

Pilon, Janet

Subject: FW: Bay Street Stop Op-Ed
Attachments: Bay Street Stop Op-Ed.pdf

From: Keanin Loomis [mailto:k.loomis@hamiltonchamber.ca]

Sent: February-21-17 9:54 PM

To: Eisenberger, Fred; Johnson, Aidan; Farr, Jason; Green, Matthew; Merulla, Sam; Collins, Chad; Jackson, Tom; Skelly, Donna; Whitehead, Terry; Conley, Doug; Pearson, Maria; Johnson, Brenda; Ferguson, Lloyd; VanderBeek, Arlene; Pasuta, Robert; Partridge, Judi

Cc: clerk@hamilton.ca; Murray, Chris; Thorne, Jason; Norton, Glen

Subject: Bay Street Stop Op-Ed

Mr. Mayor and Councillors,

I'd like to provide you with advance notice of my op-ed that will run in tomorrow's Hamilton Spectator.

Regardless of whether you are skeptical of the B-Line Project, many key stakeholders and *all* the business groups in the city urge you to consider the business case behind adding a stop at Bay Street.

Please accept the LRT Committee's recommendation to work with Metrolinx to fit it within the budget.

Respectfully,

Keanin

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Bay Street Stop Could Bring in 120 Times Current Tax Revenues

There is a considerable number of Hamilton's major employers and popular destinations – voices that are hard to ignore – that took the opportunity during last year's formal public input process to express their opinion that B-Line LRT plans can be improved by including a station at Bay and King Streets.

Even skeptics of LRT believe that Bay Street is a no-brainer – if the transit line is actually going to be built, it should be the best project possible, goes the thinking.

As the LRT plan now stands, there is nearly a kilometer between two downtown core stops, Gore Park and Queen Street. Many of Hamilton's top regional destinations – City Hall, FirstOntario Centre, AGH, David Braley Health Sciences, the Hamilton Convention Centre, Federal Building, ALL the hotels – are much closer to the intersection of King and Bay.

The Hamilton Chamber of Commerce LRT Task Force responded to the concerns of these key downtown destinations, and submitted a letter signed by all parties to the LRT Project Team in September. The letter was referred to Council's LRT Committee, on which I sit. Members of the LRT Committee expressed support for the business case that was laid out, but requested that staff report on the impacts of adding the stop.

The staff report that was presented at the January LRT Committee determined that end-to-end trip times (50 seconds), property impacts (three "shavings") and the cost of adding the stop (\$2.6 million) were minimal. The LRT Committee then adopted a resolution requesting that Metrolinx add the Bay Street stop into the project, as long as it fits within the funding envelop.

The report was submitted to GIC last week, but in an unusual step, a majority of councillors overturned the recommendation of the committee. Very little explanation was given.

It now goes in front of Council tonight, perhaps to meet its ultimate fate. But we also have the opportunity to make sure that Council does not make the first and biggest regret we will have when the LRT project is complete in 2025.

The business case behind the Bay Street stop is strong. Not only will it instantaneously be one of the busiest stops on the B-Line, it will also help unlock the potential behind one of Hamilton's most important, but underperforming intersections.

Incredibly, despite its centrality and the cluster of adjacent attractions, Bay and King is surrounded by 270 degrees of surface parking lot, from which the city is generating in total just \$52,000 in property taxes, insufficient to even service the area.

Not only that, but there are plans to tear down Sir John A Macdonald High School and develop something significant on the site.

A preliminary analysis conducted by city staff suggests that 1,500 units built in the area could bring in \$5 million to \$7 million in annual tax revenue that is then distributed city-wide.

With these blank canvases located within such proximity to an LRT stop, I have high confidence that the \$2.6 million investment will more than pay for itself within just a few years. The Stoney Creek Chamber of Commerce, the Flamborough Chamber of Commerce, the Hamilton/Halton Homebuilders Association, the International Village BIA and the REALTORS Association of Hamilton-Burlington all agree.

It is a best practice to locate transit stops closer together where densities warrant. To optimize ridership, it is especially important to make sure that significant attractions are served. This is one instance in which we must insist that our Council maximize the investment that taxpayers are making by building this project.

Keanin Loomis
President & CEO, Hamilton Chamber of Commerce