

Presentation to Mr. Mayor and Members of City Council

The Seniors Advisory Committee, in making this presentation, would like to emphasize the importance of ensuring transportation options for those Hamiltonians who live in areas under or not serviced by the HSR.

The Seniors Advisory Committee would like to acknowledge the collaboration of CityLAB, Professors Emma Apatu, Sean Nix and Jim Vanderwoerd in helping to prepare this presentation.

To begin, the students in Professor Apatu's class in the Master of Public Health program at McMaster University, after doing a rapid review of the scientific literature regarding the impact of the lack of transportation on rural residents, make the following conclusions.

- A lack of access to transportation may negatively affect rural older adults' self-reported health and quality of life compared to those with adequate access to transportation;
- Engaging in social activities is deemed vital to healthy aging by rural older adults, and not having access to transportation appears to be a barrier for rural older adults to engage in social activities, compared to those who had access to a vehicle;
- Older adults living in rural areas who lack transportation are less able to access routine medical visits and more likely to enter long-term care compared to those with access to transportation;
- Reduced access to transportation among rural older adults is linked to adverse mental health outcomes and greater difficulty accessing mental health services in comparison to those with adequate access to transportation;
- Rural older adults who have greater access to transportation engage in more physical activity, have better dental health, and less hypertension compared to those with inadequate access to transportation; however, access to transportation is not linked to reduced weight gain among rural older adults.

In conclusion, the students state that measures to improve access to transportation for older adults living in areas where transit options are very limited of Hamilton may:

- improve subjective health status and quality of life;
- improve social participation and mental health;
- increase access to routine health visits, thereby improving management of chronic conditions such as diabetes;
- increase physical activity which could reduce the incidence of hypertension and other cardiovascular diseases, thereby reducing the demand for healthcare services;
- increase the period of time that older adults can remain at home, thereby reducing the need for long-term care.

The students in Professor Nix's class in the Transportation Planning and Modelling course at McMaster University first of all present the profile of people living in Glanbrook, Stoney Creek, Ancaster, Flamborough. In summary, the population 55+ in these areas is more female, except in Glanbrook, and over 80% have a driver's licence, except in the age group of 85 +, where the percentage drops off dramatically.

The students then outline several transportation options that will be presented shortly.

In preparing this presentation, the Seniors Advisory Committee also consulted with several community groups, Ancaster Community Services, Flamborough Connects, Glanbrook Community Services, Dundas Community Services, Seniors Outreach Stoney Creek and the Red Cross.

At this moment, the Hamilton residents that live in the pre-amalgamation towns have access to the following transit options.

- Fixed route HSR - in very limited areas
- Transcab - in circumscribed areas of Stoney Creek, Glanbrook and Mount Hope. This option allows a resident to take a taxi to the nearest bus stop and vice versa. It is important to note that people who take advantage of this option pay \$0.50 on top of the HSR fare. The charge of \$0.50 was fixed in 1999 and has not increased since, even though HSR fares have increased. HSR pays the remaining taxi fare above the \$0.50.
- DARTS and taxi script - every resident of Hamilton who qualifies has access to the DARTS service. Furthermore, those who are deemed eligible may purchase Taxi Script. Under this option, a person may purchase 3 taxi coupon books worth \$40 for \$24 per month, although there is no time limit to use the taxi script books. Nevertheless, in the rural areas of Hamilton, because the distances between the starting point and the destination are so much greater one Taxi Script book of \$40 covers very few trips.
- Park and Ride - older adults who are less comfortable driving longer distances may prefer driving to the Mountain Transit Centre, located at 2200 Upper James St and park for free before boarding an HSR bus.
- Grocery Bus - from 2009 to 2019, through various federal and provincial funding programs and Hamilton Community Foundation, a bus service organized by Ancaster Community Services, Flamborough Connects, Glanbrook Community Services and DARTS took rural residents who live in Flamborough, Ancaster and Glanbrook from each of their homes to shopping destinations. The destination was determined in consultation with the users and cost \$7 round trip. Unfortunately, no more funding is available but limited service is still available in Flamborough thanks to donations and fundraising.
- Volunteer driving - this service is offered by Dundas Community Services, Ancaster Community Services, Glanbrook Community Services, Stoney Creek Seniors Outreach Services, Red Cross and several other community-based organizations. Each community group establishes its own criteria, sets the fee and matches the driver with the passenger.

Transportation options in rural areas, other than fixed route bus service, are increasing across Ontario, Canada and world-wide because of several factors, including the fact that the rural population is aging, which has a significant impact on the ability to drive. Cities and towns in Ontario have developed several strategies that give rural residents more options to travel other than driving.

In conclusion, the Seniors Advisory Committee would like to remind the Mayor and City Councillors that the following policy guidelines have been adopted:

- City of Hamilton's Strategic Plan (2016-2025) identifies the following vision: "To be the best place to raise a child and age successfully."
- Additionally, the Transportation Master Plan's vision: "Provide a comprehensive and attainable transportation blueprint for Hamilton as a whole that balances all modes of transportation to become a healthier city."
- In March 2019, the Hamilton City Council has declared a climate emergency and directed staff to identify actions to be taken to achieve net zero carbon emissions before 2050.

For these reasons, the Seniors Advisory Committee urges the City to take the following actions.

1. Where possible, HSR should extend existing bus lines further into areas that do not have HSR service. Furthermore, virtual bus stops could be incorporated into this service, as Waterloo has done.
2. The City of Hamilton should review the Transcab service. This service could be linked to more end of line bus routes so that more people could take advantage of this service. However, SAC questions the fare structure of this service. While fares on the HSR have risen, the fee charged for Transcab has remained the same since 1999. The small fee charged the users of this service is contrasted with the cost of a taxi or other ride service that others must pay to reach their destination before or after the bus ride.
3. The City of Hamilton should establish more Park and Ride areas and clearly indicate the existence of these locations on the website. The Park and Ride

service exists at the Mountain Transit Centre. However, no information on this service is on the HSR website.

4. DARTS service is available to all Hamilton residents who are deemed eligible by the Accessible Transportation Services of the HSR. The eligibility assessment could take into consideration the location of the person's residence relative to the nearest HSR bus stop and the ability of the person to drive, either temporarily, in some conditions or not at all. As the population ages, the number of people holding drivers' licences or even wanting to drive will decrease. This of course, will have an impact on the DARTS system. While DARTS is an essential service, we suggest that other options could be developed that would relieve the pressure on the DARTS service.
5. Fixed destination by reservation. As mentioned, some community agencies have obtained funds in the past to offer this type of service to grocery and other stores. The City should begin to collaborate with community groups and DARTS to offer this service to all areas not serviced by regular HSR service, which would reduce the pressure on the regular DARTS service. The various destinations, grocery and other stores, malls, recreation centres, libraries, etc. and times could be publicized on a website and people could then reserve the specific date. Furthermore, different areas could be targeted, i.e. Ancaster one day, Stoney Creek, another, etc. so that the pickup and return is more concentrated. This type of service is offered in many other towns and cities and the passenger is generally charged a higher rate than the regular bus fare.
6. The City of Hamilton should also consider collaborating with bordering municipalities. Outlying Hamilton residents often live closer to another municipality and develop connections to shopping, medical and other services there. It does not always make sense from a cost/benefit ratio to bring these residents into urban Hamilton when many of their needs could be met more efficiently if they had transit options to a neighbouring municipality.
7. The City of Hamilton should collaborate with community organizations who offer volunteer driving services. As stated, many dedicated people offer transit options through organized services or on a purely one to one basis. Even those who have Taxi Script cannot always use a taxi service because of the long distance between the starting point and the destination. Several municipalities have organized shared ride services linking drivers who live in rural areas and those who need a ride, with the cost shared between the rider and the municipality.

8. Finally, although not an option that is available now, the Draft Regional Transportation Plan for Ontario predicts that Autonomous Vehicles will account for 27% of passenger travel by 2030, which could be of great benefit, not only as a safer way to travel but also, if electricity powered, would contribute to lowering GHG emissions. In the rural areas of Hamilton, AVs could be deployed to collect people and bring them to transit hubs.

In conclusion, the Seniors Advisory Committee stresses the importance for the City of Hamilton to fund begin to fund transit options to residents who live in areas currently under or not serviced by the HSR in an equitable and publicized manner.