

From: Evan Jones

Sent: Wednesday, May 25, 2016 8:41 AM

To: Woolsey, Heather <hwoolsey@London.ca>; dmatthews.mpp.co@liberal.ola.org; City of London, Mayor <mayor@london.ca>; Helmer, Jesse <jhelmer@london.ca>; City Councillors <CityCouncillors@london.ca>; Maloney, Patrick <pmaloney@postmedia.com>

Subject: Shift Rapid Transit Public Participation Meeting

I am writing today to support the L-7 LRT Rapid Transit proposal which was unanimously recommended by the London's Strategic Priorities and Policy Committee only a few months ago.

I moved to Old North in London four years ago along with my wife and two school-aged children. I brought with me a growing company which has expanded to eight full-time employees producing award-winning interactive media. Over the years I have lived in Europe, Toronto, Halifax and Hamilton - cities with various degrees of rapid transit. We have been a single-car family throughout that time and regularly use transit options.

Urban planning often suffers from a condition known as 'bike-shedding' - it seems that the simplest problems to solve always involve the most participation. People feel that because they live in the city, they understand how cities should be designed. This diminishes the expertise that urban designers bring to the table and the proven research which should be applied over opinion.

I applauded the bold vision that London has taken with the London Plan and the careful process to include stakeholder opinion with the SHIFT Rapid Transit plan. This renewed city council understood that urban designers might be able to rise above the NIMBY-ism and community politics to imagine a long-term strategy for growth.

Light Rail Transit was the overwhelming recommendation of this process and I was elated to see our London's Strategic Priorities and Policy Committee agree with the experts. Anyone who has lived in a city with LRT knows that its reach defines the 'downtown' - property values jump significantly based on walking distance to a city's LRT and foot traffic is dramatically higher for the businesses that are accessible by LRT. Living in Toronto as a student and as a professional, the city was defined in two areas - places accessible by subway/streetcar, and places that I never visited.

The notion that BRT is functionally similar to LRT is a fiction perpetuated by people who have not lived with each option. Buses are unpredictable and uncomfortable by comparison and there is a marked difference in adoption rates by users. Councillor Helmer has assembled an impressive list of reasons why the LRT option is superior and I urge other councillors to evaluate the strong recommendations made by his arguments and those who originally convinced the London's Strategic Priorities and Policy Committee.

I have learned an important lesson as an entrepreneur - "If you don't ask, you'll never receive". It seems implausible that London's City Council would watch the massive infrastructure investments happening in other Ontario cities and feel that they were not ready to step up and ask provincial and federal partners to similarly invest. Who is motivating this reluctance to advocate on London's behalf at the municipal level? I don't recognize this behaviour in this renewed city council. Asking government partners for a poorer solution without advocating for the best can only be an indication that there is some internal horse-trading to justify this sudden lack of ambition, directly contradicting the political climate only months ago.

Making LRT the focus of our Rapid Transit plan will define our city, and I encourage all councillors to support it. Proposing a bold plan that is widely supported and recommended by expert urban planners - this is the 'Forest City' that I am proud to call home.

Thank you,

Evan Jones
Stitch Media