

To the City of London:

We've heard from numerous downtown London businesses, from restaurants to independent retailers, and from tech companies to property owners, who support the creation of a public transit system in our city that includes Light Rail Transit (LRT). As downtown business owners, we support LRT in London for the following reasons:

More Ridership = More People Downtown

Downtown will be the hub of our new rapid transit system — the transfer point for the four most traveled routes in town. Within ten years of implementation, a system that includes Light Rail is projected to have significantly higher ridership than a bus-only BRT system. In fact, the LRT system could bring thousands more riders to downtown London each month.

Less Traffic Congestion

For downtown businesses, every single rapid transit vehicle in the city will pass within a few blocks of our doors, so congestion is an important concern. With their higher capacity, LRT vehicles can move the same number of people with 12 trains an hour as BRT moves with 48 buses an hour.

LRT on the North and East rapid transit routes would make for a much more pleasant experience than our existing bus system — up to 70 buses an hour currently travel downtown from those corridors. BRT-only moves those buses into a different lane of traffic; it can't offer the same kind of improvement to congestion as LRT can by moving more people in a single vehicle.

Think about the positive difference those far fewer vehicles will make, not only to downtown drivers waiting for fewer red lights as they pause for a bus or train, but also for pedestrians crossing the streets to our stores, and cyclists commuting to work. And it means less frequent noise for those sitting on a bench or enjoying a drink on a downtown patio.

Better Air Quality

We already know that all those diesel buses affect the air quality and the smell downtown. (They're also a major contributor to dirty snowbanks.) In short, they make walking downtown much less pleasant, and that's an important part of our customers' overall experiences when they visit us. A Light Rail system will be 100% electric — from day one and forever — and have absolutely no local emissions. Opting for Light Rail on the two busiest corridors that converge in the core will make a positive, appreciable difference in the downtown experience.

Less Stigma; More Customers

While either rapid transit system will create an opportunity for expanded hours of service, LRT is uniquely capable of offering a more appealing rider experience that also breaks through the local stigma surrounding public transit use.

LRT increases the likelihood that people will choose to use public transit for discretionary trips to downtown, and take advantage of those longer service hours to enjoy a dinner out,

some shopping, or an event. Reliable transit service that people actually want to use means people don't have to worry about parking, driving downtown, or finding a safe and affordable way home.

Additionally, when employees can use public transit reliably to get downtown, it makes driving and finding a parking spot easier for those customers who choose to take their own car.

Doing it Right the First Time is Always Better

Even if we choose BRT-only for now, the city still plans to eventually upgrade the routes to LRT when they think the time is right. That will mean an additional expense, and tearing the city apart again, for much longer than the extra few months that LRT will take to implement now.

From mom-and-pop shops to heritage property owners, downtown businesses are in it for the long haul, even across multiple generations. We're already dealing with and ready for construction at Fanshawe, the library, a Flex Street, and now rapid transit.

Timing is everything. So let's do it right — right now. We don't want to live through this two or three times, and we don't want to pass it off to our kids when they take over.

30 Years of Benefits > A Few Months of Construction

We are all concerned about the impact that construction will have on our livelihoods. But because the potential BRT- only system is being built "LRT ready" and with the same road design and stations, for any given business, building a BRT- only system instead of one with LRT will only shave off a few months of disruption from construction.

Sacrificing 30 years of having more potential customers and a more pleasant downtown experience to save a few months of inconvenience would not be a sound business decision.

It's Better Bang For Our Buck

As downtown business owners, we pay the highest taxes in the city and we pay a Business Improvement Area levy on top of that. For many of us, that has a big impact on our household income every year (and we pay property taxes at home, too). Nobody in the city has more invested in making the most of London's tax dollars than we do.

The City of London will invest \$125 million in either system, but a BRT-only system will cost \$1 million more than LRT to operate each year. And right now, there is a unique opportunity to leverage our tax dollars for a greater capital investment. The political will to invest in transit infrastructure and green projects has never been stronger or better aligned at the provincial and federal levels.

Each level of government has already set aside billions of our tax dollars for transit projects. We have a choice: build a bold transit system that provides the greatest total financial benefit to London's downtown, or choose a lesser system and let our tax dollars continue to be

spent on improvements to other cities and their downtowns. An opportunity like this will probably never come around again. Now is the time to make the most of what we all pay.

We ask that you give diligent consideration to our concerns as business owners, and that Councillors not change their minds about the preferred rapid transit system, and instead re-affirm the Hybrid LRT/BRT network as their preferred option. It is certainly ours.

Respectfully signed,

Joel Adams and Amanda Stratton, **Hacker Studios** (252 Dundas Street)

Vanessa Brown and Jason Dickson, **Brown & Dickson** (211 King Street)

Gena Brumitt, **BRUMITT Management & PR Group** (151 Dundas Street)

Dave Cooke, **Fire Roasted Coffee** (105 King Street)

Jeff Crane, **POI Business Interiors** (201 Queen Street)

Titus Ferguson, **UnLondon Digital Media Association** (211 King Street)

Felipe Gomes, **Aroma Mediterranean Restaurant & Cafe** (717 Richmond Street)

Milos Kral, **Milos' Craft Beer Emporium** (420 Talbot Street)

Chris McInnis, **Über Cool Stuff** (123 Carling Street)

Jodi Simpson, **CityMatch**

Howard and Suzanne Pennell, **Crabby Joe's Tap & Grill** (276 Dundas St.)

Mark A. Rayner, **Author**

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