Council Direction:

As part of the recommendations of Staff Report PW08043d (recommendation (e)), endorsed by Council at its meeting of October 29, 2008, staff was directed to report back to Public Works Committee following the release of the Final Metrolinx Regional Transportation Plan (RTP), Investment Strategy and 5-year Capital Budget and its implications to the City of Hamilton Rapid Transit Initiative.

Information:

Background

Previous staff reports (PW08043 through PW08043d, presented to Public Works Committee on April 14, June 16, 2008, September 15, October 6 and October 20, 2008 respectively) all dealt with the rapid transit initiative that was initiated as a result of the Province’s MoveOntario 2020 announcement (June 2007), which included the identification of two City of Hamilton rapid transit corridors. The aforementioned staff reports provided background information on:

- the Rapid Transit Feasibility Study (Phase 1 & 2);
- information on plans and policies that both support and impact rapid transit in Hamilton;
- results of an aggressive rapid transit public consultation program;
- information on the Crown Corporation, Metrolinx; and
- the draft Regional Transportation Plan and draft Investment Strategy.

The MoveOntario 2020 announcement allowed Hamilton to accelerate rapid transit planning in Hamilton. The potential for the funding of capital related costs by the Province allows Hamilton to seriously consider Light Rail Transit (LRT) as opposed to focusing only on the provision of Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) to meet the goals as set out in the Transportation Master Plan. The technology that will ultimately be funded by the Province for Hamilton will be determined through a Benefits Case Analysis to be...
This information update has been written to provide Council with the final outcome of the RTP, IS and Capital Budget, that was approved by the Metrolinx Board on November 28, 2008. This update will also outline the next steps that will be undertaken by both Metrolinx and City of Hamilton Rapid Transit Team staff, as we continue to move towards the implementation of the Regional Transportation Plan and more specifically, rapid transit projects in Hamilton.

Metrolinx

Metrolinx was established by the Province of Ontario to develop and implement a Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) along with an Investment Strategy (IS) and Capital Plan and as such, presented a final plan for approval to the Metrolinx Board on November 28, 2009. The plan was approved for implementation across the Greater Toronto Hamilton Area (GTHA) and is made up of 10 Strategies, each with a series of Priority Actions and Supporting Policies, with an ultimate goal of transforming the GTHA’s existing transportation system into an effective, integrated, multi-modal transportation system, particularly through the implementation of 9 “Big Moves”. It is believed that the achievement of the plan will result in enhanced prosperity, environmental sustainability and improved quality of life across the GTHA. Metrolinx has identified that the cost of not implementing this aggressive strategy is higher than the $50 billion price tag of the projects identified in the document, as the cost of congestion is estimated today at $6 billion annually. The “Big Moves” are based not solely on infrastructure, but also about changing behaviour and addresses both implementation and the requirements of sustainable long-term funding.

There are 61 projects identified across the GTHA, which includes 15 priority projects and a 15-year and 25-year network, as well as additional projects outside of the 25-year time frame of the plan. However, at this time, it is primarily the 15 priority projects, which includes the east-west rapid transit corridor (B-Line) in Hamilton and the Go Lakeshore Electrification, which will be the focus of continued funding discussions throughout 2009, through the undertaking of the required Benefits Case Analysis studies, which will continue to feed into future 5-year rolling Capital Budget plans.

In order to provide an evidence-based platform for prioritization of the Top 15 projects, Metrolinx will undertake a Benefits Case Analysis in 2009, for each of the projects which are not already completed or substantially underway, or are already funded through previous agreements. The Benefits Case Analysis for the Go Lakeshore Electrification is already underway, with expected completion in January 2009 and the City of Hamilton rapid transit line, McMaster to Eastgate Square (B-Line) has been identified for completion in Summer 2009. It is anticipated this study will get underway in Spring 2009, with Metrolinx leading the project and including all background project studies presently being undertaken or already completed by the City of Hamilton, as part of this analysis.

Projects that are ready to proceed to implementation have been included in the 2009/2010 Capital Budget and include Sheppard East LRT and York Viva. These projects are ready for implementation (“shovel-ready”) as a result of the planning that
has been on-going for these projects, by their respective Municipalities, well before the MoveOntario 2020 announcement.

All projects that will be included in the Metrolinx Capital Budget for 2009/2010 and beyond, as part of the process undertaken by Metrolinx in terms of prioritization, have been broken down into 3 categories. Category A projects are the two projects that were identified for implementation in 2009/2010. Category B projects will be funded through remaining “Quick Win” funding commitments. This includes funding for the previously announced James Street North Platform at Liuna Station. Category C projects include the remaining top 15 priority projects that are in various stages of planning, design and/or engineering, including Hamilton’s B-Line and the GO Lakeshore Electrification.

Funding at this stage has only been discussed in terms of the top 15 priority projects. Although no specific timing or funding has been allocated to projects outside of the top 15 priorities, the plan identifies a total of 4 projects for the City of Hamilton (Appendix A) and can be broken down as follows:

- B-Line (Eastgate to McMaster University), identified within Metrolinx’s top 15 priorities, within the 15 year plan
- A-Line (Downtown to the Airport), identified within the 15 year plan
- T-Line (Hamilton Mohawk, connecting Main Street along Mohawk Road to Ancaster Meadowlands), identified within the 25 year plan
- S-Line (Centennial Rymal), connecting Eastgate Square to the Ancaster Business Park, identified beyond the 25 year plan

The approved Investment Strategy includes significant dialogue about new revenue and financial tools required to fund the RTP beyond the $11.5 B that is presently committed by the Provincial Government and the anticipated Federal funding of $6B. These funds are anticipated to complete the top 15 priority projects and carry the plan through to 2018. Metrolinx is moving forward with a “results-first” approach, through immediate project implementation and providing alternatives to the transportation system user, before bringing forth alternative revenue sources for funding the remainder of the RTP. There was much discussion on this matter at the November 23, 2008 Board meeting and although the plan doesn’t recommend setting out options for future funding till 2013, the Board agreed that discussions need to take place much sooner on this matter, with initial discussions beginning as early as 2009. It should be noted that these discussions will focus on funding the projects outside of the top 15 priority projects that will be funded by the existing $11.5B of committed Provincial funding and the anticipated $6B to be funded by the Federal Government.

**Next Steps**

City Council unanimously endorsed Staff Report PW08043d (October 29, 2008) which included the following three recommendations:

1. Request Metrolinx to undertake the appropriate Benefits Case Analysis required in order to include the functional design, detail design and construction of the B-line rapid transit corridor for the City of Hamilton in their 2009 - 2013 (5-year) Capital Budget, utilizing Light Rail Technology;

2. Request Metrolinx to undertake the Rapid Transit Feasibility Study (Phase 3) in order to continue the planning and design for the A-line rapid transit
corridor, utilizing Light Rail Technology, in conjunction with the design and construction of the B-line rapid transit corridor for the City of Hamilton as part of their 2009 - 2013 Capital Budget, with design and construction funds to be included in a future (5-year) Capital Budget; and

(e) Continue its undertaking of required rapid transit initiative studies and aggressive public consultation program for rapid transit in Hamilton.

As a result of the Metrolinx Board’s unanimous endorsement of the Regional Transportation Plan, Investment Strategy and Capital Budget, recommendation (a), as noted above, was successfully achieved by staff, as far as undertaking the Benefits Case Analysis for the B-line. As part of the BCA that is scheduled to be completed by Summer 2009, Hamilton’s B-Line rapid transit corridor will be evaluated for LRT and prioritized against other top 15 priority projects for specific timing to be outlined as part of the next rolling 5-year Capital Budget beginning in 2010/2011. The undertaking of the BCA for all priority projects will ensure an equal and evidenced based platform for the prioritization of projects for implementation. Given the various states of planning, design and/or engineering of these projects, prioritization for the 2009/2010 budget was not possible.

In regards to recommendation (b) above, the A-line has not been identified by Metrolinx as a top 15 priority project for implementation and as such, no additional funding has been made available by Metrolinx at this time. However as part of the initial “Quick Wins” funding (as outlined in report PW08074), Metrolinx has provided the City of Hamilton with $12.4M for the planning, design and engineering of A-Line improvements, including passenger amenities (stops, stations and hubs). As such, a joint Transit and Capital Planning and Implementation Study for the A-line will be underway in early 2009, which will look at both short term implementation of a BRT-lite system and long term rapid transit implementation in accordance with the Regional Transportation Plan and future potential LRT along this corridor. It is anticipated the initial rapid transit service will be in place September 2009 and will operate similar to the existing B-Line service that is in place (BRT-lite).

In order to ensure on-going momentum is maintained in regards to the planning of the B-Line corridor for LRT, and to provide Metrolinx the information they required to undertake the Benefits Case Analysis in early 2009 and in accordance with recommendation (e), Rapid Transit Team staff are undertaking the required background studies that will also satisfy any future Transit Class EA requirements. These studies include:

• Transportation Modelling
• Archeology
• Natural Heritage
• Built and Cultural Heritage
• Economic Review
• Safety Review
• Technology Review
• Route Selection

It is anticipated that the results of these studies will be brought forward for public consultation in February 2009, with a staff report and recommendations in regards to
the implementation of the B-Line, submitted to Council for endorsement in April 2009, prior to Metrolinx undertaking the Benefits Case Analysis. Although the City of Hamilton continues to move forward with rapid transit planning, utilizing LRT technology along the B-Line corridor, the Benefits Case Analysis, to be undertaken by Metrolinx, will ultimately determine if, based on a “triple-bottom-line” analysis of the proposed investment (environmental, economic and social / community), LRT is the optimum technology for this rapid transit corridor.

Scott Stewart, C.E.T.
General Manager
Public Works Department