

From: Viv Saunders

Sent: April 5, 2025 8:52 AM

To: clerk@hamilton.ca

Cc: Horwath, Andrea <Andrea.Horwath@hamilton.ca>; Wilson, Maureen <Maureen.Wilson@hamilton.ca>; Kroetsch, Cameron <Cameron.Kroetsch@hamilton.ca>; Nann, Nrinder <Nrinder.Nann@hamilton.ca>; Hwang, Tammy <Tammy.Hwang@hamilton.ca>; Francis, Matt <Matt.Francis@hamilton.ca>; Jackson, Tom <Tom.Jackson@hamilton.ca>; Pauls, Esther <Esther.Pauls@hamilton.ca>; Clark, Brad <Brad.Clark@hamilton.ca>; Beattie, Jeff <Jeff.Beattie@hamilton.ca>; Tadeson, Mark <Mark.Tadeson@hamilton.ca>; Cassar, Craig <Craig.Cassar@hamilton.ca>; Wilson, Alex <Alex.Wilson@hamilton.ca>; McMeekin, Ted <Ted.McMeekin@hamilton.ca>

Subject: Active Transportation - Public Bike Mobility - April 9 GIC

External Email: Use caution with links and attachments

Dear Honourable Mayor and Councillors

In principle, I support access to shared bikes as a form of public transportation & a municipal service.

After reading the very well written Staff Report & learning that the city already owns all the assets (including the maintenance vehicles), I'm left wondering why we have a Public/Private partnership agreement. Hence, I would ask that you consider the most efficient, responsible, accountable, transparent & sustainable method to provide and grow this beneficial service during your deliberations.

The following questions are a short list of some decisions that have been made outside the control or oversight of Council but do have a significant impact on the future operating costs / property tax levies:

1. Are you aware that just this past December 2024, the 26 employees within the non-profit private partnership, unionized & future operating costs (salaries & benefits) are now part of a collective agreement?

2. Are you aware that 20% discounts are provided to university professors, faculty & staff (above average wage earners) ; whereas comparable municipalities provide 10%?

3. Are you aware that 87% discounts are provided to ~ 30,000 university undergrad students; whereas comparable municipalities provide 10%?

4. Are you aware that we are the only city to provide free rides to anyone who simply self-declares they do not have the financial capacity to pay for the service?

1. Are you aware that just this past December 2024, the 26 employees within the non-profit private partnership, unionized & future operating costs (salaries & benefits) are now part of a collective agreement?

I read recently that unionizing increases operating costs by ~ 20%. Since the city already owns the assets, and the employees have now unionized, I'm wondering if a Staff Report should come back to Council (the public) on bringing this municipal service 'in-house'? I would think there would be some overlap in work (ex. HR, IT) that could be absorbed within our existing CoH staff complements. I would think there would also be a more transparent process going forward instead of the opaque process presently. Sometimes cheaper isn't always the best if we're serious about building out bike share as a form of public transportation.

2. Are you aware that 20% discounts are provided to university professors, faculty & staff (above average wage earners) ; whereas comparable municipalities provide 10%?

I view bikeshare as a form of public transportation. Therefore, I believe comparing some operational decisions to those policies Council has in place for bus services is warranted. Is providing Mac faculty 20% *taxpayer-funded* discounts on their HSR passes an operational decision you would support.

3. Are you aware that 87% discounts are provided to ~ 30,000 university undergrad students; whereas comparable municipalities provide 10%?

Not only do we provide extremely generous discounts to 30,000 students v. other municipalities, the present plan also provides double & triple the daily time limits versus other cities. Increased limits ties up the bikes for a longer period of time plus increases the need to purchase more bikes at \$62/month operating costs per bike. Our student plan is 90 minutes per day. Others are 30 or 45 mins per day.

I do note that this 87% discount is in keeping with our HSR U-Pass discount however I cannot see this new additional revenue stream or membership base within the details of the Staff Report. $30,000 \times \$24.50 = \$735,000$ whereas the increase in 2023/2024 user fees was **\$118,000**. Did a large majority of students opt-out?

4. Are you aware that we are the only city to provide free rides to anyone who simply self-declares they do not have the financial capacity to pay for the service?

I could only find one other city in Canada with a subsidized bike share program. Toronto provides \$5 annual memberships to RGI tenants in their City Housing buildings as well as 20% discounts for annual memberships to market-based tenants in their City Housing buildings. They also did a pilot in 2024 that provided 100 free passes (inclusive of their e-bikes) to ODSP recipients.

Hamilton, on the other hand, has a Pedal Pass which provides free* rides to anyone who "self identifies they are in need" on the application form. There is no proof required unlike our other city-wide subsidized programs and presently there is a Wait List.

As per the Staff Report, 426 passes were handed out in 2024 (126 more than in 2023) and on average each pass generated about 10 trips. 10 free public transportation trips per person is a significant deviation compared to our Fare Assist HSR bus program and with increased funding projections, this area might also warrant a deeper dive.

**\$15 annual membership comes with 3 hours per day of usage and a \$25 ride credit*

For clarity, not disparaging the provider. If we're serious about bike share as a form of public transportation, we need to consider bringing it in-house to ensure it grows in alignment with other services, forms part of our annual budget & multi-year planning and most importantly is an equitable, transparent, responsible & sustainable program. Right now we have a cap-in-hand taxpayer funded process which is a disservice to everyone who wants to use & grow a sustainable bike-share program.

Having read recently that bike share rides replace ~ 30% of previous bus trips and that the program is largely used for that first km and last km trip, should Council decide to bring this municipal service in-house, perhaps the best area to have carnage over bike share is our HSR department. Most municipality bike share programs are 100% privately funded & operated however in Toronto, bike share falls under their Toronto Parking Authority board. They have 10x the number of bikes with an approximate net cost of \$14M annually (after parking surplus & user fee revenues) I believe. Not sure it's feasible, but perhaps Presto cards can be programmed for the bike share user fees & other levels of government funding can be tapped into?

Lastly, please also consider that bike share is a special municipal service provided to a very small proportion of Hamilton (# of wards, kms coverage and only ~ 27% of total population). Operating and/or capital costs of a special service can be area-rated & is an option that warrants consideration as an equitable & sustainable funding source.

With respect,

Viv

P.S. It's not clear where the 100 new e-bikes are reflected in these reports and presentation however details might be reflected in the confidential appendix.

The reports indicated the fleet is growing from 900 to 1000 shared bikes and that the 100 new bikes form part of the additional operating cost request.

Council may recall that the recent \$750,000 funding for the e-bikes was for the bikes, charging and storage infrastructure as well as 3 years of operating costs.

Is the fleet going to be 1000 incl e-bikes or 1,100 incl e-bikes?

Are the City Contribution E-bike revenues reflected in the 2025 projected Operations? (which is only showing a \$5K bump)

E-bikes (which aren't permitted within Confederation Park / Ontario Waterfront Bike Trail), have a per minute user fee from the first minute in other municipalities.

Are we following suit? And if so, is that increase in User Fees reflected in the Projected Operations?