



The Hamilton Academy of Medicine

April 17, 2017

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Mayor Fred Eisenberger
City of Hamilton
71 Main St. West
Hamilton, ON L8P 4Y5

Dear Mayor Eisenberger and Councillors:

I write on behalf of the Executive of the Hamilton Academy of Medicine to express our support for Hamilton's proposed rapid transit system, including the Light Rail Transit system along the B-line corridor and the Bus Rapid Transit system along the A-line corridor. The Hamilton Academy of Medicine believes that these two rapid transit lines, as a first step towards a comprehensive rapid transit network serving our entire city, will be good for public health and good for the clinical and educational mandate of our healthcare and academic institutions.

As you are aware, the regional Medical Officers of Health released a report in 2014 entitled *Improving Health by Design in the Greater Toronto-Hamilton Area*. This report calls for implementing Metrolinx's *The Big Move* public transit program (including the proposed rapid transit lines in Hamilton), noting that the consequent increases in the use of active transportation across the GTHA would prevent over 90 hospitalizations, 330 premature deaths, and 1000 cases of diabetes per year. *Improving Health by Design* was endorsed by the City of Hamilton Board of Health on May 21, 2015 and the resulting report from the Board was adopted by the current Council on May 27, 2015. As physicians, we are too familiar with the cardiovascular and respiratory disease that arises from exposure to motor vehicle exhaust, the diabetes that results from communities that encourage inactivity, and the trauma that results from road traffic collisions. We are also sadly familiar with the social isolation that occurs in car-dependent communities when a person loses the ability to drive. Many of us have mourned for our patients when completing mandatory reports to the Ministry of Transportation regarding medical fitness to drive.

These problems are solvable. A rapid transit system serving our entire city would enable many people to use transit for some or all of their transportation needs rather than using a personal motor vehicle. The resulting physical activity (travelling to and from transit stops) would be good for the health of the individual. The reduced exposure of the general population to motor vehicle exhaust and road traffic would be good for the health of the community, as would the improved mobility of people who cannot drive.

We would also like to draw your attention to the benefits that rapid transit would offer to healthcare and academic institutions within our city. Nearby cities such as Mississauga and Kitchener-Waterloo (ION LRT) are investing in rapid transit to make their hospitals and institutions of higher learning more accessible. When the ION LRT opens, McMaster medical students at the Waterloo campus will be able to travel between their campus and the Grand River Regional Hospital on rapid transit. The proposed Shift rapid transit plan in London would connect three hospitals and two postsecondary institutions on two rapid transit lines.

The combination of A-line BRT and B-line LRT in Hamilton would provide rapid transit access directly to three hospital campuses (McMaster University Medical Centre, St. Joseph's Charlton, and St. Joseph's West 5th), an urgent care centre (Main St. West), the main office of the Hamilton Family Health Team, countless outpatient medical clinics including McMaster's David Braley Health Sciences Centre, as well as our two major postsecondary institutions (McMaster University and Mohawk College). By connecting these sites, the proposed rapid transit system would make it much easier for our patients to access healthcare and for health care workers and students to travel between the different locations where they work and study in our city. We note that the leaders of Hamilton Health Sciences, St. Joseph's Healthcare Hamilton, McMaster University, and Mohawk College have all publicly expressed their support for Hamilton's rapid transit plan.

Many other voices in our community have explained how rapid transit would improve Hamilton's economy by attracting investment, increasing property tax revenues, and improving mobility within our city. These perspectives are valuable. We wish to emphasize the benefits of rapid transit for public health and for positioning our city to continue to be a global leader in health care, research and education.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'J. Brasch', with a stylized, cursive script.

Jennifer Brasch, BSc, MD, FRCPC
President
Hamilton Academy of Medicine

JB/mv