



2023 Hamilton LRT Community Summary

The Hamilton Community Benefits Network (HCBN) was initially established in 2017 as a community-labor coalition in response to the opportunities presented by the original announcement of full capital funding from the Ontario Government for the Hamilton Light Rail project. Consisting of 63 members and partners — including unions, not-for-profits, social enterprises, community groups, neighborhood associations, transit advocates and environmental organizations, HCBN serves as a key community stakeholder in the Hamilton LRT project. Inspired by the Toronto Community Benefits Network and the successes of the community benefits movement across North America, HCBN envisions Hamilton as an inclusive, thriving city in which all residents have equitable opportunities to contribute to building healthy communities and a prospering economy. Community Benefits Agreements (CBA's) are a proven approach to achieving this vision. CBA's are agreements between governments, developers and coalitions of community organizations that address a range of community concerns and needs, including (but not limited to) ensuring residents receive community benefits from large-scale infrastructure projects. Community benefits are meant to respond to the needs of the residents most implicated by the project and can range from affordable housing to a community hub. Our organization is dedicated to community engagement to bring forward residents' aspirations, concerns and hopes for the Hamilton LRT project.

On September 8th, 2021, city staff brought forward a Memorandum of Understanding regarding the Hamilton LRT to the General Issues Committee for debate and a vote. In that report, the City of Hamilton and the Province acknowledge and included in clause G that: "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 will work with the city and community stakeholders to endeavour to determine how best to support these goals of affordable housing and community benefits as part of transit project delivery." All parties signed that Memorandum on September 22nd, 2021. Furthermore, Metrolinx, in a December 19th, 2022 letter to the Hamilton Community Benefits Network laying out their Community Benefits/Support pillars, wrote: "We recognize the importance of a robust and holistic approach to maximizing the benefits of our construction projects in communities across the Greater Golden Horseshoe. We will remain engaged with the Hamilton Community Benefits Network as we continue our mission to improve and expand public transit across the region.". Metrolinx has delivered community benefits on other LRT projects, such as the Ellington Crosstown and Finch West LRT. They have formally acknowledged HCBN as a community stakeholder, and are committing to the delivery of community benefits/supports through four pillars: Pillar 1 – Employment Opportunities, Pillar 2 – Local Business Supports, Pillar 3 – Public Realm Improvements and Pillar 4 – Community Improvement Supports. HCBN, its members and partners expect Metrolinx and the City of Hamilton to develop a Community Benefits Working Group, as they have with other transit projects. This working group should be responsible for the co-development and implementation of the Metrolinx-identified pillars and required plans (with subcommittees for each).

To date, HCBN has conducted 15 community engagement sessions, both virtually and in person. HCBN has also undertaken multiple online surveys with 2317 responses from residents of Hamilton. The community engagement findings to date are presented in detail in the May 2023 Hamilton LRT Community Benefits Engagement Report, which includes a demographic and equity-seeking data breakdown, and can be found on our website (HCBN.ca). The community benefits feedback is broken into eight emerging themes and listed in order of priority: Affordable housing, Transportation Connections, Local Employment and Training Opportunities, Environmental Impact, Local Procurement and Business Support, Accessibility, Community Spaces and Public Arts. This continuing engagement is being used to help shape the advocacy undertaken by HCBN. During engagement sessions and online surveys, respondents provided a wide array of community benefits ideas, which we have presented to Metrolinx and the City of Hamilton at LRT subcommittee meetings. HCBN will continue to engage Hamilton communities and communicate their feedback as the project develops.

Community Benefits Asks:

Affordable housing:

Respondents identified affordable housing as the community benefits area of the highest priority. As the national housing crisis intensified over the last five years, Hamilton residents have disproportionately felt the brunt of this issue. The LRT should bring transformative change to the city through employment opportunities and connecting communities. However, the Hamilton LRT has the potential to further exacerbate the housing crisis by displacing low-income residents and incentivizing landlords and developers to set high rent rates.

Community benefits asks directed at Metrolinx:

Surplus land to be donated to the city and local non-profits for the purpose of building deeply affordable housing units. For Metrolinx to use any profits from property sales along the route to build affordable and sustainable housing. Building affordable Housing above station stops. Force any developer who buys Metrolinx land to build a % (25+) of the units as market-affordable rentals. Community Benefits Working Group with a specific Affordable Housing working group to explore how Affordable Housing will be created as part of project delivery

Community benefits asks directed at the city:

Require all new developments within a certain distance from the LRT to have a minimum percentage of affordable housing units (Inclusionary Zoning). Policies to prevent renovations and demolitions. Vacant home/lot tax. Increase city funding for social services with a housing-first model. Increase social housing (City Housing Hamilton) investment to build more affordable units along the Corridor. Build more supportive and transitional housing. Support tiny homes/shed project. Buy apartments facing development from private market.

Transportation connections:

Through the surveys and community focus groups, the consensus communicated was that the LRT project can only achieve its intended purpose if there is an intentional effort to connect it to other modes of transportation that Hamilton residents currently use. Multi-modal transport in the City of Hamilton will positively impact mobility justice, disability justice, traffic safety, congestion, and the environment.

Community benefits asks directed at Metrolinx:

Installing flood lights, traffic calming and other safety measures to make streets around LRT stations and stops more walkable. Hamilton Bike Share/SoBi Stations at Each stop. Build wider sidewalks. Create more pedestrian crossings over the LRT. Make Rapid Transit Connection between Dundas Highway 6 BRT and Hamilton LRT. Secure Bicycle Parking at stops. Connecting the line to more GO transit stations, east terminus should be confederation GO.

Community benefits asks directed at the city:

Create the infrastructure to connect the LRT route to bike lanes, bus routes and commuter parking lots. Adjust city roads along LRT route to de-prioritize car traffic and make walking much safer. Additional bike lanes separated from cars. Having the LRT be operated by the HSR. Re-engineering HSR to properly feed LRT properly, redeploying and expanding HSR services in the suburbs like Stoney Creek and Waterdown. Policies to ensure that bus shelters and areas surrounding LRT stations and stops are adequately shoveled and maintained. Free parking at LRT stations, using LRT ticket as a parking ticket.

Local training and employment opportunities:

Metrolinx has a proven track record of providing employment opportunities through transit project construction on the Finch West and Eglinton Crosstown. It is also listed as one of their core Pillars of Community Benefits. Metrolinx is expected to work with HCBN partners and members to build on that success, with increased hard targets and expanded opportunities for our most marginalized to secure employment outcomes from this project. Community members have expressed a keen interest in seeing the employment opportunities and training go toward those who need it most in Hamilton.

Community benefits asks directed at Metrolinx:

Prioritize marginalized groups in job opportunities and training. Community Benefits Working Group with an Employment Subcommittee to manage oversight, monitoring and concerns arising from Metrolinx's commitments. Ensure local contractors are involved. Use of Social Enterprise businesses. All jobs produced by LRT construction and operation pay at least a living wage. Have positions be full-time permanent. Partnering with workforce development agencies, unions and Mohawk College for training. Incentivize youth to have careers in the LRT.

Community benefits asks directed at the city:

Have the LRT be run by the Hamilton Street Railway with ATU 107 workers. All other

operations needed (snow removal, garbage, street maintenance etc) be kept inhouse and unionized positions with CUPE 5167

Environmental impact:

Hamilton has declared a climate emergency; the effects of more extreme weather are felt across the City every year. One of the more significant positive impacts of the LRT will be its environmental impact by reducing traffic and enabling more people to utilize green electric rapid public transport. However, without solid commitments to green infrastructure, the construction and daily operation of the LRT can also present negative environmental repercussions.

Community benefits asks directed at Metrolinx:

Green space and infrastructure along LRT corridor and construction sites. Consultation with community stakeholders and environmental groups. Construction should include as many sustainably sourced materials as possible. Separation of Storm Water from Combined Sewer. Replacement of all green spaces and trees that were removed due to the LRT project, with an accountability process to keep residents updated. Redundancy and backup power systems should not run on fossil fuels. Transit Shelters that provide full protection from extreme heat and cold (heated and airconditioned). Multi-waste disposal bins and water bottle filling stations at every station. Protection of existing Trees and enhancement of urban canopy. Green tracks where possible. Green or solar roofs on stations, transit terminals and O&M facility.

Community benefits asks directed at the city:

Build additional green infrastructure along LRT corridor, urban canopy enhancement as construction opportunities. Building recreation parks and community spaces near stations. Repurposing empty houses and lots, instead of expanding urban boundary. Public washrooms that utilize grey water. Less asphalt and concrete, more permeable and drainage friendly landscape. To maximize the positive environmental impact intended with the LRT project, electric powered buses should be used to bring people to stops and stations. Support cycling in the City in policy and by funding SoBi. Funding community tree planting campaigns, community gardens, and green spaces in areas in the city that need it.

These are 4 of the 8 community benefits themes covered in the full report. To learn more about the findings of our community engagement efforts, and the community benefits that HCBN is advocating for, please read the 2023 Hamilton LRT Community Benefits Engagement Report which can be found on our website. You can stay updated on the Hamilton LRT and HCBN's work by signing up to our mailing list or following our social media accounts.



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