

Dead members of the LRT sub-committee,

I'm writing to you on behalf of Stop Sprawl Students, a community-club in Hamilton that promotes the creation of sustainable cities. We're asking that you reject the city staff recommendation to privatize the operations of the Hamilton LRT. Stop Sprawl Students supports environmental and labor advocates in the call to keep transit public.

A fully public transit system is far better than a privatized one as it puts the needs of the public first, including students. Some of the benefits include: lower fares for students (as discount programs can be run like the deal McMaster students have with the HSR), unionized staff (so workers can be treated properly and therefore care about their job more), alleviate stress about safe and reliable transportation (as it relates to the climate and housing crisis), and best of all if the city is the primary control then we as citizens can easily go to our city counselors with needs/suggestions for the LRT.

When light rail transit has service issues, it is far more important for the city to have the ability to directly intervene and fix operational problems, than have someone else to blame. By privatizing this function, the city loses this critical lever and therefore riders face the consequences.

From an environmental perspective, public transit needs to work to meet people's daily needs to be a viable enough option to leave the polluting car at home. Far too often, we've seen the privatization model fail transit riders. The supposed cost savings from private operation can only come from cutting corners and cutting wages. These cuts only hurt the City of Hamilton in the long run.

There is no reason why the City of Hamilton could not operate Light Rail itself, and build up its own expertise. In 2017, the city already voted to have the LRT publicly operated and maintained, and this decision is no different. Hamilton won't stop growing as a city – and will eventually need more rail transit. It only makes sense for the city to begin building operational experience now, and have the direct control needed to fix operational problems if they arise.

This is a generation-defining project that will be transformative for the city and it is crucial that it is done right.

Kind regards,

Shania Ramharrack-Maharaj
Stop Sprawl Students