

HSR Next: Moving Hamilton Forward

Communications Strategy

The overarching goal of the communications strategy is to ensure timely, proactive and effective communication that retains and increases transit ridership, minimizes disruptions to existing customers, delivers an excellent customer experience, and provides a smooth transition for all. In addition, public engagement activities will be undertaken to help inform future related projects such as wayfinding and public art installations.

The HSR Next communications strategy establishes how the Transit Division will connect with multiple audiences as the City of Hamilton implements and promotes its redesigned transit network. The strategy:

- Outlines detailed actions that use multiple channels and tactics to target various audience segments through timely updates;
- Embeds Inclusivity, Diversity, Equity and Accessibility (IDEA) and targets key audience segments including youth, seniors, newcomers, persons with disabilities, new customers, businesses, and residents.

Communications Strategy - Overview

The communications strategy is an internal resource created for staff and provides a framework to ensure current customers, new customers, residents and other important parties are appropriately informed, involved and supported as the Transit Division implements and promotes its new transit network.

Implementing HSR Next will have many impacts and a robust communications strategy will address both the challenges and opportunities:

Community-Wide Impact

- HSR Next will fundamentally change the way transit users travel in Hamilton and will also have an impact on traffic patterns.
- There will be changes to existing routes and to neighbourhoods as service expands to new areas.
- HSR Next advances Council priorities by connecting people to affordable housing, jobs, social service supports, and neighbourhoods, growing key economic sectors, responding to climate change, modernizing City systems and making sure people can safely and efficiently move around by foot, bike and transit.

Customer Impact

- HSR Next will have a direct impact on its existing customer base. Daily travel patterns are engrained, and many customers know their schedule to best align with when they want to travel.

- The HSR Next network changes routes, bus stops, schedules and travel patterns. Every aspect of the customer journey will be impacted over time.
- The large-scale changes over a seven-year period will be disruptive and confusing to customers.
- Major infrastructure projects like the two-way conversion of Main Street and LRT construction will require on-going detours due to road closures that disrupt bus routes. Customers will have to navigate an increased number of detours. Timely information through website updates and real-time alerts available through third-party trip planning applications will be critical.

Attracting New Customers to Transit

- With a total transformation to the transit network comes great opportunity to attract new customers to a system that is fast, frequent, and reliable.
- Attracting new customers requires additional activities to support more advertising, direct communication tactics such as direct mail, outreach, and ridership development programs.
- Building on the current Try Transit campaigns, targeted communications will be developed for communities receiving service enhancements a minimum of four months in advance.

Meeting the Unique Needs of Each Audience

- All customers have service information and wayfinding needs, and new customers need orientation, education and support to take transit such as learning the routes, how to pay a fare, trip-planning tools, accessibility features and travel tips, both in-person and through print or digital channels. Examples of tactics include signage at stops, videos, new digital tools, education events and outreach, and potentially ambassadors at major stops and hubs to provide in-person support.
- There are many diverse audiences and customer segments with different information needs, and some segments, particularly those from under-represented groups, are more challenging to reach with traditional media and tools, highlighting the need for more inclusive and equitable strategies that include non-traditional tools.
- Providing key information in a welcoming, accessible and safe space including hubs, stops and onboard buses is paramount for the customer experience. Information provided will need to be practical and timely. Meaningful visuals and tools will be developed and information will be updated annually including maps and ride guides while ensuring all materials follow accessible guidelines, and are inclusive, clear and consistent.

Measuring and Celebrating Success

- The Transit Division has a customer panel and runs ongoing customer surveys to track customer sentiment, identify issues for improvement, and assess pilot projects. These customer surveys will be critical during implementation to make

needed adjustments, track the overall success of the communications strategy and inform decision making.

- There will be many milestones to celebrate as new transit routes and hubs are launched. These are important community and public spaces.

A fulsome communications strategy document has been created by the Customer Experience and Innovation section within the Transit Division, and in consultation with Corporate Communications. The strategy will guide the work of responsible staff and will inform the following key audiences:

- City Council
- Committees and related subcommittees of Council
- City staff, with particular emphasis on divisional staff
- Transit customers, both current and potential
- Major institutions (educational, health care)
- Community partners such as major employers, BIA's

Staff will use a variety of communications tactics to provide information to the key audiences, including:

- Dedicated HSR Next: Moving Hamilton Forward project webpage, with updates published no less than two times per year
- City and HSR social media accounts
- Paid ads on board buses, print digital and broadcast
- Bus News targeted customer newsletter
- Direct mail campaigns to businesses and residents
- Council Reports, Communication Updates
- Public education and outreach activities
- Signage at major stops
- Notifications and publication of detour notices using real-time alerts posted to the City's Open Data program and available through third-party trip planning applications.

A detailed internal guideline has been created for staff to support the communications strategy for HSR Next.

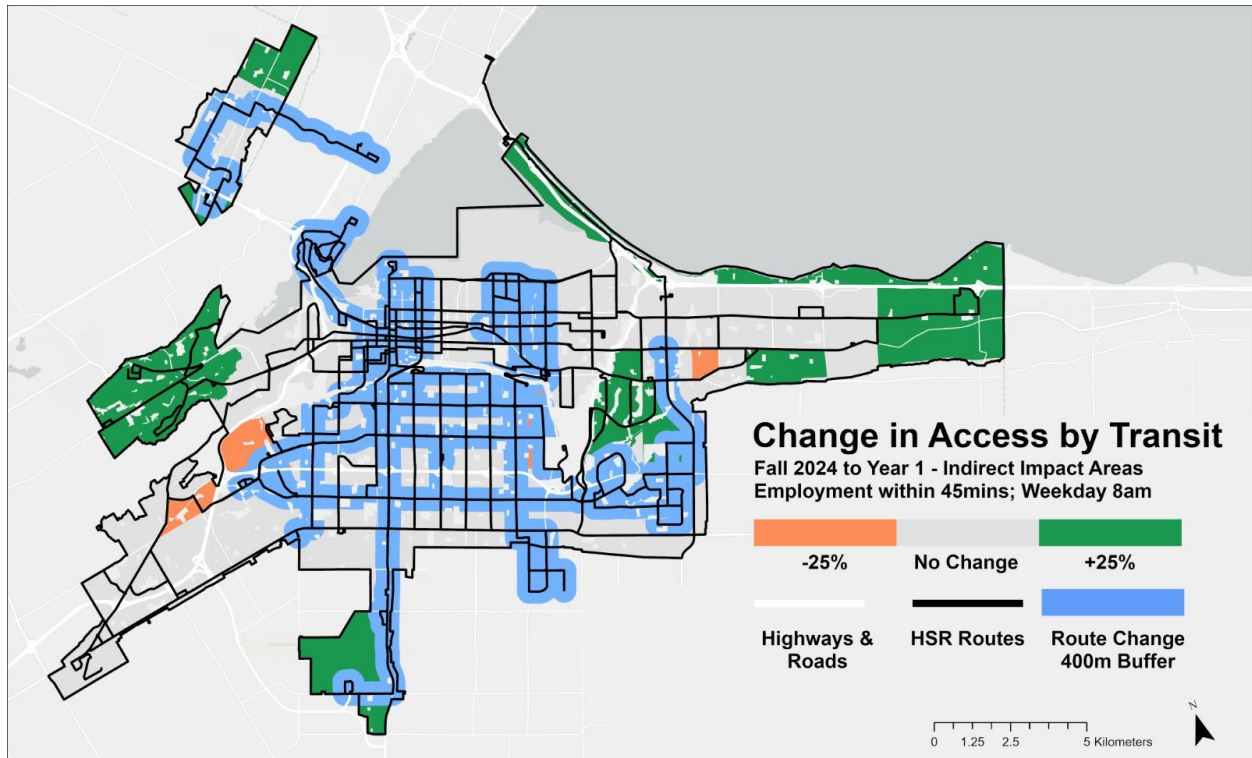
To guide the communications and target areas most affected, staff prepared an analysis based on annual impact to capture year over year changes by catchment area. These analyses consider both direct and indirect impacts from transit service changes. Direct impacts are the catchment areas of routes experiencing change and indirect impacts reflect areas whose level of service may drive a change in transit use.

Year Over Year Changes

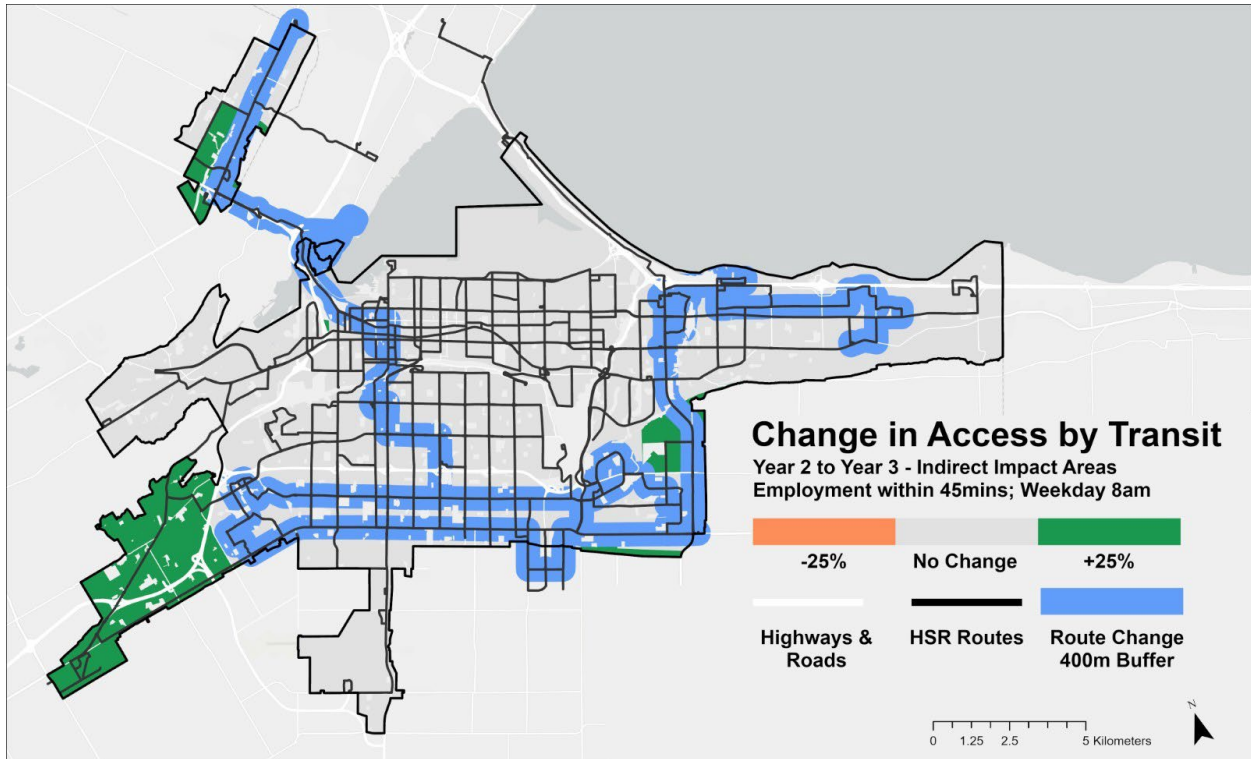
Year over year change maps have been created to guide staff's effort for concentrating targeted communications.

Particular attention will be paid to the areas highlighted in green on the maps, as these illustrate a 25% or greater improvement in access to transit and represent core areas to attract net new transit riders. Similar attention will be paid to orange areas, given the change to service they will experience.

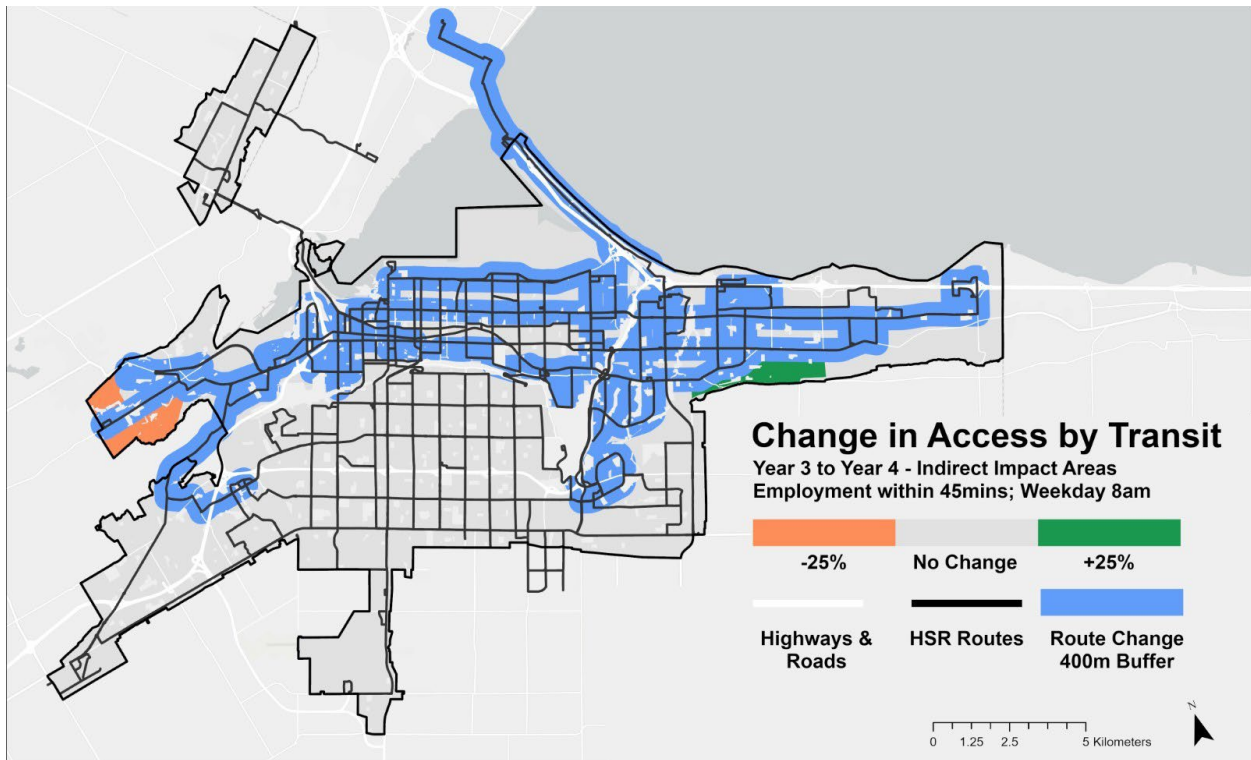
Year One



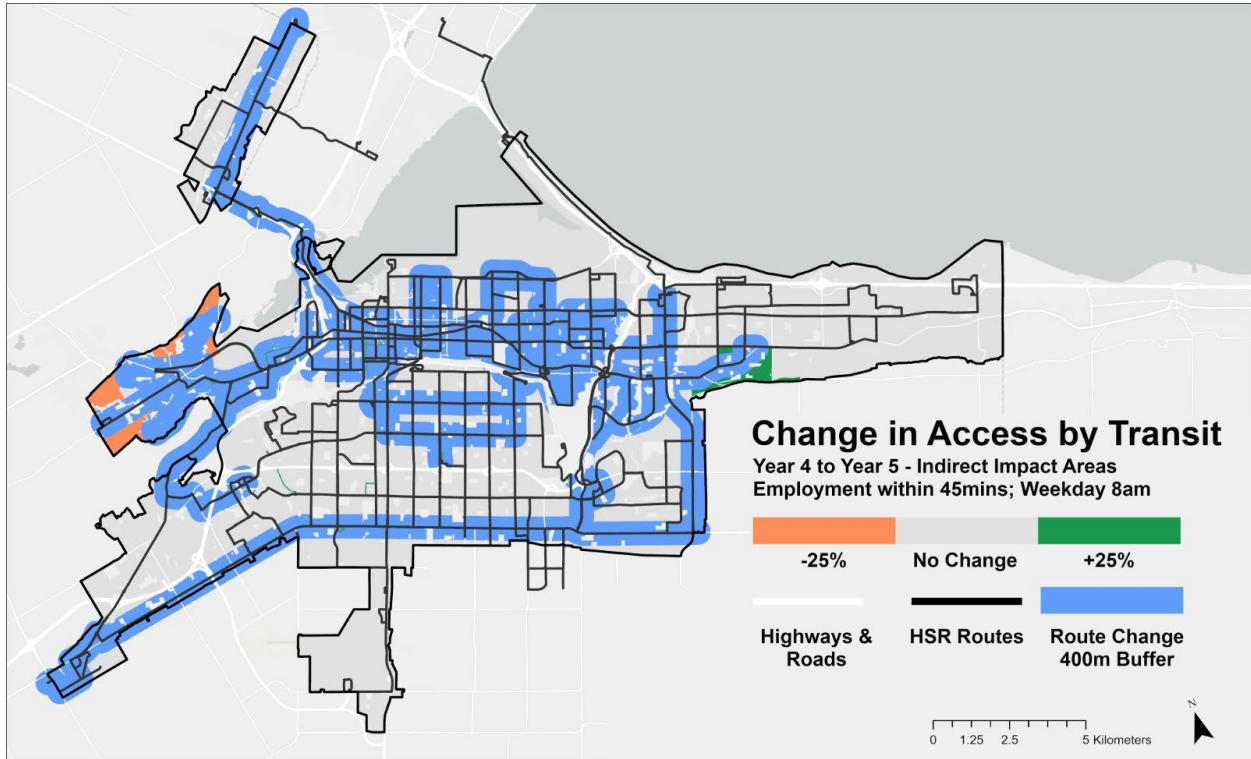
Year 2



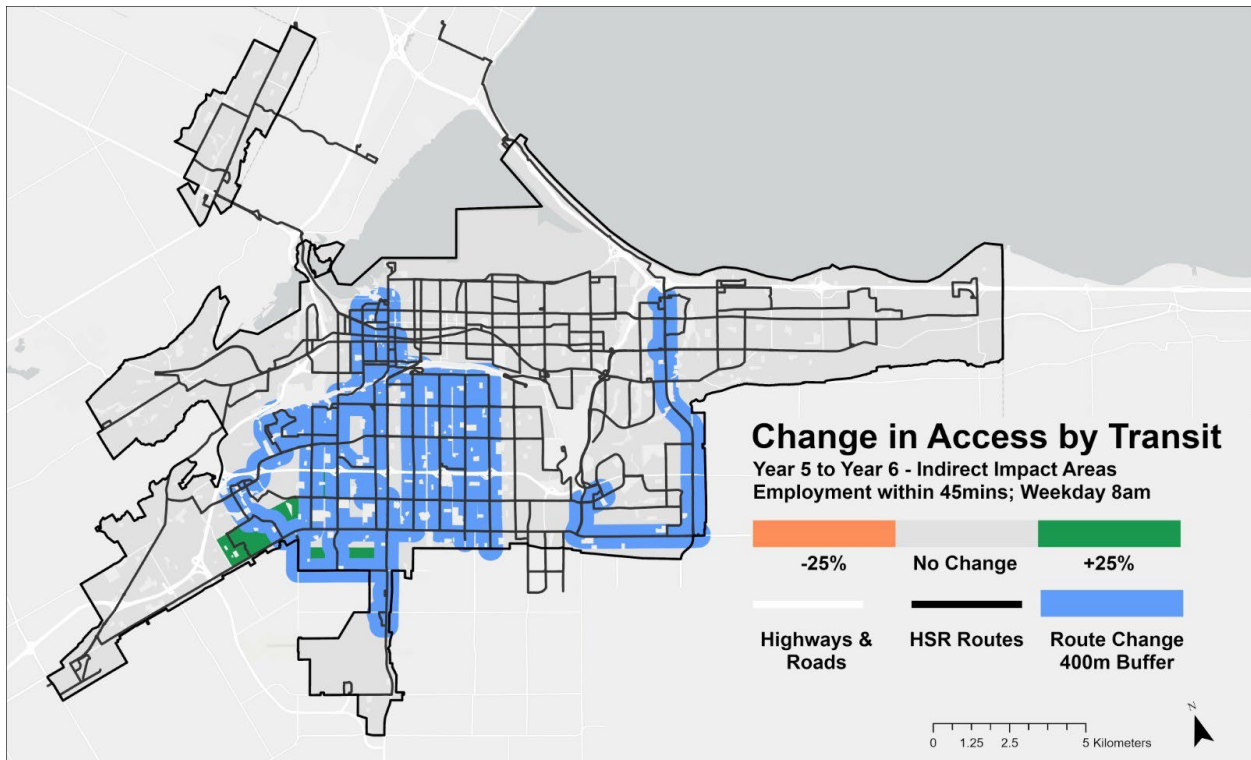
Year 3



Year 4



Year 5



Year 6

