

Toronto makes a pitch for rejected HMLRT cash

Peter Criscione

Brampton Guardian | Dec 10, 2015

Toronto wants Brampton's Light Rail Transit money.

A motion tabled yesterday (Dec. 9) at Toronto City Council asks the Minister of Transportation and Premier of Ontario to consider reallocating funds rejected by city leaders for the downtown portion of the Hurontario-Main LRT project, to the Toronto Transit Commission (TTC) for capital improvements.

"Considering Toronto is Ontario's most populous city and that the (TTC) delivered transit services to an estimated 545 million riders in 2015, it would be entirely credible for Toronto City Council to advocate for the funding returned to the Ontario Moving Forward fund by Brampton's refusal of the HMLRT," reads the motion introduced by Toronto Councillor Kristyn Wong-Tam.

The motion requests the \$200 to \$400 million in provincial funds that would have been allocated to the final stretch of the 23-km LRT line be made available to enhance the TTC's accessibility.

Earlier this year, the Province committed to covering the full \$1.6 billion cost of connecting Mississauga's Port Credit to the downtown Brampton GO station.

On Oct. 27, Brampton council voted narrowly to stop the LRT route at Steeles Avenue as the proposal to drive mass transit through the city centre ignited tensions and pit neighbours and community leaders against one another.

Critics cited a range of issues to oppose the plan, including the desire to protect the city's heritage district, and pushed for an alternate route.

Brampton council's decision to reject the Main Street surface route option sent hundreds of millions back to provincial coffers, to now be used to pay for other transit improvements in the Ontario Moving Forward fund.

Brampton's controversial decision made headlines nationally, and has motivated other major urban communities to try to lay claim to the cash local leaders passed on.

Under Wong-Tam's motion, the money could be used toward capital investment in key services areas including enhancing ease of access (\$35 million), upgrading the streetcar network (\$4 million) and improving bus stops.

Meanwhile, Metrolinx has officially cut the "M" out of HMLRT.

Anne Marie Aikins, spokesperson for Metrolinx, told

The Guardian

this week that the mass transit initiative is now officially known as the Hurontario LRT to "make it clear to the public as to the scope of the project."

A Forum Research survey done exclusively for

The Brampton Guardian

shows that a majority of residents polled disagree with council's decision to kill a downtown route for the Hurontario-Main LRT.

Forum Research polled 728 Brampton residents and found that 52 per cent of respondents believe city council made a mistake voting down the Metrolinx preferred route, with 27 per cent agreeing with the decision.

One fifth of respondents (21 per cent) didn't have an opinion.

Peter Criscione is city hall reporter for The Brampton Guardian. He can be reached at pcriscione@bramptonguardian.com. Follow him on [Twitter](#) and the Guardian on [Facebook](#)