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Thank you.

Best,

Aidan Johnson, BCL, LLB, BA, MA
Councillor for Ward 1
Chair, Emergency and Community Services Committee City of Hamilton

-----Original Message-----

From: Grant Ranalli
Sent: February-05-17 4:58 PM
To: Johnson, Aidan
Subject: My submission to Metrolinx and The City re: bike lanes & LRT

Aidan,
This is my submission to Metrolinx and The City regarding the proposal to remove bike lanes to make way for LRT.
Grant

Dear City of Hamilton & Metrolinx,

Feb. 1, 2017.

As a cyclist and a proponent of active transportation, and also a HUGE fan of LRT, I was disturbed by the recent revelations that a proposal has come forward so that several bike lanes will be removed or reduced in the city to make way for LRT. On first blush, this news seems counterintuitive. After drilling down a little deeper, the idea seems counterproductive and indeed flies in the face of sound, urban transit planning with the aim to reduce our carbon footprint.

If the aim of a comprehensive, integrated transit network is to reduce car trips, then a combination of LRT and increased cycling infrastructure is the way forward. Short trips that were made by car can be accomplished on bike. Longer trips would necessitate the use of LRT or a combination of LRT and bike. Removing bike lanes does nothing to advance this agenda. It is really a case of "One hand giveth and the other taketh away"?

Do we really have to sacrifice one to have the other? I think not!

I frequently speak to colleagues who say that they would cycle more IF ONLY it was safer to do so. Frankly, they are afraid of car traffic - and really, who can blame them? I commute to and from a school in the north-central Hamilton from the Southwest end of the City and I understand the fear. Removing or reducing our modest cycling infrastructure would only aggravate these fears and keep people OFF bikes.

I am not simply a teacher but also the co-chair of the Hamilton-Wentworth Catholic District School Board's environmental committee (SERE Committee - Social and Ecological Awareness in Education). Among other initiatives like promoting recycling, composting, energy conservation, school ground greening etc we also try to increase the use of active transportation to and from our schools. Numerous studies have shown that students who walk or cycle to school arrive happier, healthier, in a better frame of mind to learn and score higher on assessments. With obesity a growing problem among today's youth, this is a wonderful solution and could eliminate the need for such programs as DPA (Daily Physical Education - designed to get more children physically active). With these gains to be made, I have, for a number of years, promoted the City-subsidized bike rack program in many of our schools. As well, our school has been the fortunate recipient of over 150 brand new bikes, helmets and locks courtesy of the 'Bike for Mike Foundation'. I have also promoted 'Bike to School' days every year (and trips to Gore park & City Hall) and have enrolled all the students in our school from gr. 4 to 8 in the Ride Smart Safe Cycling Program run by New Hope Community Bikes. This program teaches vital safe riding techniques and road and traffic awareness. We have also participated in the Metrolinx-sponsored 'Stepping It Up' and 'Wheel to School' pilot programs designed to make students confident, safe and 'streetwise' riders and have identified Active & Safe Routes to School with a School Travel Plan on file.

I firmly believe that cycling education should be mandatory like the "Swim to Survive" program as an essential life skill. It is a common fact that teaching a child to swim may save a life. Learning to ride safely on our busy roads is an equally crucial skill - and is probably required much more often than swimming skills on a day-to-day basis.

Therefore, I cannot in all conscience promote students cycling to and from school, make sure our students participate in safe riding programs, ensure that they have proper helmets, locks and a secure bike rack and then send them out onto city streets bereft of proper cycling lanes and other cycling infrastructure.

That would be irresponsible - as would this proposed decision to kill off the hard-won cycling lanes citizens our citizen (and yes, children are citizens) so badly need. In all honesty, exactly WHAT are the planners thinking? For that matter, what City in their right mind would let individual city councillors veto bike lanes in their ward and thereby throw a wrench in to the entire cycling network? The world extends beyond the parochial boundaries of a single ward. These naysaying councillors need in broader terms.

Remember, "The needs of the many, outweigh the needs of the few"

With our changing demographics, the population is aging and getting people (young and old) to be more active and connected with their communities is a WIN-WIN prospect (be it on bike, LRT or both).

Further know that what is good for young riders is also good for older riders.

Again, win-win. So pulling the rug out from one major component of a comprehensive and user-friendly transit network is not a good idea. In fact, it is a very BAD idea and I cannot believe it was proposed without seriously considering all other possible alternatives. More car lanes are NOT the answer. We should all know that by now - especially proponents of the LRT!

Surely we can find a better solution than this 'scorched-earth' proposal. Let's roll up our proverbial sleeves and get working on it - sooner rather than later.