

Pilon, Janet

Subject: Please Support LRT Bay Street Station

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From: Ryan McGreal

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To: Office of the Mayor; 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

Subject: Please Support LRT Bay Street Station

Dear Mayor Eisenberger and City Council,

The Hamilton Light Rail Transit (LRT) project is going ahead on the strength of consistent, longstanding Council support and the once-in-a-lifetime full capital funding commitment from the Province.

Metrolinx has already issued a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) for interested bidders on the construction contract.

I understand that some Councillors have recently expressed concerns about the project, but the responsible course for every Council member is to give fair and good-faith consideration to the well-argued proposal for a Bay Street station that emerged during the recent public consultation period.

With a project the scale and magnitude of LRT, it is imperative that we pay careful attention to benefits-case analysis and feedback from the public and stakeholders to make the very best decisions that will ensure its overall success.

Even - indeed, especially - if you are not sure that LRT will be successful, you should be doing everything in your power to set it up for the best possible outcome.

We will all lose if the Province makes this transformative investment but the City undermines and subverts it through sour-grapes municipal policy decisions.

A Bay Street LRT station makes very good sense, as argued by the Hamilton Chamber of Commerce and a coalition of business and community partners and reviewed by City staff.

* The downtown core has a high density of destinations and trip generators and warrants stations placed more closely than the rest of the line.

* A Bay Street station would directly serve a large number of significant trip generators, including the new McMaster Health Centre and FirstOntario Centre, both of which Council has already identified as strategic downtown assets (not to mention City Hall itself).

* The opportunity for new high-density, mixed use development and increased property tax assessment around the Bay Street station is huge.

* The estimated capital cost is a tiny fraction of the total, and will in any case be reviewed by Metrolinx to ensure it fits within the budget and delivers good value.

* The operational impacts are already minimal, and will be at least partially offset by more efficient boarding and deboarding between Bay and James.

* The station has the broad, enthusiastic support of the business community and major community and institutional stakeholders.

This proposal was submitted through the recent Public Consultation process, which was specifically held in order to receive feedback on precisely this type of minor improvement.

As such, approving it will not open the door to "scope creep" - the public consultation period has finished.

The final decision will rest with Metrolinx, which is responsible for the engineering and detailed design and the final procurement process.
That means the proposal will still be reviewed to ensure it wits within the budget envelope and provides good value for money.

There is literally no downside for Council to do the right thing and ask Metrolinx to consider this addition.

Again, every Councillor who sincerely wishes for the best possible outcome will vote for the course of action that ensures the most promising design elements are given due diligence.

Please, do the right thing and approve this initiative at next week's Council meeting.

Sincerely,

Ryan McGreal