



*The proactive voice for the environment in  
the Grand River watershed*

June 2009

### **Grand River Environmental Network Position on Proposed Region of Waterloo LRT/BRT**

Population growth, climate change, traffic gridlock and air pollution are all driving the need for change in how we live, work and travel, not only in Waterloo Region, but in the world.

The Grand River Environmental Network recognizes that public transit is an effective and efficient means of dealing with many of these pressing issues. GREN regards the LRT as the spine of a much-needed upgrade to Waterloo Region's public transit system. No system is ideal, no system is cheap, but if the LRT meets the following criteria, GREN offers its support.

The LRT should:

1. Seamlessly integrate with other modes of transportation – GO, inner and inter-city buses, VIA, walking and biking, airport in a timely, convenient manner;
2. Provide a safe, clean, sustainable and affordable move away from private car use;
3. Meet the requirements of the Provincial Places to Grow Act for urban intensification to benefit rural, as well as urban, areas of the Region. With the firm countryside line and countryside protection embedded in the Region's Official Plan, the LRT in the urban core helps stop urban sprawl and protects farmland and water recharge areas outside the cities;
4. Costs are kept low by minimizing underground and elevated trackage, sharing transit malls with buses, leasing rights-of-way from freight railroads, and combining LRT construction with freeway expansion. [www.calgarytransit.com/pdf/Calgary\\_CTrain\\_Effective\\_Capital\\_Utilization.pdf](http://www.calgarytransit.com/pdf/Calgary_CTrain_Effective_Capital_Utilization.pdf) and
5. NOT be built without the written commitment of both the provincial and federal governments to cover the pledged 2/3 of the cost, with every effort made to not exceed the projected cost of \$790 million for the 11 km of LRT and 13 km of adapted BRT (Bus Rapid Transit - no separate bus lanes).

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## **Cost**

There have been significant objections to the high cost of installing an LRT/BRT system, but GREN believes the costs are justified to create a healthy and dynamic Region that will make it easier for people to live in a more sustainable manner. Upgrading buses without an LRT is not significantly cheaper.

Annual operating costs for the LRT/BRT are not expected to exceed \$23 million/year while operating at rapid 15 minute intervals, a fraction of a Regional budget expected to surpass one billion dollars annually.

The chart below shows that both Toronto and Calgary installed their first subway and LRT lines, respectively, when their populations were similar to the Region of Waterloo's current population. By way of comparison, we have also included the cost of other significant public work projects in the Region.

| <b>\$ in millions</b> | <b>Date</b> | <b>Location</b>                   | <b>Population</b>                       | <b>Public Work</b>  |
|-----------------------|-------------|-----------------------------------|---|---|
| 790 (projected)       | 2009        | Regional Municipality of Waterloo | 506,800 (2006 Stats Can/RMOW estimates) | 11km LRT + 13 km adapted BRT                                  |
| 600 (projected)       | "           | "                                 | "                                       | Upgrade to buses w/o LRT                                      |
| 80                    | "           | "                                 | "                                       | Addition of 2 lanes < 4km, Hwy 8 to 401                       |
| 20                    | "           | "                                 | "                                       | 3 km sewer system work on Erb St. Westmount - Fischer-Hallman |
| 67 (1954 \$)          | 1954        | Toronto                           | 680,000 (1951)                          | 1 <sup>st</sup> leg subway 7.4 km Yonge St.                   |
| 543                   | 1981/87/90  | Calgary                           | 593,000                                 | 29.3 km   |

### **To support ridership and increase the success of the LRT, we also recommend that the LRT:**

1. Stations include large employers, the universities, VIA train station, major retailers
2. Include parking lots and kiss and ride at ends of line, (e.g. , similar to Yorkdale Shopping Centre, Kipling Station kiss and ride interface with TTC in Toronto)
3. NOT be a license for unlimited Regional growth beyond capacity or to profit land speculators
4. Include BRT to Waterloo Regional Airport, Conestoga College, Elmira, New Hamburg, New Dundee, Wellesley, St. Jacob's
5. Extend to the Sportsworld Greyhound station and proposed GO stations to ease intercity travel
6. Extend through to Cambridge, if not immediately then by a specified date
7. Include a stop at Iron Horse Trail and provide a secure bike lockup facility
8. Extend to Guelph rather than spending \$300 million+ on a new Highway 7
9. Be powered by clean, renewable energy (e.g., Calgary's wind-powered C-train, City of Toronto's commitment to clean, renewable power)

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10. Trains be low floor models
11. Service is free. Public transportation and roads are both built and maintained by tax dollars. We do not pay tolls to use our roads; we should not pay to use public transit.
12. Go upscale – plush, comfortable seating, WiFi connection, fold-down worktables, beverages
13. Provides frequent service (10 – 15 minutes) with minimal wait time for connectors
14. Explore public/private partnership to provide taxi-buses (e.g. Rimouski Quebec) for less busy routes; rural and suburban feeder routes so all people in the region can benefit from the LRT – not just those living in the core
15. Provides reliable service seven days a week and in the evenings
16. Is wheelchair and stroller accessible and bicycle friendly
17. Be the first step towards a pedestrian mall on downtown King Street in Kitchener and Waterloo.

### **In Conclusion**

The Region of Waterloo has the opportunity now, with support from both the provincial and federal governments, to raise the bar and create a world-standard setting transportation system that can do more than just move people. Indeed, without it, it is difficult to envision a healthy, sustainable future for our community.

The Grand River Environmental Network supports the LRT proposal if it meets the five criteria listed. We will continue our ongoing efforts to ensure the highest possible quality of life for our citizens and be a proactive voice for the environment in the Grand River watershed.