

For the City of Hamilton Light Rail Transit Sub-committee - meeting on July 26th, 2023
Input on Item 8.1 “Light Rail Transit Operations Models (PED23166) (City Wide)”

Environment Hamilton has been longtime advocates for the building of higher order public transit in the City of Hamilton to achieve environmental, economic, and social goals that will benefit residents of our city and help achieve a truly sustainable future. As an advocate, I have personally spoken with residents in every corner of this city - in some cases going door to door with other passionate advocates - sharing the vision of the benefits the B-Line LRT can bring to our community. During this time however, it has been quite clear that many in power and who are ultimately responsible for this project to succeed do not have the same vision that excites and generates support amongst all Hamiltonians for this project.

To be clear, this project from a public transit advocate perspective is not ideal. Metrolinx does not have an adequate track record when it comes to projects like this, and unfortunately our provincial government continues to prioritize private profits over the delivery of good public services. Those who remain skeptical of this project have every right to be - residents have been displaced, the project has been debated endlessly by previous Councils, and it was even outright canceled. Looking at how other higher order transit projects have played out elsewhere in Ontario certainly does not reinforce confidence that Metrolinx - an agency that is supposed to be “arms length” from the project yet increasingly has been revealed to be controlled and politicized by the provincial government - has the track record or earned authority to determine what is actually best for local transit services in our cities. While it has long been heralded as a sweetheart deal - it’s quite possible that Metrolinx having such absolute control over this LRT line will be seen as yet another public transit failure in our province in the future.

It was encouraging however when this project was brought back from the dead, that Metrolinx officials clearly articulated to Council that the City of Hamilton would be able to determine who operates and maintains the B-Line LRT. This was fantastic news, we need to ensure that Hamiltonians - through our City Council - have as much oversight and influence on this project as possible. Reading through Item 8.1 on the agenda today, it is incredibly disappointing to read that with regards to maintenance “Metrolinx recommends that these activities should remain with the third party”. This is not what Metrolinx told the City of Hamilton - and in light of recent reports that the provincial government is increasingly asserting control over Metrolinx communications - one has to question if this is a recommendation made out of genuine interest in ensuring that the B-Line LRT is as successful as we need it to be.

I highly encourage you to push for what was originally promised to us - that the City of Hamilton choose who operates and maintains the B-Line LRT - and furthermore to choose the only reasonable option if you have any interest in seeing this project be a success to do so: Our HSR.

- Ian Borsuk, Interim Executive Director
Environment Hamilton