

Members of Council,

I am glad to report my recovery continues to go well, but the possibility of a 7-hour meeting is still more than I can handle. While I still plan on attending the meeting, I may not be able to be there for all of it and as such wanted to make sure I shared my opinions on this matter with you as well as our entire community.

In short, I very much appreciate the efforts of staff to turn around significant work under tight timelines so council and the community could have more time to reflect on our routing options. After undertaking an analysis of all options it seems quite clear to me that the routes which make the most sense are the ones initially proposed by staff with the exception of two way BRT on King St. As a member of the Covent Garden Market Board for 7 years now, I hold in high regard the opinion of our successful tenants. Beyond the tenants we also have surrounding businesses to consider, as well as the Budweiser Gardens. Hearing from these different stakeholders is important as compromises and changes can be made and I think switching to the Queen/King couplet makes the most sense.

I want to make something very clear though; whatever decision we make today on routing options, will be followed by approximately a year to two years of engineering design work that will allow us to respond to many of the excellent questions we have received on topics such as: possible impacts, underground conditions, expropriations, etc. No shovels will be in the ground for a few years yet and approvals for construction will likely be decided by London's 2018-2022 council.

It's important to stress here that if we ever want to have any sort of access under the tracks on Richmond, whether it be for cars, buses, emergency vehicles etc., we have the opportunity now to at least learn everything we can about its potential, otherwise we will be required to come up with necessary funding and resources at a later date.

In my opinion everything I have reviewed, including simply expediting and improving existing service, leads me to believe that the BRT model works better. Not only is the cost/benefit ratio greater, it also enables the city to save the \$290 million that would be required for road widening. Some argue though that just because we have the chance doesn't mean we should; and I agree, it is not always the wise choice. Under the BRT model though it seems a prudent choice, as we would be able to improve our infrastructure with tax dollars from other levels of government which people in our community have already contributed to. If we ditch this project, funding will be required anew.

The BRT plan has been in the works for many years. Does that mean we should automatically go forward? No; we should continue to proceed with it and study it more because it is already a well-planned and thought-out project. For those that prefer just an upgraded LTC service, that is one of the options previously considered in the business case; with dedicated lane BRT we get both an improved LTC base system in addition to the inclusion of BRT which will also help reduce our infrastructure deficit. The June 2016 LTC report on "Transit Network Rapid Transit Integration Strategy and Financial Plan", illustrates well the points made above and clearly shows the increases LTC expects, not just as a result of BRT, but for the whole city. Overall the system from now until 2035 should grow by 35% in service hours.

Some have cited that we are basing this project off reports which are out of date. While our reports may be a few years old, Councils are charged with planning for the long term future of our city and unfortunately it often takes many years to even get to the point of putting those plans into action. It has taken us years of planning to get here, and if a new plan is requested you can expect much the same process. I believe that overall this initiative is a good one with the potential for significant future benefits including options for different/other uses in the future for example, autonomous vehicles. At present we have significant commitments from other levels of government for massive infrastructure investment which will have a net positive impact on our community. We don't have to do this project, but I think it is our best bet for improving our infrastructure, transit, and the economy of the city as a whole. **And for those that think there is better use of this money, this funding is specifically earmarked for transit projects and nothing else.**

### Common Objections:

The reason I cite these is so people have an understanding that we are not ignoring these possibilities, but to show we have explored them and they are too far down the path from feasibility.

### Move the Tracks

There are those who will say we should spend this money on moving the tracks outside of the city. If this was practical I would imagine it would have already been done given how much headache it causes our community. So why hasn't it? Well, the rail companies have stated to the city they are not interested in moving anything out of London because it works well for their business. They would be open to discussions on the matter but at least 50% of those costs would have to be covered by the city, and we would have to get a community outside of London to agree to take both the rail lines and train yards. At a recent Civic Works meeting, our engineers while not having firm numbers estimates the costs would likely be in billions. After seeing the rail situation in London, would any other municipality want to install new rail lines in their community? I have yet to hear from another municipality requesting our rail lines. That aside, we have a number of businesses in our community who still connect to the rail lines to distribute and sell their commercial goods. So that would mean the potential of economic losses for our city. While this option could be pursued, the barriers, disruption, and costs are exorbitant, quite likely far more than the introduction of BRT in our community.

### Build a Ring Road

Others say what about a ring road. A real chance for this was passed decades ago and as London has grown so have communities outside the city. If we were to try and do this we would need to annex part of Middlesex Centre which is likely out of the realm of possibilities. Beyond the difficult realities we face in trying create a ring road, the costs would likely be higher than BRT (no guarantees of investment from other levels of government) and in addition, after discussions with engineers, the fact that London is so large in area now, in many instances it would be shorter to travel in the city than to go out to the ring road and come back in.

### Autonomous vehicles

Yes it is very likely that the future will include autonomous vehicles, however how that future comes to be and what the end result is are not as close as I think some might like to believe. Take for instance the fact that the Ontario Government currently has a 10 year pilot project (<http://www.mto.gov.on.ca/english/vehicles/automated-vehicles.shtml>) which began last year to test autonomous vehicles in Ontario. This means a testing period of 10 years before anything is actually legislated by the province to allow for the operation of these vehicles en masse on roads in Ontario.

While private enterprise is certainly pushing for this to occur faster, governments need a strong framework in place before these vehicles are permitted on our roadways. If not there could be significant safety issues. Humans are much less reliable than an autonomous vehicle: vehicles don't get tired, don't drink and drive, and are not careless. As we begin to introduce these vehicles there will be major challenges as to how they will operate with human vehicle traffic. Another factor to still be considered are the liability factors of an autonomous vehicle. What happens if there is an accident? Major technology disruption to existing systems can take time to happen because of things like this. Not only that but think about the reality of how many people work in our country driving vehicles for work. That will be something quite complex to deal with when the time comes. While I think it is inevitable that autonomous vehicles will become common place, its not going to happen that quickly.

All this being said I am very much for the introduction of autonomous vehicles and I think we should be planning for it. Frankly I believe dedicated lanes in the city are the best option; as an example, Australia has recently mulled having HOV dedicated lanes on their highways specifically for autonomous vehicles to help ease the transition and avoid difficulties of rapid integration of human and autonomous traffic. I see this is a great fit for the system we are looking to build here in London. Another factor that those in favour of autonomous vehicles seem to forget is that even if we waited for autonomous vehicles and did little else in the meantime besides widen roads, a major issue still arises; the tracks on Richmond south of Oxford.

In Conclusion:

Out of approximately 130 emails I have received on BRT in the last couple months, the majority (approximately 90) all cite not wanting the tunnel because of concerns about how it will impact Richmond Row and the cost. These concerns are very valid as our engineers have recently confirmed. It would be a very complex, difficult, and expensive project. I am in no way at this point advocating that we absolutely must build this tunnel, however, to not study it would be folly. Our engineers have shown that we cannot fit four full lanes under there without destroying buildings on Richmond Row so the tunnel seems to be the best option if we ever want any traffic or vehicles going under the tracks. The reason we can't go up over Richmond instead of constructing the tunnel: an overpass would ruin Richmond Row streetscape and image, as well completely remove people from the street. While I recognize the high cost of the tunnel I think its important to recognize that the best time to have disruption in a city is now not the future. The number of new developments, commercial interest, etc. in the core is massive currently. As more and more development occurs, the more difficult it becomes to do something like the tunnel, which is likely our best chance at ever avoiding the tracks in some capacity.

I will wrap up by saying, the original routes with the exception of the king/queen couplet can help solve major traffic in the city and allow the creation of an essential spine for an improved overall LTC base system. The BRT will help make transportation better for the whole city, both on and off the bus.

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