

## GREEN CITY : LET'S BUILD A GREEN CITY WITH BUS RAPID TRANSIT

Submission by Helen Riordon

I live in Ward 1 and also own property on Piccadilly St. in Ward 13

Councillors and Mayor:

I urge you to consider the Bus Rapid Transit System in order to develop a sustainable and liveable city. I wish to remind you that the London Plan outlines a plan for denser growth, or sustainable growth in the City of London which would include a rapid transit corridor.

As a resident of London living in Ward 1, also owning property on Piccadilly St. in Ward 13, I will outline the reasons I feel the Bus Rapid Transit System with two rapid transit corridors is the best system for London.

In my travels to Winnipeg, Manitoba, I encountered a great Bus Rapid Transit System which helped me travel where I needed to go in that city. I was staying out at the University of Manitoba and I took their bus rapid transit to their Forks of the Assiniboine and Red Rivers, downtown. The trip actually took about 30 min. from University of Manitoba to the Forks, as it is quite a long distance if you look on a map. The beautiful forks of their rivers uses the natural features to create a beautiful and natural space. After spending time at the forks, I took a bus to Portage and Main (about 3 min.). I also took the bus out to the airport when I needed to go home. While in Winnipeg, I did not need a car or a taxi. I got around very easily totally on the bus. We need to look at Winnipeg to see how they have integrated the bus system into the life of the people there.

Last year, I also traveled to Ottawa by train from London. I stayed at my sister's place out on the west end. I found it easy to get around on their bus rapid transit to get downtown (about 10 min.) from my sister's condo on the west end. I took my skates on the bus and went skating on the Rideau Canal. I had no need for a car or a taxi in Ottawa during my stay for the Winterlude event. We need to look at how Ottawa's system is working.

In London, I take the bus or ride my bicycle everywhere I go. I do not own a car. From where I live, I find it fairly convenient to get around. But it could be so much better. We need to follow the London Plan. It calls for an increase of 10,000 people along the transit corridors and greater intensification with a target of 45% to curb urban sprawl. If we continue to eat up agricultural land through urban sprawl, this is costing taxpayers money through servicing land and expanding city services. Urban sprawl is not sustainable. We need a high intensity rapid transit system for development along the rapid transit corridors and rapid transit stations. We need high intensity corridors serving UWO, Fanshawe College and hospitals where parking is limited.

Now, I have seen that council is thinking about dividing the parts of the BRT to do it piecemeal. I believe you should approve the whole thing. It will be less expensive that way than dividing it up piecemeal. I often take the bus from my place south east of the Thames up to UWO, University Hospital and sometimes Maisonville Mall. If you do the whole North-South and East-West corridors, it would be so much more convenient for all, as we need to access the whole city. I hope that this council decides to bring London in line with other major cities in Canada. We are the only major city in this country without some kind of rapid transit system. Breaking the BRT system into separate elements will only improve transit in certain parts of the city. Breaking the proposal into parts loses the cohesive nature of the full network, which was intended to transform London's transit system and lure development along the "L" and "7" shaped transit corridors. Those corridors are a key part of the London Plan, the city's blueprint for growth during the next 2 decades.

"If we build it, they will come." I really believe this statement. For those who complain that we don't have a high enough ridership to make this possible, I say that the system we have right now needs this work to gain the ridership. We need to promote public transit as a positive way to travel. I can get on a bus, go downtown for dinner and a play at the Grand Theatre and not have to worry about drinking and driving. I can go to a big event at the Budweiser Gardens and not have to worry about parking. We need to educate people in London that there is another way to get around this city. We need to show people that we can get around this city easily without stepping into a private vehicle.

Most of the money for this big project will be coming from the Federal and Provincial governments. We need to make use of this money to also fix our infrastructure and to build the BRT while we are fixing our roads and sewers.

This past week, we have seen people come flocking to London for our JUNO awards. This would not have been possible if we had not had some forward thinking people on council several years ago who saw the value in building the John Labatt Centre. There was much controversy back then. There were many naysayers both on council and in our city. There was a fight to have that big development in the heart of the city. There was also a fight to build the Covent Garden Market. We have had to fight the naysayers all along the way. But, we have seen the rewards last week in hosting the Junos, and when we hosted the World Skating events 2 years ago.

In closing,

“If we build it, they will come”

Submitted by: Helen Riordon