



INFORMATION REPORT

TO:	Chair and Members Light Rail Transit Sub-Committee
COMMITTEE DATE:	February 20, 2025
SUBJECT/REPORT NO:	Hamilton Light Rail Transit (LRT) Project Update (PED25052) (City Wide)
WARD(S) AFFECTED:	City Wide
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SIGNATURE:	

COUNCIL DIRECTION

Not applicable.

INFORMATION

The City, Metrolinx and the Ministry of Transportation ratified the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for the Hamilton Light Rail Transit (LRT) Project in September 2021. The general project update was previously provided in the Hamilton Light Rail Transit (LRT) Project Update (PED22117) received by the LRT Sub-Committee on May 16, 2022. Subsequently, the LRT Project Office has provided updates on specific items through various reports and presentations to the LRT Sub-Committee. This report aims to provide a general project update at a high level, covering key project activities that City staff have been engaged in since the execution of the MOU to the present.

Enabling Works

Enabling works are discrete and essential underground projects, on or adjacent to the LRT corridor which are being delivered in advance of major construction to reduce complexities. Projects are funded by Metrolinx and delivered by Metrolinx or the City or respective Third Party Utility on behalf of Metrolinx. These works have been delivered in conjunction with needed capital improvements on City infrastructure to facilitate a more cost-effective delivery for both the City and Metrolinx and reduce construction disruption in the community.

The LRT Project Office has delivered or commenced construction of watermain enabling works for Metrolinx, inclusive of the following coordinated works for Public Works:

- Sherman Avenue
 - o Resurfacing, sidewalk repairs and cycling facilities
 - o Completed in August 2024
- Wentworth Street
 - o Resurfacing and Two-Way Conversion
 - o Active construction, planned completion in Q2 2025
- Queenston and Nash
 - o Large valve replacements and lowering of 1200mm watermain across Queenston under future guideway (Construction Administration)
 - o Construction is on hold, planned completion in Q4 2025
- Main and Rosewood
 - o Narrower, safer, greener and more balanced roadway corridor which prioritizes the pedestrian and cyclist experience
 - o Construction to commence in Q2 2025, planned completion in Q4 2026
- Main and Ottawa
 - o No Coordinated works
 - o Construction to commence in Q2 2025, planned completion in Q4 2026

Metrolinx funds all the enabling projects. The City is contributing to the cost of coordinated works, as highlighted above. In addition to the City's initiated enabling projects, Metrolinx is currently working with other Third Party Utilities, such as Alectra, Bell Canada and Enbridge, to complete enabling works before the major construction begins along the LRT corridor. This includes projects by Alectra (Vineland, Maple Ave, Dunsmuir and manhole investigations), Bell Canada (Main and Ottawa Streets) and Enbridge (Rosewood and Queenston Road).

Project Design

The LRT design currently available to the public is from the 2017 Environmental Project Report (EPR) addendum. The design evolved in the first iteration of the project and significant modifications were communicated to the Council through various reports.

While the project was paused, the City developed new standards and guidelines such as the Vision Zero Strategy, Complete Street Design Guidelines, Climate Change Action Strategy, City-wide Transportation Master Plan, Main Street Two-Way Conversion and the Truck Route Master Plan.

In November 2023, Metrolinx announced a major design realignment that:

- eliminated the LRT-only bridge across Highway 403;
- shifted the route to run along Dundurn and Main; and
- shifted access to the Operations and Maintenance Storage Facility (OMSF) from Longwood Road to Frid Street.

City staff have been working with Metrolinx to update the 2017 design concept, inclusive of, the above as well as current City approved initiatives and standards. As per the MOU, Metrolinx remains the lead on this task and will remain the ultimate decision-maker on design modifications, including those resulting from the City's new project requirements. City staff have identified design changes/themes under consideration in the following:

- Hamilton Light Rail Transit (LRT) Design Update (PED22118) received by the LRT Sub-Committee on May 16, 2022;
- Hamilton Light Rail Transit (LRT) Design Update (PED22118(a)) received by the LRT Sub-Committee on July 18, 2022; and
- Hamilton Light Rail Transit (LRT) Governance Frameworks and Design Update (PED23139) received by the LRT Sub-Committee on June 2, 2023.

Metrolinx expects to release a document in the coming months which provides for a more current understanding of the design concept for the corridor. The design concept would be considered as a reference design for the project's procurement process and refinements are expected when Metrolinx retains its designers and contractors (Alliance Partner) to deliver the project. The document does not reflect enhancements or additional works that the City may propose funding for inclusion in the project.

Project Procurement

Metrolinx is the project owner and is responsible for project delivery. Metrolinx is implementing a delivery strategy for major construction works for the LRT Project, which consists of two main packages (packaging of elements are subject to change):

Package 1 - Civil Works and Utilities

- Mainly Third-Party assets designed, constructed, commissioned, and handed over to stakeholders; and,
- Private and Public Utilities, Civil Structures (bridges and grade separations), Road and Urban Realm.

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Package 2 - Stops, Rail, Systems (SRS)

- Guideway, rail, systems, operations and maintenance storage facility (OMSF), and integration of Light Rail Vehicles (LRVs) delivered for Revenue Service; and,
- Potential to include light rail vehicles and operations and maintenance period.

Metrolinx initiated the Request for Qualification for Package 1 on November 6, 2024 and is recommending an Alliance Contracting delivery (a form of “Collaborative Contracting”) that prioritizes high levels of interface with municipalities and third-party utilities making it well-suited for the scope of Package 1.

The Alliance contracting model includes four phases:

- Request for Qualification (RFQ)
- Request for Proposal (RFP)
- Development Phase
- Implementation Phase

The release of the RFQ for the Hamilton LRT Project was an important milestone and the first step of the procurement process, inviting proponents to submit a statement of qualifications for Package 1. The shortlisted qualified proponents will then be invited to submit proposals for the delivery of the project in the RFP process, which is anticipated for Spring 2025. Through the RFP process, one shortlisted preferred partner will enter the Development Phase and be invited to submit the project proposal. Upon acceptance of the project proposal by Metrolinx, the Implementation Phase will be initiated, and major construction will commence. The schedule for the Implementation Phase will be determined through the Development Phase.

A City representative will be part of the evaluation committee with Metrolinx staff for the RFQ and RFP for Package 1 procurement. The contracting model and timing for Package 2 - Stops, Rail, Systems (SRS) are not currently known.

LRT Operations Model

The MOU establishes that the City will be responsible for operations and non-lifecycle maintenance costs of the LRT system. The Province has indicated they are open to input from the City regarding the role the City would like to play in the operations of the LRT system. As the project owner, the final decision will remain with Metrolinx.

In 2023, City staff established a working group to assess the City’s role in the operations of the LRT Project. The working group undertook an extensive review, which was supported by the City’s internal governance framework established for the LRT Project. This work was completed in the following three stages:

- Stage 1: Present operational models and assessment criteria for how staff will assess models.
- Stage 2: Present preliminary analysis of operational models.
- Stage 3: Present final analysis as well as recommended operational model.

Stage 1 was presented to the LRT Sub-Committee on July 26, 2023, through the Report PED23166, which included the overview of the following four operations models under consideration:

- Model 1: Third party performs all ‘Operational Activities’.
- Model 2: City performs ‘Passenger Interface Provider Activities’.
- Model 3: City performs ‘LRT Vehicle Operations and Passenger Interface Provider Activities’.
- Model 4: City performs all ‘Operational Activities’.

Stage 2 was presented to the LRT Sub-Committee on September 25, 2023, through Report PED23166(a), outlining a preliminary assessment of LRT operational models using the selected criteria. This preliminary assessment included ranking and weighting each criterion, namely: Customer Experience (35%), Risk and Liabilities (30%), Cost to the City (25%), and Interface between Parties (10%).

Stage 3 was presented to the LRT Sub-Committee on January 29, 2024, through the Report PED23166(b), providing assessment results and a recommendation for the City’s preferred operational model. A decision was deferred to the General Issue Committee (GIC). At the April 17, 2024 GIC meeting, members received the staff recommendation and approved the following:

- (a) That the City endorse Operations Model 2 (Municipality performs passenger interface activities) to be selected as the City’s preferred LRT operations model;
- (b) That within the first 5 years, staff begin the process of preparing the City to transition to Operations Model 4, where the Municipality assumes all aspects of operational activities from the third party at the 10-year mark; and
- (c) That staff seek approval from Council, at the appropriate time, to enter negotiations with Metrolinx and the Province of Ontario, to transition fully the operations of LRT to the City of Hamilton.

The above recommendation has been sent to Metrolinx for their consideration. The City is currently waiting for Metrolinx's final decision. Regarding the City’s role in maintenance, staff is seeking clarity from Metrolinx on which tasks they would be open for the City to take on. Upon receiving that feedback, staff will complete the assessment and make a recommendation to Council.

City Standards and Guidelines

Per Article 8 of the MOU, Metrolinx is responsible for ensuring that New City Infrastructure will be:

- Built to the standards and guidelines for the design, construction, rehabilitation and protection of such New City Infrastructure in force in Hamilton on the date which is three months prior to the request for proposal issuance date and which are available upon request to engineers and architects licensed in Ontario;
- Built to replace existing City infrastructure and assets on a “like for like” basis with respect to function, size, capacity and location, unless otherwise provided in the Benchmark PSOS for a particular asset; and
- Built in compliance with the City’s laws and those federal and provincial laws applicable to and enforceable against the City.

With regards to the City’s standards and guidelines, the cutoff date set out in section 8.1(ii) of the MOU is noteworthy (emphasis added):

*“[New City Infrastructure will be] ... built to the standards and guidelines for the design, construction, rehabilitation and protection, as the case may be, of such New City Infrastructure **in force in Hamilton on the date which is three months prior to the request for proposal issuance date** and which are available upon request to engineers and architects licensed to practice in the Province of Ontario (the Basic Standard).”*

Metrolinx is currently in the Request for Qualification process and the expectation is that this process will align with the Request for Proposal, which is anticipated to be issued in Spring 2025.

Starting in 2022, City standards, criteria and guidelines were compiled by the LRT Project Office, staff dedicated to project and members of the City Extended Resource Team staff who support the project. Staff have taken the opportunity to streamline, address gaps, supplement and expedite revisions such that a robust library of over 80 standards, criteria and guidelines will be made in advance of the three month submission requirement prior to RFP. The City is coordinating these timelines with Metrolinx.

Property Acquisitions

The existing municipal right-of-way is insufficient for the construction of all utility relocations, public realm components, LRT stops, track and other construction requirements. As owner of the project, Metrolinx’s real estate and legal teams are responsible for the acquisition of the requisite lands. Metrolinx continues to negotiate

with property owners on a “willing seller/willing buyer” basis and relies on the expropriation process as a backstop option due to time sensitivities.

The project requires approximately 102 full property and 240 partial property purchases. To date, 79 of 102 full properties have been acquired for the project and acquisition activities remain ongoing for both partial and full property needs. All properties to date have been purchased on a willing seller/willing buyer basis. Of the 79 full properties acquired to date, 49 demolitions have been completed on the LRT corridor with additional demolitions planned for 2025.

The expropriation process began in February 2024. Metrolinx is in the process of registering the plan of Expropriation for 15 more full buyouts. Registration of the Expropriation Plans is intended to be complete by February 2025.

The City has negotiated increased property takes with Metrolinx which support the wider pedestrian zones identified in the Complete Street guidelines as part of 122 partial property takes currently in the acquisition process.

In addition to private lands, the City and Metrolinx are currently negotiating the transfer and compensation for some lands from 14 adjacent municipal properties such as parking lots and parks to the municipal right-of-way.

Community Engagement and Communications

The LRT Project Office presented Hamilton Light Rail Transit Project Communications and Engagement Update (PED24150) to the LRT Sub-Committee on September 20, 2024. Report PED24150 identified the roles and responsibilities between the City and Metrolinx as per the established Communication Protocol. The following are the types of engagement activities that the City and Metrolinx continue to utilize for the project.

- Elected official briefings;
- Townhalls and open houses (virtual and in-person);
- BIA walking tours;
- Local partnerships;
- Printed materials, mailers, construction/demolition notices;
- Stakeholder meetings (e.g., BIAs, Hamilton Community Benefit Network (HCBN), Hamilton Chamber of Commerce, etc.);
- Metrolinx ‘Transit in Your Community’ school presentations;
- Community events and pop ups;
 - Festivals (e.g., Open Streets, Supercrawl);
 - Library pop-ups;
 - Park pop-ups; and,
 - Bike Day and City of Hamilton cycling events (year-round);

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- Metrolinx LRT Community Office;
- Social media and email newsletter; and
- Corridor/neighbourhood canvasses.

Metrolinx and City LRT communications and engagement teams meet regularly to discuss the above engagement and pop-up opportunities. Report PED24150 also provided the yearly engagement activities. For example, in 2023-2024, Metrolinx held 44 “Transit in Your Community” sessions and 50 events comprising of LRT pop-ups, events, and festivals.

Metrolinx has also opened a Community Office in June 2024, at the Royal Connaught building, located at 116 King Street East. The Community Office is another way to engage the community in addition to events and canvasses, and is being used for hosting pop-ups, small events, and stakeholder meetings as the project progresses.

Affordable Housing and Community Benefits

The MOU acknowledges the critical importance of affordable housing and community benefits per the following:

The Province continues to recognize the critical importance of building affordable housing near transit stations and maximizing high quality jobs and benefits for communities adjacent to or affected by the Project.

The Province has indicated that they will be initiating working group meetings to begin exploring approaches for meeting the above objective. Despite repeated attempts by City staff to expedite the scheduling of the meetings, none have been scheduled to date.

In addition, at its meeting of April 6, 2022, Council directed through a motion, as follows:

That staff, in collaboration with the federal and provincial Governments and Metrolinx, be directed to establish a strategic land disposition and or acquisition plan along the Hamilton LRT corridor for the purpose of planning to deliver future municipal services including, but not limited to, parks, as well as non-profit affordable housing and report back to the General Issues Committee.

Staff have compiled preliminary options for strategic land acquisition on the LRT corridor for municipal uses, including affordable housing and community services and amenities.

On May 22, 2024, the Mayor sent correspondence requesting the establishment of the working group to the Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities Infrastructure

Canada and the Minister of Transportation, Ontario. City staff will continue to follow up with the parties until such time that meetings have been scheduled.

Agreements

The MOU mentions of the following series of agreements and protocols that are to be incorporated into the MOU as “schedules”.

Schedule A Train Operator Services Agreement
Schedule B Municipal Funding Agreement (also known as Payment for Services Agreement)
Schedule C Commissioning and Acceptance Protocol
Schedule D Fare and Non-Fare Revenue Matters
Schedule E Staffing Agreement
Schedule F Municipal Infrastructure Agreement
Schedule G Real Estate Protocol
Schedule H Permits, Licenses and Approvals
Schedule I Communications Protocol
Schedule J Dispute Resolution Protocol
Schedule K Governance Protocol

In addition, the City and Metrolinx have worked on the Preparatory Activities Agreement for the City to lead on enabling projects. A brief overview of each agreement is provided in Appendix A: Agreements Update.

LRT Enhancements

The MOU requires Metrolinx to replace City infrastructure impacted by the LRT Project on a “like for like” basis unless Metrolinx has previously agreed otherwise or as required by the City’s standards and guidelines. The MOU allows the City to request enhancement of City infrastructure as part of LRT construction, provided that the City is funding the incremental cost beyond Metrolinx’s obligations per the MOU. Staff is currently working with Metrolinx and is in the process of identifying the list of potential enhancements.

The City has proactively included the following two budget items in the 2023 Tax and Rate supported Capital Budget, which are anticipated to be used for the City’s enhancements items as part of the LRT Project.

Public Realm Improvements – LRT (Surface Enhancements)

This budget was sourced from Development Charges (50%) and Tax Supported Capital Budget (50%) and was established to fund the incremental costs of delivering additional municipal surface works and/or enhancements in the LRT corridor which are in addition

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to the base scope agreed upon by both parties. The inclusion of speciality surface treatments would be a representative example.

Budget allocations for the Public Realm Improvements are as follows:

2023	2024	2025	2026	Total
\$0	\$3,330,000	\$3,330,000	\$3,330,000	\$9,990,000

City Initiated Subsurface Priorities Coordinated or Integrated with LRT

This budget was sourced from Development Charges (50%) and Rate Supported Capital Budget (50%) and was established to fund the incremental costs of delivering additional municipal subsurface works and/or enhancements in the LRT corridor which are in addition to the base scope agreed upon by both parties. The inclusion of subsurface works adjacent to the corridor would be a representative example.

Budget allocations for the City Initiated Subsurface Priorities are as follows:

2023	2024	2025	2026	Total
\$1,020,000	\$3,010,000	\$3,010,000	\$3,010,000	\$10,050,000

It is expected that once the design has evolved further, that a list of potential enhancements, prioritized based on an assessment criterion, will be identified by staff for Council’s consideration. Upon confirmation by Council, the City would then enter into an agreement with Metrolinx to commit the funds to the LRT Project budget. Staff will submit an Information Report providing greater detail on the process and proposed criterion and seek Council direction in Q2 2025.

Streamlining City Processes

The Alliance delivery model chosen by Metrolinx for the LRT Project, coupled with the size and complexity of the corridor, has created unique challenges for staff in their roles as Project Partner, Owner, Operator of the right-of-way and Permitting Authority.

To ensure an efficient project delivery, while continuing to protect City interests, dedicated City LRT staff have consulted with other staff to identify opportunities to streamline, adapt, revise or create efficiencies in existing processes. Staff have also reviewed LRT projects in the GTA to leverage the knowledge and experience of municipal staff in those areas.

Permit Process

The LRT Project Office, in consultation with the City’s Corridor Management group are establishing a responsive permitting process, inclusive of a unique dashboard which

facilitates an efficient workflow and provides status updates for the permitting associated with major construction in the LRT Project. The process is administered by the LRT Project Office and is currently being applied to smaller works in the corridor in order to identify possible improvements or refinements prior to full implementation. The permit process will be applied to works delivered by Metrolinx, their Alliance Partner and Third Party Utilities.

Furthermore, the LRT Project Office has been supporting, by means of conducting trainings and workshops for those City staff who are required to navigate Metrolinx' permitting requirements, either obtaining a Metrolinx Corridor Development Permit (CDP) for City works or processing external permit inquiries which would have interactions with Metrolinx permits.

Submittal Process

Prior to permitting, the City will be receiving submissions from Metrolinx's Alliance Partner and Third Party Utilities at multiple design milestones for review, comment, and approvals as appropriate.

Since LRT works touch upon multiple service areas in the City, a City Extended Resources Team (CERT), comprised of over 60 staff, was formed to help support and provide supplemental subject matter expertise to dedicated City LRT staff upon request.

To facilitate an efficient and coordinated review and approval process, the LRT Project Office and City IT staff developed a special module (LRT Comments Management Application) that will assist in data sharing and the consolidation of comments and approvals.

The module is being applied to smaller works in the corridor in order to identify possible improvements or refinements prior to full implementation.

Construction Closure Process

Construction of the project will precipitate full and partial closures of sidewalks, cycling facilities and vehicular lanes of various durations. This will impact local businesses, residents, pedestrians, transit users, cyclists, drivers and goods movement through and crossing the corridor.

The process identifies the roles and responsibilities of Metrolinx, their Alliance Partner and City staff and details the requisite timeframes. Communication touch points, consultation with Emergency Services, coordination with HSR and City Capital projects is identified. As part of the project delivery, the Alliance Partner is required to develop

and maintain a webpage which identifies active construction, closures and detours. The specifics of the webpage will be determined prior to major construction.

LRT Streetscape Design Coordination Strategy (for Private Development)

Staff have been coordinating the development applications adjacent to the LRT corridor with Metrolinx and its designers and contractors. Staff is currently working on developing this process which aims to develop an LRT Streetscape design strategy that will apply to development proposals for sites adjacent to the LRT Corridor and provide direction to developers and staff on establishing a compatible streetscape interface between the new development and the adjacent ROW. This process will guide developers in building an interim streetscape for development frontage adjacent to the LRT corridor while protecting the ultimate streetscape interests that will be built as part of the LRT Project. Upon finalization of this process and receiving appropriate internal approvals, the process will become a requirement for all development applications adjacent to the LRT corridor.

Council Direction

Staff have sought Council direction for various aspects of the LRT Project, involving LRT Governance Framework, affordable housing, community benefits, small business support, social procurements, climate justice lens, and the Major Transit Station Area. More specifically:

Change Tracking Framework

The LRT Sub-Committee directed staff at the September 20, 2024 LRT Sub-Committee meeting to develop the terms of reference, presented in report PED24207 at the LRT Sub-Committee on November 15, 2024, and are currently advancing a framework with indicators that will be used to track changes through the entire pre-construction, construction and post-construction/operations stages of LRT. The framework will assist with tracking changes in economic, environmental, and social conditions in the LRT corridor which will ultimately serve a number of important purposes including but not limited to allowing City service areas to ensure that the benefits of LRT for Hamilton are maximized and that staff, Metrolinx, residents and other stakeholders can be kept informed of changes.

Climate Justice Lens

In December 2023, the LRT Sub-Committee directed staff to review the information presented by CityLab Semester in Residence students regarding ‘Applying a Climate Justice Lens to the Light Rail Transit.’ and directed staff to report back respecting what recommendations the City is acting on and if there are additional recommendations for the LRT Sub-Committee to consider. At the May 23, 2024 LRT Sub-Committee, a

recommendation was approved directing ‘That staff report back the process to enable recruitment of additional non-voting community advisors to the Light Rail Transit Sub-Committee table to ensure that the Sub-Committee’s composition reflects the community from a climate justice point of view.’ Staff have been working on this recommendation, and the first report (PED24087(a)) was presented to the LRT Sub-Committee on November 15, 2024. Staff were subsequently directed to explore various governance models for including additional community voices and will bring a follow-up report to the LRT Sub-Committee in April 2025.

Major Transit Station Areas

The Provincial Planning Statement (2024) has established minimum density targets for Major Transit Station Areas (MTSAs). In June 2022, Council approved a Municipal Comprehensive Review (MCR) for the City, which, among other changes, added a new policy framework for Major Transit Station Areas (MTSAs) to the Urban Hamilton Official Plan. The City is currently planning for MTSAs in the lower City, including 17 LRT stops and 3 GO rail stations. The first report (PED23105) ‘Draft Major Transit Station Areas’ was presented to the Planning Committee on September 19, 2023. Staff is working to finalize the MTSA Report and Official Plan Amendment and aiming to present to the Planning Committee later in 2025. The Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing is the final approval authority of the MTSA Official Plan Amendment.

Small Business Grant and Support Programs

At the May 23, 2024 LRT Sub-Committee, Council directed staff to research and explore potential small business grant and support programs in consultation with key stakeholders and to perform this scan on an annual basis. Staff presented the findings at the November 15, 2024 LRT Sub-Committee in a report, 'Information on Potential Grant and Support programs related to Light Rail Transit Construction (PED24182)'. Staff will repeat this scan again in Q4 2025 and will report if there are any changes to the report presented at the November LRT Sub-Committee.

At the October 26, 2023 Open for Business Sub-Committee, Council directed staff to report back on the plan for working with the small business community along the LRT corridor and terminal points leading up to and during the construction. Staff responded to this at the April 8 2024 Open for Business Sub-Committee through report Light Rail Transit Corridor Business Update (PED24074).

Next Steps (12 Month Look Ahead)

Over the next 12 months, staff will engage in the following activities:

- Lead the design and construction of City works;
- Develop schedules, protocols and agreements of the MOU;

- Investigate enhancements and additional City works for inclusion in LRT Project;
- Review, approve, coordinate and issue permits for Third Party Utility works in the corridor;
- Work with the Province on affordable housing and community benefits programs;
- Address Council and Committee directions; and
- Support Metrolinx in:
 - advancing the surface and subsurface LRT designs
 - evaluating the procurement candidates
 - property acquisition process
 - community and stakeholder engagement.

APPENDICES AND SCHEDULES ATTACHED

Appendix “A” to Report PED25052 – Agreements Update