

# **Hamilton Light Rail Transit (LRT) Project**

Project Development and Pre-Procurement Phase

MTO, Metrolinx and

City of Hamilton

Communications Protocol

**Final**

January 26, 2022

## **GENERAL**

On May 13, 2021, the Federal and Provincial Governments announced a \$3.4B joint funding investment to build the Hamilton LRT project. The LRT will run from McMaster University through the downtown core to Eastgate Square in Stoney Creek. The Ministry of Transportation, along with Metrolinx, will lead construction of the project and retain ownership of the asset once complete.

The Ministry of Transportation, Metrolinx and the City of Hamilton (the Parties) agree to undertake joint communication activities where and when appropriate that will enhance opportunities for open, transparent, effective and pro-active communications with the public and recognize the contribution of the Parties as we work to advance these important projects. Metrolinx will coordinate the review of all communications with the Ministry of Transportation before they are issued.

The term of this communications protocol will extend to the pre-procurement phase of the project. This protocol may be further revised as part of the development of a project master agreement. Although this agreement is about pre-procurement, the parties recognize that clear and regular public communications will be critical to the success of the project, especially leading up to and during the construction phase. Through future amendment to this agreement, the parties will outline a protocol that ensures an "on-the-ground" presence for the project team, for example through a community office on the corridor. The parties will also establish a protocol for regular updates to the business community through the BIAs and Chambers of Commerce.

Subject to any of the above occurrences, the Communications Subgroup may contribute to the development of a project management and implementation plan and/or master agreement containing a schedule that outlines all key projects, milestones, approvals and any associated communications materials requiring development and approval.

## **COMMUNICATIONS SUBGROUP**

- A Subgroup of Metrolinx and City of Hamilton staff will be established to advise and provide support for all communications and public information activities related to this project. A Ministry of Transportation communications representative may attend the subgroup meetings as required.
- The Subgroup will be comprised of at least one representative from each Party and other specialized staff as required.
  - The Subgroup will report to the project Working Group.
- A designated representative from Metrolinx will chair the Subgroup.
- Each designate will update the Subgroup on related developments and

communications activities.

- If required, the Subgroup shall develop templates for project-specific and broad communications about the projects covered under this protocol, which may be jointly approved.
- The Subgroup shall develop and recommend communications materials. Where appropriate, material will be shared -- for information, for input or for review and approval by the Working Group. Where approval is being sought, the request will include clear timelines and deadlines.

## **PROJECT SPECIFIC COMMUNICATIONS**

- The Ministry of Transportation, working with Metrolinx, has overall lead and responsibility for final project communications, and MTO will also coordinate as needed with the federal government. Where required, final review and approval is subject to the terms and conditions of the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU).
- Hamilton City Council will be updated regularly throughout the project through one-on-one briefings and Council reports/presentations. Depending on the nature of the update, the parties will decide who is most appropriate to deliver the update.
  - It is within City Council's purview to discuss and deliberate impacts of the LRT during Committee and Council meetings.
- Local communications are encouraged; however, for project success it will be integral for the Ministry of Transportation and Metrolinx to discharge an overall leadership and coordination role.
  - There may be specific communication materials and issues where the City of Hamilton will assume the lead. For example, City projects/operations, roadworks, or HSR services that are affected by LRT construction. The City will inform and/or consult with Metrolinx in advance of these occasions depending on the nature of the issue.
- Metrolinx and the City of Hamilton may develop joint information kits, brochures, public reports, and website material to inform interest groups, contractors and the public about the project.
  - Metrolinx has established a project website to share information about the project that will be updated as new information becomes available. The City of Hamilton can link to the project website and may wish to include other City-related information on their own website.
  - The Parties are encouraged to prepare communications products to support their local events, campaigns, meetings, etc.

- The Master Messaging document (to be developed) should guide all messaging used about the LRT project.
- In these situations, production costs for materials prepared for local events related to the project will be the responsibility of Metrolinx as per the MOU.
- The Metrolinx Project Sponsor and Technical Lead, in partnership with the Metrolinx Communications Lead(s), will work with the City of Hamilton Project Director and Communication Lead in directing day-to-day communication activities related to pre-procurement planning, including:
  - development of business cases, value-for-money assessments, procurement of advisory services; and
  - development of project specifications, and with the assistance of other agencies, preparations for procurement to identify a contractor for project delivery.
- The Subgroup will recommend how the Parties may be identified and recognized through these communication activities using pre-approved templates.
- Should local communications occur, Metrolinx and the City of Hamilton will agree on who will lead the overall coordination of communications and leverage the Parties and their respective communications/marketing and local knowledge resources as appropriate. It will be important to convey cohesive and integrated project management and delivery.
- Where elected officials (MPs, MPPs and councillors) are to be briefed on the project, or gather/attend public meetings/event where the Hamilton LRT project is either a focus or substantive item on the agenda/program, Metrolinx and City of Hamilton communications staff will coordinate prior to the meeting. It is anticipated that Metrolinx will assume an overall lead role as it relates to the MPs and MPPs, working closely with the Ministry of Transportation, while the City of Hamilton will assume an overall lead with respect to City Council.
- It is recognized that in the event that impromptu or adhoc briefings and meeting requests arise, and if the LRT project is a point of discussion, each party will keep the other apprised of these discussions and any related developments.
- The Subgroup may organize an advertising or public information campaign related to the project, if there is a determined need.
- The Subgroup will review and make necessary updates to this protocol prior to the procurement phase of the project.
- Metrolinx will take the lead on responses to community and stakeholder inquiries about the project through the [Hamilton@Metrolinx.com](mailto:Hamilton@Metrolinx.com) email address and dedicated phone line. Metrolinx's standard response time is to acknowledge the inquiry within 24 hours and respond within 10 days. If the inquiry is more

appropriate for the City to respond to, Metrolinx will forward the inquiry to the City and requests to be copied on the response.

- In the event of a dispute related to communications activities, the parties will escalate the item for decision-making at the appropriate level through the City of Hamilton-Metrolinx project governance structure.

## **MEDIA/PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENTS/EVENTS**

- The Ministry of Transportation, working closely with Metrolinx, will be responsible for coordination of major announcements and media events in collaboration with the City of Hamilton in keeping with this protocol.
- It is recognized that not all communications related to the project can be centrally organized/coordinated. Instances will arise in which Parties to the project may feel the need to convey independent messages or perspectives. In such circumstances, the Subgroup requests that Parties inform each other of the intention to communicate.

### **I. Media Releases and Events**

The Ministry of Transportation, working closely with Metrolinx, will issue news releases for major announcements and other relevant events.

- The Subgroup will collaborate in organizing special events that are determined to be required Metrolinx and/or the City of Hamilton.
- Major media conferences, announcements and official ceremonies will be led by the Ministry of Transportation and Metrolinx. Ministry of Transportation will coordinate with the federal government as required.
- As a general principle, the Parties agree that no public announcement about the project event/activity covered under this Agreement shall be made independently by the City of Hamilton. An announcement schedule will be developed by the Communications Subgroup and reviewed periodically.
- The Subgroup will provide advice and recommendations to the Working Group; and,
- Wherever possible, the parties shall mutually agree on the use of quotes from the designated representatives of the Ministry of Transportation, Metrolinx and the City of Hamilton, and where appropriate, any third-party funding partners or stakeholders.

## II. Media

- All media inquiries received by the City of Hamilton should also be forwarded to Metrolinx Media Relations for coordinated follow-up and response if required. Metrolinx will coordinate the review of all media responses with the Ministry of Transportation before they are issued. Standard messaging will be developed and approved within the Communications Subgroup, which will be used as a basis for all media responses.
  - In certain instances, Metrolinx may refer specific media questions to the City of Hamilton if the response is better suited coming from the City. For example, City projects/operations, roadworks, or HSR services that are affected by LRT construction.
- Requests for interviews should be forwarded to all Subgroup designates and assessed. Parties will provide recommendations and Metrolinx or appropriate Party will respond.
- Designated spokespersons will be identified by each Party for major announcements, media interview requests, and issues management.
  - Designated spokespeople will receive media relations training, as needed.
- Standard messaging will be developed and approved within the Subgroup, which will be used as a basis for all social media post and responses.

## III. Social Media

- Metrolinx will assume oversight and "ownership" of existing social media accounts (Twitter, Instagram and Facebook) for the Hamilton LRT project and update the content to reflect recent developments. The City of Hamilton will contribute to the social media strategy and content development.
- The City of Hamilton is encouraged to re-post information about the Hamilton LRT project from their respective social media accounts.

## IV. Branding

- Metrolinx and the City of Hamilton, through the Communications Subgroup and the Project Working Group, will work together to advance and promote the brand strategy for the 'construction phase' of the project, understanding that branding and strategy for the service delivery phase will be addressed at a later date.

## V. Issues Management/Crisis Plan

- The Subgroup will develop a protocol for issues management to share information and coordinate messaging to ensure the public is well-informed.

- The protocol will be shared with the Metrolinx Corporate Communications, the City of Hamilton and the Ministry of Transportation.
- The Issues Management Protocol will be reviewed periodically to ensure that it is effective.

#### VI. Working within Existing Communications Protocol Requirements

- This protocol functions in parallel to other communications protocols that the Parties must adhere to. For example, where required, the Parties are responsible for facilitating any required internal reviews and approvals necessary for the development and implementation of any communications products.
- This also includes the recognition of any pre-existing communications protocols that exist between the Parties and any of the funding, procurement or delivery partners.

#### VII. Communication During Exceptional Events

- In the event of a Federal, Provincial or Municipal election, any communications, community and consultative work directly related to the critical progress of the project will continue to be carried out (e.g. open houses that are part of legislated public consultations). However, any communications items that could be viewed as having a political focus (e.g. specific funding announcements) will be deferred until the conclusion of said election.