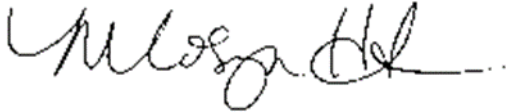




Hamilton

INFORMATION REPORT

TO:	Chair and Members Public Works Committee
COMMITTEE DATE:	November 28, 2022
SUBJECT/REPORT NO:	(Re)envision the HSR Update (PW20005(b)) (City Wide)
WARD(S) AFFECTED:	City Wide
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SIGNATURE:	

COUNCIL DIRECTION

N/A

INFORMATION

The purpose of this report is to provide Council with an update on the (Re)envision the HSR project.

(Re)envision the HSR project was launched to the public in 2019 and its purpose was twofold: to reconfigure the transit network and to transform the customer experience. The project was based on broad stakeholder engagement, striving to grow ridership and, most importantly, to position transit as a preferred choice.

Fifty percent of the network reconfiguration project (i.e. research and design) has been funded by the federal government under the Public Transit Infrastructure Fund program, and the remaining 50% has been funded by the City of Hamilton. Within the City of Hamilton, (Re)envision the HSR is a strategic project that not only integrates with high order transit decisions but also aligns to other key City priorities such as the Economic Development Action Plan and Hamilton's Plan for an Age-Friendly Community.

Engagement efforts have been extensive and total nearly 13,000 instances, including a survey of almost 6,000 customers and residents, attendance at over 50 community events and neighbourhood meetings, meetings with dozens of community stakeholders, and digital consultation with hundreds of participants on the *My HSR* public engagement

OUR Vision: To be the best place to raise a child and age successfully.

OUR Mission: To provide high quality cost conscious public services that contribute to a healthy, safe and prosperous community, in a sustainable manner.

OUR Culture: Collective Ownership, Steadfast Integrity, Courageous Change, Sensational Service, Engaged Empowered Employees.

website. A summary of the engagement efforts to date is outlined in Appendix “A” attached to Report PW20005(b).

(Re)envision the HSR establishes transit as a key tool for city-building; supporting economic growth, equity, diversity and social inclusion; cultural vibrancy; and environmental balance.

Network Reconfiguration Design

The City’s current network design is more than 100 years old. Over time, changes have largely been reactive and incremental, constrained by costs and service cuts, and have relied on extending routes to minimize new resource requirements. The existing network is largely based on a “hub and spoke” network and is not reflective of current and future transit needs based on residential and commercial growth areas. The existing network is stagnant and is comprised mostly of routes travelling to and from the core, resulting in longer than necessary journey times for local trips, with little variation in service that matches demand beyond fulfilling service standards which may no longer meet route modernization practices or travel demand.

As such, HSR embarked on a network redesign, which is a significant undertaking impacting every aspect of transit planning and design, from service models, route types, vehicle capacities, shelters and bus stop locations. The network reconfiguration project is being facilitated by McMaster University’s Department of Civil Engineering in collaboration with HSR’s planning staff. The work is based on a robust quantitative analysis with over a dozen inputs, including community engagement, insights from a staff survey, assessing the travel behaviour of Hamiltonians, system performance and reliability assessments, route analysis and rationalization, and regional connectivity.

The network reconfiguration design has been prepared multiple times, and progress has been hindered each time due to various circumstances, including COVID-19, and shifting decisions regarding higher order transit along the Main, King, Queenston corridor. The first design was partially completed and was based on a Light Rail Transit (LRT) supportive network. The cancellation of the LRT project in late 2019 necessitated a second network design, supported by Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) as an alternative higher order option to LRT. In early 2021, LRT was re-introduced, and ratified by Council in September 2021, which required a third network design supportive of LRT. Finally, the two-way Main Street conversion was the most recent impact and further design modifications were necessary, noting that the two-way conversion of Main Street is expected to have a positive impact on the design for the overall reconfigured transit network.

Elements of the network design that are not impacted by the two-way conversion are undergoing a technical review with internal stakeholders for feasibility consideration and an assessment by subject matter experts to ensure it aligns with the City’s overall

growth plans. Internal stakeholder engagement is underway with Public Works, Planning and Economic Development and other key groups in the months ahead. Once the network undergoes internal review, staff will present the draft network to Council in Q1 of 2023 along with the plan for broader external engagement and public engagement sessions. The target date to commence external engagement is early Q2 of 2023.

The redesigned network is aspirational and focuses on building the transit system from its existing form to the desired future-state for the Hamilton of tomorrow and aligns with the City's major growth plans to support employment, housing and economic development.

Transforming the Customer Experience: HSR Guiding Principles

HSR's six (6) Guiding Principles set the foundation for how transit will be delivered in the City of Hamilton. The Guiding Principles were first made public in Information Report (PW20005(a)) in January 2020 and are summarized in Appendix "B" attached to Report PW20005(b).

The public engagement portion of the (Re)envision the HSR project has largely concluded at this time, leaving behind the 6 Guiding Principles and a legacy on how Transit evolves in the future. Arising from the public consultation and supporting the Guiding Principles, HSR has subsequently identified 19 desired outcomes and 46 operating principles. In addition, 86 action plans have been identified for implementation, and one-third of the actions already are underway, including various pilots and promotional campaigns. These will continue to be incorporated into work plans and have provided a roadmap for future public engagement, which will be reintroduced during the external consultation part of the network redesign.

The culture shift toward innovative practices, including experimentation and collaboration, has already started within HSR. The following highlights some of the transformative efforts taking place that demonstrate each Guiding Principle in action.

- (i) Customer experience is at the heart of what we do.

In November 2021, HSR launched a customer satisfaction survey. The "rate my ride" survey is accessed through HSRNow, HSR's real-time trip planning app. HSR continues to promote the app and adoption has tripled since the launch of the survey to approximately 4,700 active users. To grow sample size and solicit more feedback, HSR is also piloting in-person customer satisfaction surveys at transit terminals in November and December.

The customer satisfaction survey, feedback received through customer service agents, a customer panel, and surveys embedded in HSR myRide are part of HSR's Voice of

Customer program that drive positive change. Customer feedback is an integral part of a quality loop for rapid improvement and corrective action. Customer feedback received by HSR is actioned to create positive outcomes such as coaching, training, policy reviews, schedule reviews, and new amenities.

Finally, HSR continues to demonstrate its commitment to community outreach. Throughout the summer and fall, staff attended 20 events and met thousands of people of all ages and abilities including festivals, seniors' organization events, secondary and post-secondary schools, and the Hamilton Public Library.

(ii) We honour equity, diversity and inclusion.

Equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) is one (1) of eight (8) Council priorities that support the City of Hamilton's Strategic Plan. Hamilton is committed to nurturing a city that is welcoming, and the goal is to increase a sense of belonging, feelings of safety, City responsiveness and inclusive engagement.

HSR honours the City's EDI priority and has established the desired outcome "everyone has a right to feel welcome and safe while using transit". One example of a project that aims to increase safety and belonging is HSR's "See Something Say Something" campaign that is on track to launch by December 2022.

HSR's "See Something, Say Something" campaign encourages transit customers to step forward if they experience or witness discrimination, harassment or other concerning behaviours. The campaign addresses recent research by the Hamilton Immigration Partnership Council that reveals 32.7% of immigrants and visible minorities and 47.2% of indigenous persons surveyed reported experiencing discrimination on transit. The research is an important reminder that transit both reflects and serves the greater community.

The "See Something, Say Something" campaign is the first step among other planned activities to ensure transit is a safe and welcoming space for all residents and visitors. These efforts will require ongoing, collective community action and collaboration across community partners and residents. Transit is an important public space and HSR is committed to being a trusted partner engaged in continuous improvement.

(iii) We deliver on our promise.

HSR is developing a Customer Charter that will formalize HSR's commitments to our customers to provide the best possible customer experience. The work is considered a best practice and will be based on consultation with staff and the community and seeks to improve trust and confidence in the customer experience. The charter will be a key strategic document for staff and will include key performance metrics that are measured, tracked and communicated on an ongoing basis. The Charter is expected to

launch in 2023 following community endorsement with a comprehensive marketing campaign across all communication channels include web, print, and social media.

The (Re)envision the HSR research reinforced that the most important driver of customer satisfaction is on-time performance, also known as service reliability. Actions that are underway to increase service reliability include the establishment of an internal working group, a review of reliability of services such as TransCab, HSR myRide and accessible transit services, and a review of HSR's real-time trip planning tools.

- (iv) We connect, innovate and evolve.

One example of innovation at HSR is the Bus Marker Bench (BMB) Pilot. The BMB pilot was inspired by (Re)envision customer research that showed comfort and amenities at bus stops are important drivers of customer satisfaction. Requests for shelters and benches throughout the City are received frequently; however, in certain circumstances, requested locations are constrained by limited space which prohibits the installation of traditional transit amenities. The BMB pilot tested an innovative solution in which a bus stop pole is combined with a bench for customer seating for locations with limited space.

The BMB prototype was designed by HSR staff and manufactured by Daytech Ltd., the City's standardized shelter manufacturer. The design features a bolt pole with a bench and grip bar attached. The unit cost is \$1,400 (including installation) and the pilot was funded through the Public Transit Infrastructure Fund (PTIF-HAM-03 Transit Shelter and Bus Stop Rehabilitation). Photographs of the two configurations (single seat and dual seat) are attached to Report PW20005(b) as Appendix "C".

The implementation of the BMB project was undertaken through three (3) phases:

1. Bus Operator feedback and field testing (1 unit);
2. Installation of modified design (10 units); and
3. Installation of additional BMB's (28 units).

Throughout the pilot, internal and external stakeholders, including the Advisory Committee for Persons with Disabilities (ACPD), were provided with opportunities to give feedback, which helped to provide value-added design modifications. An on-line survey of 400 respondents indicated that most respondents felt a BMB would improve the "waiting for the bus" experience.

Going forward, staff have adopted a standard installation procedure that any BMB's placed within a boulevard that has a width of 1.5 metres or less will be a one-seat unit. Two-seat units will be reserved for locations where the BMB can be placed either behind the sidewalk, or within a boulevard with a width greater than 1.5 metres.

The 2023 Capital budget submission 5302385807 HSR Bus Marker Bench, if approved, allows for a BMB yearly expansion program, with priority given to bus stop locations that have previously received requests for shelters from customers, yet which could not be accommodated due to a lack of space for a shelter.

- (v) We engage with our employees to improve customer experience.

The customer experience and the employee experience are often symbiotic. Since customer experience relies heavily on the employee experience, HSR staff have developed an employee experience plan as part of the on-going transformational work. Key goals of the employee experience plan include a communication plan, a voice of employee program, a recognition program, and most importantly, enhanced access to training and professional development to equip front line staff to better meet the needs of the customers.

HSR is also developing a customer experience plan by asking operators and other front-line staff, as super-users of the system, to identify tips and hints to help customers get the best experience on their journey. This will be done through staff polls and in-person interviews and will be shared with the HSR customer panel before launching.

- (vi) We make a positive impact on communities, environment and economy.

Transit has a growing narrative that centres on the powerful role it plays in city-building and strengthening the quality of life in communities. In Hamilton, HSR is proud to work collaboratively with other City departments such as Economic Development, with the shared goal of increasing access to jobs and economic opportunities, or Tourism Hamilton, with the shared goal of providing safe and efficient mobility that positively reflect Hamilton during major events.

HSR continuously reviews local and national data that measure transit's impact on communities and has started to incorporate these concepts into marketing campaigns that strive to grow ridership based on best-practices. HSR is an active member in the Canadian Urban Transit Association (CUTA), who released an issue paper in 2019 entitled The Economic Impact of Transit Investment in Canada which states the following facts¹

- The economic benefit of Canada's existing transit systems is at least \$19 billion annually.
- The transit industry directly employs 59,600 Canadians and transit capital investment creates an additional 65,000 jobs.
- Transit reduces vehicle operating costs for Canadian households by about \$12.6 billion annually

¹ https://cutaactu.ca/wpcontent/uploads/2021/01/final_issue_paper_50_cuta_v2.pdf

- Transit reduces the economic costs of traffic collisions by almost \$3.2 billion annually.
- Transit reduces annual greenhouse gas emissions by 4.7 million tonnes, valued at \$207 million
- Transit saves about \$137 million in annual health care costs related to respiratory illness

Attracting new riders to transit means changing human behaviour from car dependency, and the opportunity to attract new riders to transit has never been more promising. The stark reality of the climate emergency, housing crisis, and economic forecasts combined with rising everyday costs, make transit an increasingly smart and liberating choice.

Conclusion

Transit supports economic growth, employment and education sectors; culture and tourism; climate change; and promotes healthy and safe communities. The City will be well-positioned to achieve its transit mode share target of 12% by 2031 through (Re)envision by focusing on a redesigned network that is future-ready and capable of supporting the LRT and ongoing innovations in service delivery, like demand-responsive and integrated transit, and by continuously improving the customer experience.

APPENDICES AND SCHEDULES ATTACHED

Appendix “A” to Report PW20005(b) – (Re)envision Engagement Efforts

Appendix “B” to Report PW20005(b) – HSR’s Guiding Principles

Appendix “C” to Report PW20005(b) – Photographs of Single Seat and Dual Seat Bus Marker Bench Units