



CITY OF HAMILTON
PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT
Transit Division

TO:	Chair and Members Public Works Committee
COMMITTEE DATE:	June 4, 2018
SUBJECT/REPORT NO:	Mountain Climber Pilot Results and Expansion (PW17026a) (City Wide)
WARD(S) AFFECTED:	City Wide
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SUBMITTED BY:	Debbie Dalle Vedove Director, Transit Public Works Department
SIGNATURE:	

RECOMMENDATION

- (a) That the Mountain Climber Pilot on James Mountain Road be considered complete as a pilot, and continue on a permanent basis;
- (b) That the Transit Division implement two new Mountain Climber pilot locations: Beckett Drive and Kenilworth Access with a total one-time capital cost of \$2100 to be funded through the existing budgets in account and Dept ID 53070-530270. Included in this cost is the installation of signage and all related communications (internal and external);
- (c) That staff be directed to monitor both new pilot locations for a total of one year, and report results to Public Works Committee in 2019.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Staff launched the Mountain Climber Program in 2017 as a pilot on James Mountain Road. Cyclists are allowed a free ride up or down the access provided they board and disembark at designated stops. Through monitoring, staff determined there have been minimal impacts to HSR Operations, generally positive feedback from users and residents, a healthy but not overwhelming number of users, and a nominal financial

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impact. Staff are recommending that the existing pilot be maintained as a permanent program, and that Kenilworth Access and Beckett Drive are piloted as expansion locations through 2018 and 2019.

Alternatives for Consideration – See Page 5

FINANCIAL – STAFFING – LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

Financial: Based on estimated lost fare revenue of \$600 during the James Mountain Road Pilot, staff anticipate a comparable loss in fare revenue for each new Mountain Climber location. Staff were unable to quantify the fare revenue gained while introducing new customers to our service, therefore pilot implications for gained fare revenue are uncertain.

Implementation of the two new pilot locations will come at a total one-time capital cost of \$2100 and will be paid within existing budgets in account and Dept ID 53070-530270. Included in this cost is the installation of signage and all related communications (internal and external).

Staffing: None.

Legal: None.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Staff launched the Mountain Climber Program as a one-year pilot on May 29, 2017. The program allows cyclists to board HSR buses at designated stops on James Mountain Road / the West 5th Cut for a free ride up or down the escarpment. Program users (or “Mountain Climbers”) must get on and off the bus at designated stops, marked with signage, and communicate to the driver that they are using the program.

Staff have continuously promoted the program through 2017 and 2018, including at Bike to Work Day, and other City attended events. Promotion outside of cycling events included posters distributed in key locations, a media release; a promotional video released on the City’s YouTube channel, and coordinated tweeting among various City accounts. A City website page has been created and maintained containing key program information.

Staff have been monitoring the pilot since implementation last year (please see below for details). The pilot is considered a success based on positive results in all four areas monitored: minimal impact to HSR operations, positive feedback from the public and users (including several requests to expand the program), reasonable usage, and nominal operating cost. In addition to this, staff have identified a demand to expand the pilot beyond James Mountain Road.

Staff analysis concluded that an identifiable need for expansion beyond James Mountain Road exists. The expansion process began with the evaluation of all potential

accesses i.e. those with HSR service. Accesses considered included Centennial Parkway (Route 44), Red Hill Valley Parkway (Route 11), Kenilworth Access (Route 41), the Jolley Cut (Routes 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27), Beckett Drive (Route 34/34A), Wilson Street East (5A, 5C), and Mill Street South / Waterdown Road (Route 18). While all accesses showed varying level of potential, staff narrowed the second phase to two locations that prioritized (among other things): improvements to safety, geographical spread across city residents, and coordination with existing and planned cycling infrastructure.

1. Beckett Drive (Route 34/34A). Beckett is steep and narrow with no paved shoulders, creating existing and future conflicts between cyclists and drivers. There is no current or planned cycling infrastructure on the access itself. There is connecting built bicycle infrastructure at the bottom, and planned bicycle infrastructure at the top. For recommended stop locations please see Appendix "A" attached to Report PW17026a.
2. Kenilworth Access (Route 41/41A). Similar to Beckett, the Kenilworth access is narrow with no paved shoulders. There is no current or planned cycling infrastructure on the access itself. There is existing cycling infrastructure at the top and bottom, and additional planned cycling infrastructure at the top. For recommended stop locations please see Appendix "A" attached to Report PW17026a.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS AND LEGISLATED REQUIREMENTS

None.

RELEVANT CONSULTATION

1. Users were surveyed at Mountain Climber stop locations. They were asked about previous travel habits, frequency of program use, general program satisfaction, and for their suggestions for program improvement.
2. City of Hamilton (CoH) Traffic (Signals/Cycling) were consulted on existing and future cycling infrastructure, as it might benefit certain locations (current and future), general feedback on project decisions, as well as an identified signal concern at the bottom of James Mountain Road.
3. CoH Planning and Economic Development (Transportation Planning Services) were consulted on general feedback, promotion alongside existing efforts, and assistance in project management including the evaluation of program expansion and website maintenance.
4. CoH Corporate Communications analysed twitter feedback, produced a media release, and created a promotional video.
5. CoH Transit Division (Operations, Training, Marketing, Planning and Infrastructure) in Operator feedback, Operator training, farebox maintenance (set up, maintenance, data collection, and data cleaning), twitter engagement and analysis, and stops and shelters coordination.
6. Hamilton Cycling Committee for their feedback.

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ANALYSIS AND RATIONALE FOR RECOMMENDATION

Staff have monitored the Mountain Climber Pilot Program in relation to operational impact, resident and user feedback, usage statistics, and budget impacts. The results are as follows:

Staff consulted with Operators and Operations staff to determine the impacts to HSR Operations:

- A potential safety issue (existing) became more apparent due to the pilot (James at St Joseph's Drive, as cyclists load bicycles). Signals staff have been engaged and will consider the issue in the next signal review.
- Many operators found that having fewer cyclists on the access was a benefit to safe and efficient operation along the access.
- There have been no issues with fare evasion or schedule adherence resulting from the program, and therefore no associated budget impacts.

Staff conducted surveys, and monitored digital media including twitter, news outlets, and resident emails for public response and feedback to receive resident and user feedback:

- Surveys: Overall, feedback was positive. Most surveyed users were happy with the service. There were several requests to expand the service, and a few comments that bike racks were occasionally full (requiring customers to wait for the next bus).
- Twitter: At program launch staff monitored related tweets. The two most common themes were positive feedback, and requests for additional accesses beyond James Mountain Road.
- News outlets: Staff monitored news coverage, which indicated a positive reception to the program.
- Resident emails: Monitoring resident emails to staff indicated general support for the program, as well as requests for expansion to a variety of additional accesses.

Usage Statistics: A process was implemented whereby bus operators manually counted program users by pushing a farebox key.

- Bus Operators collected data resulting in approximately 900 key presses. Estimated average monthly use is approximately 100 users. Based on this, staff estimate annual use at approximately 1100 unique cyclist trips.
- Based on staff surveys, it was determined that the majority of program users would not have used the HSR on that trip were it not for the Mountain Climber Program.

Budget Impacts: Based on data collected, staff estimated minimal fare revenue loss during the pilot of this program. Staff surveyed users about their previous commuting patterns to identify the proportion of Mountain Climber trips that were previously being

completed as HSR trips. A combination of survey results and farebox data was used to estimate lost fare revenue.

- Overall, staff estimate that lost fare revenue for the pilot period was approximately \$600.

ALTERNATIVES FOR CONSIDERATION

1. Continue program exclusively on James Mountain Road.
 - a. Financial: \$600 (approximate ongoing cost per annum in lost fare revenue).
 - b. Legal: None.
 - c. Policy: None.
 - d. Pros: Continue the program for existing users. No additional costs associated with expansion (i.e. capital) and maintenance of new locations (i.e. lost fare revenue).
 - e. Cons: Program is limited to one access, and therefore residents in other parts of the City will not benefit.
2. Discontinue the pilot program entirely.
 - a. Financial: \$200 (one-time cost for removal of signage to be absorbed in existing budgets).
 - b. Legal: None.
 - c. Policy: None.
 - d. Pros: No ongoing loss of fare revenue.
 - e. Cons: Existing users need to return to their previous commute habits. Loss of the new connection between the lower City and Mountain.

ALIGNMENT TO THE 2016 – 2025 STRATEGIC PLAN

Healthy and Safe Communities

Hamilton is a safe and supportive city where people are active, healthy, and have a high quality of life.

Clean and Green

Hamilton is environmentally sustainable with a healthy balance of natural and urban spaces.

Built Environment and Infrastructure

Hamilton is supported by state of the art infrastructure, transportation options, buildings and public spaces that create a dynamic City.

APPENDICES AND SCHEDULES ATTACHED

Appendix “A”: Kenilworth and Beckett Pilot Stop Locations