

Written Submission regarding HSR Next: Moving Hamilton Forward

Mayor and Members of Council,

On behalf of the Hamilton and District Labour Council, which represents over 50,000 members across the city. We are here to express our unwavering support for the HSR Next plan and to propose a vital amendment that aligns with our shared commitment to building a more inclusive, prosperous, and resilient Hamilton.

This plan is so much more than a new transit schedule; it's a blueprint for the future of our city. At its core, HSR Next is a massive investment in our community and our people. As the report outlines, this initiative is projected to create 450 new, full-time jobs for operators, maintenance technicians, and other critical staff. These aren't temporary positions; they are good, stable careers that will provide for families and strengthen our local economy for years to come. These are the kinds of jobs that the Labour Council fights for every day.

A strong, accessible transit system is the backbone of a thriving working-class city. The planned shift from a "hub and spoke" model to a direct hub-to-hub network is a game-changer for people who rely on public transit to get to work. For countless Hamiltonians, the current system can make commuting a challenge, but this plan will dramatically improve access to jobs and services. The demographic analysis in Appendix D clearly shows that HSR Next will increase the number of jobs reachable by transit within 45 minutes by over 11% on weekdays. This is a crucial improvement for everyone, but for our lower-income households, the impact is even more profound. The plan directly addresses the needs of those who depend on public transit, ensuring that opportunity isn't limited by location.

This strategic redesign of our transit network is about equity. The service standards in Appendix B demonstrate a commitment to providing transit service to neighbourhoods where more than 30% of the population lives below the low-income cut-off, even if traditional metrics might not otherwise support it. This shows that the city is prioritizing people over simple cost-benefit analyses, a principle that is fundamental to creating a truly fair and equitable city.

That's why the Hamilton and District Labour Council is also in favour of an additional provision to the recommendations before you. You have already shown immense leadership by updating the city's procurement policy to support Canadian and local businesses, a crucial move in a time of political pressures and trade tariffs from our neighbours to the south. This policy is a shield for our local economy, and now is the time to wield it.

The HSR Next plan has a substantial capital cost, with nearly 87 million earmarked for new buses and over 32 million for infrastructure. This represents a massive opportunity to put our local procurement policy into action.

To ensure a **project-specific focus** on local and national procurement, we would suggest incorporating a re-affirmation of these basic tenets into the recommendations within the plan itself by adding:

(e) That the General Manager, Public Works, BE AUTHORIZED and BE DIRECTED to ensure that all procurement for the HSR Next: Moving Hamilton Forward plan prioritizes Canadian businesses with a focus on Hamilton-based suppliers, in accordance with the recently approved city-wide procurement policy that gives preference to Canadian steel and aluminum and other locally-sourced goods and services.

By directing the General Manager of Public Works to prioritize Canadian and local suppliers for this project—especially for the steel, parts, and other materials required for the infrastructure and vehicles—we ensure that our tax dollars stay within our community. We keep our money working for us, circulating through our local businesses and supporting our neighbours. This isn't a small detail; it's a direct investment in the long-term health and stability of our labour market.

This procurement provision also sends a clear message to our provincial and federal partners. In a time when Canada is working to strengthen its own supply chains and create domestic demand for our industries, Hamilton is showing that it's a reliable and committed partner in this national economic strategy. By linking our public infrastructure projects to local industries, we demonstrate a "Team Canada" approach that aligns perfectly with a shared vision of a more resilient and self-reliant national economy. This isn't just good for Hamilton; it's good for Ontario and for Canada.

It's not just a feel-good measure; it's an act of economic defence. It strengthens our city from the ground up, linking a vital public service to the health of our local industries and working families. By moving forward with the full plan and this amendment, you're not just improving our transit; you're reaffirming your commitment to a Hamilton that works for everyone.

So, on behalf of the Hamilton and District Labour Council, I urge you to pass this report and approve the HSR Next plan in its entirety. And I implore you to add the project-based provision that explicitly directs staff to prioritize Canadian and Hamilton-based procurement. Let's not just move our city forward; let's build it stronger, with local jobs and local businesses leading the way.

Thank you for your time and for your consideration.

Anthony Marco
President, Hamilton and District Labour Council