for interviews should be forwarded to all Subgroup designates and assessed. Parties will provide recommendations and Metrolinx or appropriate Party will respond.

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- Designated spokespersons will be identified by each Party for major announcements, media interview requests, and issues management.
  - Designated spokespeople will receive media relations training.
- Standard messaging will be developed and approved within the Subgroup, which will be used as a basis for all social media post and responses.

### III. Social Media

- Metrolinx will assume oversight of any existing social media pages for the Hamilton LRT project and update the content to reflect recent developments.
- Metrolinx and the City of Hamilton will need to create and maintain Facebook and Twitter accounts for the Hamilton LRT project. Further discussion will be required as to ownership of such accounts. Coordination is necessary and in either case, mutually agreed upon messaging will be required and must be developed collaboratively. Typically, Metrolinx assumes "ownership" of LRT specific social media accounts.
- The City of Hamilton is encouraged to post information about the Hamilton LRT project from their respective social media accounts.

### IV. Branding

- Metrolinx and the City of Hamilton, through Communications Subgroup and the Project Working Group, will develop a branding strategy for the "Construction phase" of the project, understanding that branding for the Service delivery phase will be addressed at a later date.

### V. Issues Management/Crisis Plan

- The Subgroup will develop a protocol for issues management to share information and coordinate messaging to ensure the public is well-informed.
  - The protocol will be shared with the Metrolinx Corporate Communications, the City of Hamilton and the Ministry of Transportation.
- The Issues Management Protocol will be reviewed periodically to ensure that it is effective.

### VI. Working within Existing Communications Protocol Requirements

- This protocol functions in parallel to other communications protocols that the Parties must adhere to. For example, where required, the Parties are responsible for facilitating any required internal reviews and approvals necessary for the development and implementation of any communications products.

- This also includes the recognition of any pre-existing communications protocols that exist between the Parties and any of the funding, procurement or delivery partners.

#### VII. Communication During Exceptional Events

- In the event of a Federal, Provincial or Municipal election, any communications, community and consultative work directly related to the critical progress of the project will continue to be carried out (e.g. open houses that are part of legislated public consultations). However, any communications items that could be viewed as having a political focus (e.g. specific funding announcements) will be deferred until the conclusion of said election.