



**CITY OF HAMILTON**  
**PLANNING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT**  
**Office of Climate Change Initiatives**

<b>TO:</b>	Chair and Members Light Rail Transit Sub-Committee
<b>COMMITTEE DATE:</b>	May 23, 2024
<b>SUBJECT/REPORT NO:</b>	Applying a Climate Justice Lens to Light Rail Transit (PED24087) (City Wide)
<b>WARD(S) AFFECTED:</b>	City Wide
<b>PREPARED BY:</b>	Lynda Lukasik (905) 546-2424 Ext. 3169 Beatrice Ekoko (905) 546-2424 Ext. 6885
<b>SUBMITTED BY:</b>	Lynda Lukasik Director, Office of Climate Change Initiatives Planning and Economic Development Department
<b>SIGNATURE:</b>	

**RECOMMENDATION**

- (a) That the City continue to apply a climate justice lens to the Hamilton Light Rail Transit (LRT) Project and associated works to ensure that any relevant mitigation and adaptation actions as set out in Hamilton’s Climate Action Strategy are implemented in a manner that considers climate justice.
- (b) That the LRT Sub-Committee recruit additional non-voting community advisors to the LRT Sub-Committee table to ensure that the Sub-Committee’s composition reflects the community from a climate justice point of view.

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

At the Light Rail Transit Sub-Committee meeting on December 11, 2023, a notice of motion was put forward directing staff to review the presentation entitled ‘Applying a Climate Justice Lens to the Light Rail Transit’ and to report back to the Light Rail Transit Sub-Committee respecting which recommendations the City is acting on and if there are additional recommendations for the Light Rail Transit Sub-Committee to consider. The presentation and an associated report were prepared by CityLab Semester in Residence students working with the Hamilton Community Benefits Network. The purpose of Report PED24087 is to review the recommendations set out in the December 2023 presentation from CityLab Semester In Residence students and the

---

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.

accompanying report 'Getting Hamilton's LRT on the Right Track', to determine whether there are City and/or Metrolinx efforts underway that address these recommendations and to provide a high-level assessment of whether this is being done in a manner that considers climate justice principles. Report PED24087 also introduces the work currently underway in the Office of Climate Change Initiatives to develop a 'Climate Justice Framework' to guide municipal climate action, including a preliminary illustration of how this framework might be applied to LRT-related work into the future. Finally, the report includes recommendations for additional measures to ensure that climate justice is considered within the context of the Hamilton LRT Project moving forward.

### **Alternatives for Consideration – See Page 11**

### **FINANCIAL – STAFFING – LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

Financial: Not applicable.

Staffing: Not applicable.

Legal: Not applicable.

### **HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

On March 27, 2019, Hamilton City Council declared a Climate Change Emergency. Subsequently, Council approved Hamilton's Climate Action Strategy on August 12, 2022. Hamilton's Climate Action Strategy calls for, amongst other actions, climate justice by committing to the integration of equity considerations to guide climate mitigation and adaptation actions.

At the December 11, 2023 LRT Sub-Committee, CityLab Semester-In-Residence students working with the Hamilton Community Benefits Network, presented a report entitled '*Getting LRT on the Right Track – A Report on Findings and Recommendations for Hamilton's Light Rail Transit Project from a Climate Justice Lens*'. At the same meeting, a notice of motion was put forward by council members, as follows:

*That staff be directed to review the presentation respecting Applying a Climate Justice Lens to the Light Rail Transit and report back to the Light Rail Transit Sub-Committee respecting what recommendations the City is acting on and if there are additional recommendations for the Light Rail Transit Sub-Committee to consider.*

## **POLICY IMPLICATIONS AND LEGISLATED REQUIREMENTS**

Not applicable.

## **RELEVANT CONSULTATION**

Planning and Economic Development Department (LRT Project Office) and Metrolinx through LRT Project Office.

## **ANALYSIS AND RATIONALE FOR RECOMMENDATION**

The LRT Sub-Committee heard a presentation from CityLab Semester-In-Residence students and Hamilton Community Benefits Network regarding the LRT project and climate justice. Recommendations were presented regarding actions necessary to apply a climate justice lens to the LRT Project.

Currently, there are no formal policy or guidelines for assessing whether climate mitigation and adaptation actions uphold climate justice principles. However, the City has committed through Hamilton's Climate Action Strategy to consider climate justice. Office of Climate Change Initiatives Staff are currently finalizing a plan for the co-design of a Climate Justice Framework intended to guide municipal efforts to implement climate mitigation and adaptation actions set out in Hamilton's Climate Action Strategy. The Climate Justice Framework will support the participation of communities who are directly affected by climate change and social inequity at higher rates than those with more resources (such as racialized, low-income, 2SLGBTQQIA+, seniors, youth, and Indigenous Peoples) in these efforts, recognizing the lived experience of these historically marginalized audiences. The Framework will also guide the prioritization of climate actions that are informed by input from these community members and that help to address the climate impacts they experience.

### **Climate Justice**

As the City of Hamilton transitions to a healthy, vibrant, prosperous, zero-carbon future, it is responding to community calls to facilitate the empowerment of communities who have experienced barriers and/or exclusions from the policy development process. The call to action refers to climate justice – a framework for climate action framework that centres social justice and equity in our understanding of climate change, including its causes and impacts, as well as in climate mitigation and adaptation efforts.

Climate justice addresses not only the environmental aspects of the climate crisis but also the social and economic dimensions, striving for an equitable and inclusive approach in the face of this challenge. It underscores the need for a comprehensive, multi-sector response that acknowledges the historical and current impacts of the

climate crisis and that those who may have contributed the least to climate change are typically the most negatively impacted. Climate policy and the action that ensues are then designed to avoid exacerbating social inequities. Rather, a Climate Justice Framework guides outcomes that address equity challenges in benefiting and improving the lives of frontline communities.

### **Creating a Climate Justice Framework for Hamilton**

The plan for the co-design of a Climate Justice Framework is being finalized by Staff in the Office of Climate Change Initiatives. The proposal is to build the Framework on three equity dimensions of climate justice.

**Recognitional Equity:** Asks who should be included as a stakeholder in climate action decisions and whose needs should be prioritized, based on identification of groups or communities who are most vulnerable or historically ignored or underrepresented.

**Procedural Equity:** Considers processes used to make municipal decisions and who is involved in these processes. This type of equity ensures that the plans and actions within a municipality accurately reflect the needs and wants of the community.

**Distributive Equity:** Considers distribution of climate action benefits and burdens in society across different groups and communities. This dimension helps municipalities consider the groups who are receiving benefits of a climate action plan's actions and program activities, what is being distributed and how these decisions are made.

### **Applying A Climate Justice Framework to the LRT Project**

Applying these equity dimensions to the LRT project is an opportunity to realize climate justice by:

- Recognizing and prioritizing the needs of and opportunities for those communities and groups who are at risk of increased vulnerability or who have been historically ignored or underrepresented;
- Distributing climate action benefits and diminishing burdens across different equity-owed communities; and,
- Factoring in municipal decision-making processes and who is involved in these processes to ensure the project reflects the needs, aspirations and knowledge of impacted communities.

## **Recommendations from the ‘Getting LRT on the Right Track’ Report**

In their December 2023 presentation to the LRT Sub-Committee, CityLab Semester-In-Residence students presented recommendations put forward in their report entitled ‘*Getting LRT on the Right Track – A Report on Findings and Recommendations for Hamilton’s Light Rail Transit Project from a Climate Justice Lens*’. The recommendations are organized under four pillars:

- Housing;
- Connectivity and Usage;
- Accessibility; and,
- Climate Adaptation and Resilience.

## **Consideration of Recommendations Presented in the CityLab Report**

The report recommendations are included below with overviews of relevant City efforts to date provided where possible. The three equity dimensions that provide the foundation for the emerging Climate Justice Framework have been applied to the recommendations under the ‘**Climate Adaptation and Resilience**’ pillar to provide a preliminary illustration of how the Framework might inform municipal climate action.

### **Inclusionary Zoning**

A process is currently underway through the City’s Planning Division to explore the feasibility of inclusionary zoning as an affordable housing tool<sup>1</sup>. The provincial planning framework limits the application of inclusionary zoning to private market developments within provincially recognized ‘major transit station areas’. A market feasibility study must be undertaken to determine if and how inclusionary zoning is financially viable within each specific major transit station area location. Inclusionary zoning can be used to generate more affordable housing units, but these policies secure such units in market developments for fixed periods of time and there is no mandated requirement to provide deeply affordable, geared to income units. Instead, the requirement is that units be no more than 80% of the market rental rate. Further, the provincial inclusionary zoning framework does not mandate any requirements to ensure building design and performance is climate resilient. From a climate justice point of view, the provincial inclusionary zoning policy framework is not an ideal tool for ensuring that those most impacted by the climate crisis have access to safe, healthy, affordable, climate resilient housing within major transit station areas.

---

<sup>1</sup> See ‘Exploring Inclusionary Zoning as an Affordable Housing Tool’ - <https://engage.hamilton.ca/inclusionaryzoning>

## **Passive House Design**

The need to build climate resilient residential housing is a key action in the pathway to net zero carbon set out in Hamilton's Climate Action Strategy. Passive House design is one of several recognized building methods capable of achieving low/no carbon building performance and providing safe, healthy, climate resilient living spaces. CityHousing Hamilton has committed to building any new housing developments to Passive House standards and many other local not-for-profit affordable housing providers have made similar commitments to climate resilient design. CityHousing Hamilton projects include buildings within future LRT transit station areas, like the development underway at the Queenston Traffic Circle, and projects within proximity to an LRT station, like the recently redeveloped social housing on Reid Avenue in Roxborough Park. These efforts by CityHousing Hamilton serve as solid examples of climate justice in action, particularly where distributive justice is concerned. The City is also formalizing its commitment to climate resilient building through work underway to develop an Energy Performance/ Net Zero Standard for all new municipal facilities.

Currently, the City cannot mandate private sector developers to build to low/no carbon design and performance standards. However, the municipality is in the process of developing Green Building Standards and these standards can include incentivization of climate resilient building design<sup>2</sup>. Additionally, the City's Economic Development Division offers incentives to private sector developers through its Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Community Improvement Plan program. This program is currently under review, with public input being sought to aid in the City's efforts to further enhance the program's ability to support climate resilient private development.

## **Land Value Capture & Donating Land**

Access to higher order transit for *all users* is a critical goal for transitioning our city to a net zero carbon future. So that equity-deserving communities can participate in this climate action, and benefit from it, proximity to higher order transit is necessary to make it fair (climate and mobility justice). This requires ensuring there is a mix of housing, including deeply affordable units, along major transit lines like the LRT. There are municipal efforts underway to support not-for-profit housing directly along and near the LRT corridor. This includes the dedication of city-owned land within a major transit station area for new CityHousing Hamilton units (42 units being built at the Queenston Traffic Circle) and on-going assessment of the suitability of other municipally owned parcels for the same purpose. The City also continues to seek out suitable land parcels for purchase along or near the LRT corridor. Hamilton City Council has also requested

---

<sup>2</sup> See 'Green Building Standards' - <https://engage.hamilton.ca/green-building-standards>

that Metrolinx make any surplus public lands it has acquired for the LRT available for affordable housing projects in the future.

The City of Hamilton is also an active partner in the Transit Oriented Affordable Housing Lab, a collaborative effort facilitated through Social Innovation Canada that is ‘focused on identifying and co-developing financing solutions to preserve existing and create new affordable housing near transit corridors in the City of Hamilton’. The work of this group is predominantly focused on affordable housing opportunities along the LRT corridor and the effort embodies the equity dimensions of climate justice through its inclusive approach and dedication to deeply affordable, climate resilient residential units close to transit.

### **Affordable Housing & Tenant Support Policies with Non-Profit Partnerships**

Assessing the potential of these policies and partnerships is beyond the scope of the Office of Climate Change Initiatives but any policies that effectively bring more affordable units into the LRT corridor would contribute to climate justice as has already been described in previous sections.

### **Connectivity and Usage Recommendations**

#### **Utilize user journey mapping to identify pinch points in transit connectivity**

The City has policies in place and initiatives underway to build up connectivity, whether with transit or active transportation networks. There are now Complete Streets Guidelines in place, the City is accelerating implementation of the cycling infrastructure network, and HSR continues to engage community in exploring transit route improvements through the ‘(Re)Envision the HSR’ project.

These efforts will contribute over time to the enhancement of the user journey, whether on foot, by bike or by transit, to and from the LRT system. There are additional opportunities for the City to enhance these connections through dialogue and input from those who are fully dependent on these connections to ensure that these routes are not only connected but designed to mitigate and adapt to climate impacts (for example, planting trees along pedestrian connections to the corridor).

#### **Offer Cycle Hamilton a seat on the LRT Sub-Committee**

Applying a Climate Justice Framework requires ensuring that the voices of frontline communities are at the table or included in meaningful ways on issues that affect them. While this recommendation identifies the need for a specific organization to be at the table, broader consideration should be given to whether the current composition of the sub-committee effectively reflects the community from a climate justice point of view.

## **Accessibility Recommendations**

**Incorporate connective routes, nodes and stops along the LRT & Bus Rapid Transit corridors for accessible transportation services like DARTS & Taxis as part of the Taxi Scrip Program.**

Taking steps to accommodate the ability of those who are already depending on accessibility programs to be able to easily connect with the fully accessible LRT system, will be important for ensuring equitable access to the line. This will ensure mobility justice is realized.

## **Subsidize LRT fare prices for low-income individuals (like HSR Fare Assist)**

The LRT project is structured so that the City will set fares and be entitled to all fare box revenues. This enables the municipality to be able to consider 'Fare Assist' programs that are seamlessly integrated into the municipal public transit system, including the B-Line LRT. Such programs would support climate justice (and mobility justice) through enabling those who might not otherwise be able to afford the cost to use the system, to be able to do so.

## **Put equity analysis like Gender-based Analysis + (GBA+) at the forefront of accessibility planning**

Gender-based Analysis is another key factor to consider within the context of climate justice. For instance, on a global scale, women carry the heaviest burden where climate impacts are concerned and, in a more localized context, women are also more dependent on services like public transit. It is Staff's understanding that there is a dialogue has been initiated on this issue around the LRT Sub-Committee table. This conversation needs to continue as part of equity/climate justice considerations.

## **Climate Adaptation and Resilience Recommendations**

There are two recommendations under this pillar: (a) Rework transit design standards to emphasize considerations for community health, safety & resilience to climate change; and (b) Prioritize climate adaptable and accessible infrastructure. These recommendations straddle the realm of actions that are subject to the formal Memorandum of Understanding between the City and Metrolinx/Ministry of Transportation and actions that spill out beyond the transit infrastructure into the associated corridor and surrounding streetscapes and neighbourhoods where the City has jurisdiction. It should also be noted that Metrolinx continues to engage with community regarding a variety of measures, including some that will address climate adaptation and resilience, through its Community Benefits and Supports Program.

Specific issues have been raised via the recommendations under this pillar, that focus on the need to pay attention to climate justice as it relates to the everyday lived experiences of those most impacted by climate change (frontline community members) who must travel to and use the LRT system. There are opportunities moving forward for the City to continue to assess and adjust some project-related elements in the detailed design process in this respect, drawing from the Climate Justice Framework that is in development, and there is ample opportunity for the City to continue to consider these issues in adjacent areas moving outward from the LRT corridor.

While the Climate Justice Framework has yet to be fully developed, the LRT project is a useful testing-ground for determining how elements of this major infrastructure project can be actualized to build up resilience for equity-owed groups while at the same time, creating a healthier, climate resilient community for all Hamiltonians. Actions taken through this project and along connecting routes, could be guided by the Climate Justice Framework and lessons learned applied to other climate actions. A preliminary application of the three equity dimensions that are guiding the Climate Justice Framework is presented here to illustrate how this might look.

Climate adaptation and climate justice go hand in hand with the LRT project. As extreme weather increases in severity and duration, frontline communities will need protection from the impacts—impacts that will likely cause upheavals such as delays and cancellations in scheduling, and potential damage to the infrastructure itself. In prioritizing climate-adaptable and accessible infrastructure for the LRT, applying **recognitional equity** as a dimension of climate justice requires asking whose accessibility needs—from within frontline communities—should be centered and what those accessibility needs are. This dimension requires identifying who is not at the table (whether that table is the LRT Sub-Committee or any other related advisory bodies) helping to determine outcomes but who should be included based on the identification of communities and groups who are most vulnerable to climate impacts and who have been historically ignored or marginalized. Indigenous peoples, new immigrants, youth, elders, 2SLGBTQQIA+, and others may have unique knowledge, lived experience and identified needs that serve as key inputs for ensuring the climate adaptability of the planned infrastructure. Ideas to improve accessibility, safety and comfort for these audiences will bring universal benefits and may range from:

- o Increased weather protection (shade structures, cooling, heating, seating, and lighting);
- o Accessible passenger information and wayfinding (in multiple languages);
- o Accessible walkways and bikeway connections;
- o Parking for bicycles (bike cages) and shared micromobility services; and,
- o Drinking fountains and washrooms.

**SUBJECT: Applying a Climate Justice Lens to Light Rail Transit (PED24087) (City Wide) - Page 10 of 11**

---

The associated need for safe streets considerations, particularly for marginalized community members cannot be overstated. Safety on transit, around transit hubs and getting to and from transit hubs is a legitimate concern for many marginalized groups including racialized and Indigenous peoples. Strategies to create safer and more welcoming spaces should be top priority.

From a **procedural equity** dimension of climate justice, the process of how City decisions are made concerning the LRT's infrastructure climate adaptability and accessibility extends to the concern of who is involved in the decision-making; are they operating from a place where plans and actions accurately reflect the needs and wants of equity-owed community groups? This can only be answered by engaging with these often transit-dependent groups most likely to be impacted negatively in the event of extreme weather events. **Procedural equity** would involve meaningful communications and engagement with these frontline communities.

Finally, when applying **distributive equity** to the LRT project, consideration is given to the distribution of its benefits and burdens across different groups and communities. What is being distributed? Who is receiving the benefits of this project and its beneficial offshoots; who is being burdened or harmed by its activities? For example, attention is already being paid to ensure strategically placed, green infrastructure to support and protect the LRT infrastructure. Distributive equity extends outwards from there to include access to tree-lined walking and biking routes that connect to the LRT corridor, or the capacity to utilize the LRT to travel to quality parks and naturalized spaces within reach of the corridor. The LRT project could play a key role in connecting low-income, youth, newcomers, residents to green spaces (trails, waterfalls, etc), by designing not only routes that link to the LRT route but also having visuals, maps, and digital information at all LRT hubs.

Other important distributive equity questions include: who is being economically uplifted: are we looking into transportation-related new technology jobs/training opportunities for Indigenous peoples, youth and other equity-owed communities? Can LRT program activities prioritize Black-owned/Indigenous-owned businesses and entrepreneurs? Which frontline communities are being displaced or disrupted by this project? How will they be compensated? The Hamilton Community Benefits Network is actively exploring these elements of community benefits and should continue to do so by extending the scope of their reach to include even more equity-owed community voices.

Climate justice centres on the concerns and aspirations of diverse, historically marginalized groups. Coordinated, well communicated efforts must be made to ensure that these frontline communities have equitable access to participatory events and other avenues of engagement that shape the development of projects. We can ask ourselves "How are we increasing the scope of these voices and moving towards more comprehensive engagement that centres the concerns of historically marginalized

---

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.

groups?” This often means being creative in our approach, understanding that unique approaches will have to be tailored to the diverse needs of diverse communities. There is a need for engagement that is collaborative and co-designed and where discussions seek to learn from the climate action work that these groups are already leading, so it is reflective of the agency and expertise of these historically marginalized communities.

### **ALTERNATIVES FOR CONSIDERATION**

Council could choose not to continue to consider climate justice within the context of the Hamilton LRT Project. Staff does not recommend this approach given that a commitment exists within Hamilton’s Climate Action Strategy to consider climate justice in all climate action efforts.

### **APPENDICES AND SCHEDULES ATTACHED**

Not applicable.