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From: **Martin Zarate** >

Date: Tue, Jun 15, 2021 at 12:41 AM

Subject: It's time to build the LRT for our next generation

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Councillors, Mr Mayor,

I'm writing to respectfully ask you to support the Hamilton LRT project. This is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for our city - I know this because I've spent my whole life here in Hamilton, so it's at the very least once in *\*my\** lifetime.

I graduated from Westdale back in 2000, and watched my best and brightest classmates move on to greater cities for greater things - teaching at Cornell, working at Google in Seattle, running their own tech company in London... or move to Brantford and beyond for the kind of housing that we used to be able to afford in Hamilton.

And I look at my kids and see them growing up in a city that is losing the ambition that used to be its slogan. Are my children going to be faced with leaving Hamilton for greener pastures too? We bent over backwards for Bob Young to keep the Ti-cats in Hamilton, is it too much to ask that my kids get the same consideration?

The LRT is a transformative change for Hamilton - a chance to redirect the slow conversion into yet another GTA suburb back to becoming a destination of its own. You've all traveled to see great cities of the world just like I have, and you've all seen how great cities aren't ones where the poor have cars, but ones where the rich take transit. Right now, the HSR is predominantly occupied by either idealists like me or, more frequently, people without an alternative (eg, students). The LRT will change that, and I'm sure you've all seen that yourself in every rail-based transit you've been on, just as I have.

And from an environmentalist perspective, it's irresponsible *\*not\** to work with a giant electric transit vehicle that will take many gas-burning cars off the road. In the endless relitigation of climate change arguments we hear so many things about the futility of fighting climate change: "even with electric cars, the batteries made from cobalt mined by slaves!" Well the LRT runs on a catenary, not batteries. "But the tires and roadway are made of petroleum products!" Well the LRT runs on rails that can be sustainably maintained. "But an E-bus can do most of the same things, and can be re-routed". Exactly, which means that the densification and investment will be more suspicious of the stability of the route. Would Bay Street in Toronto be the same if Union Station could be relocated at the drop of a hat?

We have to fight climate change, and beyond being just an electric vehicle, the LRT attracts intensification, and the dirty secret of environmentalism is that the simplest way to be greener is to densify. Green living doesn't look like Frank Lloyd Wright's Usonian fantasy, it looks like

Manhattan. Looking South, in spite of California's constant arguing about green infrastructure and electric cars and green energy, the lowest-carbon-per-capita state in their 50 states remains New York, simply because they have a gigantic city that has the kind of housing that can be efficiently heated, serviced, and traveled to and from. If you can't get people out of their cars, then they drive. That means they need parking, which means we need seas of surface parking-lots, which means everything is spaced further apart, which means the city isn't walkable, which means transit can't be used, which means *\*everybody\** has to drive, and not everybody can afford that, and so create choking traffic as everybody is pushed further and further out, until our only choices are to sprawl out into the greenbelt with more choking traffic or watch the endless upward march of absurd million-dollar prices for detached split-level bungalows, because nobody wants to live without a 2-car garage in a car-commuter city. Is that your vision for this city? Because I honestly don't see an alternative without real, transformative transit intensification.

It's all one piece. It's all one big structure, and the LRT is the keystone of it. Take that piece out and the future of this city falls apart. With 400,000 new Canadians coming to Canada every year and housing prices climbing out of reach, staying as we are isn't an option. We need to pick a future.

And as a rider, there are so many intangibles that the LRT brings to the table over comparative bus transit. Have you ever been on a bus when it has to stop to allow a disabled person to embark or disembark? I mean, you can't blame them, but it's not a fun delay. An LRT solves this by providing level boarding, eliminating the complicated boarding process for disabled Hamiltonians and giving them the dignity of entering like everyone else. Have you ever stepped onto a bus and been pitched into the ground (or into a stranger) by a sudden acceleration or deceleration? LRTs smoothly accelerate and have a dedicated ROW free from unexpected traffic. I mean, how can we ask Hamiltonians to stop driving so much when we offer them vehicles that feel and sound like they're about to shake themselves to pieces? I invite you to sit at the back of an artic with poorly-secured maintenance hatches, you will not be able to hear your own headphones, much less a conversation.

Yes, these sound like luxuries. So do sidewalks, to some people. If you want somebody who can afford a downtown parking spot and a fancy car to ride transit, a little luxury might be necessary. I've heard poverty-activists decry the LRT as a middle-class toy... and I say that's actually pretty fair. Because getting middle-class people into transit is actually part of the point of this venture. Without middle-class people on transit, transit will always be seen as a poverty service, and you council folk will never be able to get buy-in from your residents for real improvements since they'll see transit as an "other people problem".

And as for those who want BRT and better service to other parts of the city - I do too! But we don't have plans for that ready, or \$3.4 billion dollars on the table on offer for any of that. You want to draft up a plan for an A-line and a T-line, I'll support it! You want to raise my taxes for better transit, do that (but also do some zoning changes so that you can get more taxpayers into these new corridors because otherwise that's not a long-term strategy)! But either way, none of those plans are ready right now. The LRT is. And the province and federal government are here to support it. The federal government in general and Hamilton's own Ms McKenna in particular have stuck their necks out for us, and you want to strangle that neck?

This is our chance to build a greater, greener Hamilton. The world is starting to embrace this kind of green infrastructure, and we can't afford to be left behind. And if the world doesn't embrace green

infrastructure like this... well, I'd like to be able to explain to my grandkids one day that we \*tried\* to stop climate change here in Hamilton.

I'm sorry I wrote such a long letter, I didn't have the time for a short one. I assume none of you have read this verbose mess in its entirety, particularly since I'm sure it's one of many, but I thank you for whatever time you've given me.

Regards,

Martin Zarate  
Ward 1 resident