MEDIA RELEASE: Friday, May 27, 2011 4:30 p.m.

REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY OF WATERLOO
PUBLIC INPUT MEETING OF THE
PLANNING AND WORKS COMMITTEE
CONSOLIDATED AGENDA

Wednesday, June 1, 2011
6:00 p.m.
Council Chambers
2nd Floor, Regional Administration Building
150 Frederick Street, Kitchener, Ontario

*Denotes Item(s) Not Part of Original Agenda

PUBLIC MEETING RE: RAPID TRANSIT

1. DECLARATIONS OF PECUNIARY INTEREST UNDER THE MUNICIPAL CONFLICT OF INTEREST ACT

2. STAFF PRESENTATION
   Nancy Button, Director, Rapid Transit

3. DELEGATIONS
   1. Gary Promhouse, Kitchener
   2. Alison De Muy, Waterloo (Moved to May 31st, 2011)
   3. Linda Hacker, Waterloo - CANCELLED
   4. Ruth Haworth, Tax Payers for Sensible Transit, Waterloo
   5. Mirek and Eva Stehilk, Kitchener
   6. Chris Klein, Kitchener
   7. Tim Mollison, TRITAG, Kitchener
   8. Judy Garrett, Kitchener
   10. John Shortreed, Waterloo
   11. Sheila Hultquist, Kitchener
   12. Byron Weber Becker, Kitchener
   13. Helen Ellis, Waterloo
   14. Brian Turnbull, Taxpayers for Sensible Transit, Waterloo
   15. Craig Beattie, Perimeter Development Corporation, Toronto
   16. Reemah Khalid, Waterloo
   17. Michael Druker, Waterloo
   18. Susan Koswan, Grand River Environmental Network, Kitchener
   19. Hilary Abel, Kitchener
   20. Stewart Thomas, Kitchener
   21. Ramy Nassar, Waterloo
   22. Dianne Ensing, Waterloo
   23. Ondrej Recnik, Virtual Properties.ca, Waterloo
   24. Benton Leong, Waterloo
   25. Sam Ducklow, Kitchener
   26. Ron Hackett, Wallenstein
   27. Emil Frind, Waterloo
28. Ian McLean, Greater K-W Chamber of Commerce, Kitchener
29. Don Bourgeois, Kitchener
30. Robert Milligan, New Dundee
31. Taylor Byrnes, Kitchener
32. Christopher Letnick, Kitchener
33. Josh Hoey, Kitchener
34. Paul Cyr, Kitchener
35. Scott Piatkowski, Kitchener
36. Douglas Gregory, Kitchener
37. Stan Rektor, Waterloo
38. Greg Michalenko, Waterloo

DELEGATIONS REGISTERED AFTER THE DEADLINE– 5 MINUTES EACH

* 39. Roger Farwell, Kitchener
* 40. Susan Bryant, Elmira
* 41. Carl Kaufman, Waterloo CANCELLED

CONSOLIDATED – 5 MINUTES EACH

* 42. Sarah Witmer, Waterloo
* 43. Alan Hawes, Kitchener
* 44. Ellen Shields, Waterloo
* 45. Pat Kinsella, Kitchener
* 46. Jeffrey Beckner, Kitchener
* 47. Margaret Santos, Pedestrian Charter Steering Committee
* 48. Ravi Upadhyay, Waterloo
* 49. Rosa Bustamante, Waterloo
* 50. James Maaser, Waterloo
* 51. Kareem Shehata, Kitchener

4. ADJOURN
Waterloo Region LRT Proposal: Concerns

By Ruth Haworth

May 24, 2011
Author details

I am a resident of uptown Waterloo, a past member of the Uptown Vision Committee, and an enthusiastic booster of the uptown. I am a University of Waterloo alumna (MA Economics, 1984) and an employee in Waterloo’s high tech sector. I am the spokesperson for Taxpayers for Sensible Transit (T4ST).

I am not a political insider and some of what I say here is second-hand information and speculation, but I hope I have provided enough evidence to convince politicians, staff and others that LRT should not be approved unless some very serious issues are resolved.

I welcome all criticisms of my analysis. This is a work in progress. Please feel free to contact me with comments, questions, or related thoughts: rhaworth@sentex.ca

Parts of this report are excerpted from my blog: http://yappadingding.blogspot.com/search/label/lrt

More information: http://www.t4st.com

I have also published articles in local papers:

- Questions of rail plan go beyond money
- Public will never give up their cars
- No: We need other mass transit solutions
- Do residents want an LRT?

You can hear me in an online debate on LRT here: http://media.slightlysauced.com/SlightlySauced-Episode-33-The-Great-LRT-Smackdown.mp3

I am adding to this report regularly. A link to the latest version will always be available at http://www.t4st.com. In addition, here is a direct link to the download page for this report: http://www.t4st.com/index.php?title=File:LRT_impact_on_Waterloo.pdf

Are you interested in speaking out about LRT? All the contact info you might need is here: http://www.t4st.com/index.php?title=How_to_Help

Executive summary

This document provides evidence for the following propositions. The current plan for rapid transit in Waterloo Region is:

- **Unnecessarily costly**: Transit could be greatly improved at a much lower cost.
- **Not justified by reasonable ridership projections**: When analyzed from a number of angles, the region’s ridership estimates are far higher than is credible.
- **Bad for transit**: LRT is so expensive that it will result in a reduction of overall transit quality in Waterloo Region.
- **Inconvenient**: By stopping every 1.5 kilometers, it is not the right system to run on our main streets. In addition, in many cases the stops are too far from destinations, such as the malls and R+T Park.
- **Not designed for work commuters**: Increased ridership may occur due to university students living further from campus, but that won’t significantly reduce car use.
- **Unlikely to significantly reduce the need for road expansion**: The route is such that LRT will not lure commuters out of their cars and so will not reduce the need for road expansion.
- **Disruptive to other uses of roads**: LRT will be a major cause of congestion.
- **A threat to the vibrancy of uptown Waterloo**.
- **A threat to other important activities that need funding**: LRT will stretch regional and municipal budgets to such an extent that there will be cutbacks to the arts, recreation, parks...
- **Likely to raise taxes so much that some people will move to the townships and commute in to town, and businesses will relocate**.
- **Not supported by facts**: In the region’s attempt to sell rapid transit to residents, there have been many confusing, questionable or downright incorrect claims.

My proposal for how to proceed is:

- Look into applying aBRT to the entire route. (aBRT, or adapted bus rapid transit, travels in the same lanes as other traffic but utilizes signal priority, queue jumping, bus bypass shoulders on hiways, and other “smart transit” techniques.)
- Request the provincial and federal governments to allow the dedicated funds to go towards aBRT and more iXpress routes. (Note: This appears to not be a problem.)
- Rethink the route. For example, the route should not go through Waterloo Park and the University of Waterloo, but should instead go straight north on King.

If we proceed with LRT, then we must:

- Provide and examine comparable options: same route, different technologies.
- Hold a referendum.
- Subject all the region’s projections of ridership and costs to independent review.
- Defer any decision until all the concerns in this document are answered honestly and fairly.
aBRT: The better alternative?

Instead of spending a billion dollars to replace the iXpress route with LRT, the region could replace the iXpress route from end to end with adapted bus rapid transit, or aBRT. This is the technology they are currently proposing for part of the route from Fairview Mall to the Ainslie Street Station.

The aBRT option is like the iXpress but adds traffic signal priority, queue jumping, bus bypass shoulders on hiways, and other “smart transit” techniques. It would provide speeds comparable to LRT or BRT at a much lower cost. Brampton and York have both implemented aBRT.

After we have fixed our current bus system, we should start to attract more business commuters to transit. As transit usage grows, we may want to consider an LRT in future. The problem with BRT is that it is an expensive solution involving curbs or raised pavement to create dedicated lanes for the entire route, and switching it to LRT is very expensive. aBRT does not present this problem. It provides sufficient capacity for years to come, and it can be transitioned to LRT without financial loss.

aBRT also the provides more flexibility than BRT and especially LRT. Buses can be diverted temporarily in case of accidents or construction, and the route can be changed if need be.

Brampton recently installed an aBRT system called Zum (pronounced Zoom). Zum buses are light-weight hybrid diesel-electric. They operate on Brampton’s most high-demand corridors. The first five routes are budgeted at $295M and they criss-cross the city.

York region has an aBRT system called Viva.
Disruptions to normal uses of our roads

No left turns
The LRT tracks will either be raised or have curbs around them, and it will not be possible for cars to cross them. This means that, except for at specially designated intersections and certain exceptions in core areas, there will be no left turns over LRT tracks. Driveways and many streets will be inaccessible unless drivers continue past their destination and make a U-turn.

As I discovered recently when driving on St. Clair in Toronto on a Sunday morning, all those U-turns make traffic very slow because the traffic light has to have a U-turn only segment.

The following snippet of the region’s LRT map shows King Street where it crosses John and Union. There will be no left turns on to John or any of the driveways on King, so drivers will have to go to the next “full movement intersection” (such as John) and make a U-turn.

Buses alongside trains
The LRT stops on average only every 1.5 kilometers, so buses will be required to drop people off between stops. This means that a lot of buses will run alongside the LRT. The problem is that the LRT permanently obstructs two lanes of the street, so in most spots there is only one lane for cars and buses beside it. This is going to cause problems.

Traffic congestion
With the need for U-turns and extra buses, along with the reduction of streets from four lanes to two, there will be a lot more traffic congestion – even if the LRT can lure a lot of commuters out of their cars and on to LRT. But the route is so inconvenient, as described in earlier sections, that this does not seem likely.

Other transit
What Waterloo Region needs, much more than an overpriced luxury train, is more GRT buses. Enhancements are planned, but the region has decided that due to the cost of LRT, they will have to delay most of the bus enhancements until 2018.
Unknown costs of LRT

- **Downloading** — The region intends for the municipalities to pay for a portion of capital costs related to LRT. These are costs such as moving hydro vaults and poles, resurfacing roads, rebuilding curbs and sidewalks and moving light posts, and the cost to municipalities will at the least be related to the length of time before they require replacement. The region intends to shift the location of water pipes so that they are not under the tracks – an added cost. There may be costs to the municipalities to build parking garages at some LRT stations. In addition, for utilities such as gas, telecommunications and electricity, the region intends to download all or most of the cost to the company, which will be added costs passed on to consumers.

- **Possible causes of cost overruns** — Land acquisition costs could be higher than expected because the region will have to acquire a lot of land at one time. I have heard this issue described as “the black cloud hanging over LRT.” LRT could go over-budget before the shovels hit the ground. Another common local problem is contaminated soil.

- **The effect of cost overruns** — Our region pays one third of the cost of LRT up to a limit; after that we pay all of the cost. Large cost overruns are common (it has been estimated than on average in North America, LRTs run 40% over budget).

- **Tax increase estimates misleading** — A recent article in the Waterloo Chronicle revealed that the region’s figures for property tax increases are misleading. See [Confusion over tax impact of rapid transit](#), March 15. Plus, the estimated tax increases don’t appear to include the much higher operating costs of LRT. We need an independent review of the figures.

- **Total transit costs not known** — LRT is part of a transit solution that includes a lot of other bus lines. The cost of the Transportation Master Plan over 20 years is estimated to be $3.75B, according to regional staff. It is disingenuous at best to tell us the tax effect of LRT without telling us the tax effect of the total transit solution.

- **Costs of true alternatives not known** — In the region’s February 15 eleven-option report, the only bus option was a “Cadillac” version of BRT that goes all the way to the St Jacob’s market. We need to be able to really compare the options: LRT, BRT, aBRT, iXpress; same route, different technology.

- **Economic impact of construction** — Uptown Waterloo is booming with construction projects, which will exacerbate the disruption caused by construction of the LRT. As businesses in Toronto launch a hundred million dollar class action law suit against the TTC for disruptions caused by construction of the St. Clair LRT (link), it is especially important to understand where disruption will be severe and to estimate the costs.

- **Net economic impact of LRT** — The influx of federal and provincial money for LRT construction would have a positive benefit for our community. The high debt and high taxes caused by the local contribution would have a negative impact. What is the net impact?

- **Social impact of LRT** — Here are some questions we should be trying to answer: What programs will be cut when we are paying off our high debt from LRT? Will our relatively higher property taxes discourage people from living in Waterloo? (Paradoxically, the LRT, by raising taxes, could encourage more development in the surrounding countryside.) What is the impact on seniors and others on fixed incomes?
Questionable ridership Estimates

Currently there are 9,000 riders on the iXpress route that is slated to be replaced by LRT. The Region projects that ridership to rise to 27,000 the day LRT opens, and to rise to 56,000 by 2031.

The following table shows current population and daily LRT boardings for seven North American cities, and compares those figures to the Region’s projections for an LRT in 2031.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>City</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Boardings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dallas</td>
<td>4.5M</td>
<td>57,400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denver</td>
<td>2.9M</td>
<td>42,600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baltimore</td>
<td>2.7M</td>
<td>34,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Houston</td>
<td>2.3M</td>
<td>35,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charlotte</td>
<td>1.8M</td>
<td>20,200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phoenix</td>
<td>1.4M</td>
<td>37,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seattle</td>
<td>1.1M</td>
<td>26,600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waterloo Region (2031 est.)</td>
<td>462K*</td>
<td>56,000 **</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* The population of Waterloo region is estimated to reach 729,000 in 2031. However, the LRT route covers only K-W, whose population is estimated to reach 462,000 in 2031.
** These estimated boardings were reported in memo to Council, 23/12/09 File No. D10-40.

The figures for the other cities are from Wikipedia.

This analysis was done by Dave Ramsey. Here are Dave's conclusions:

- The estimated daily boardings of 56,000 in 2031 are overstated by at least 40,000.
- Just like every city in North America with a population of less than 1M, K-W will not need the LRT or BRT to cope with its public transit needs now or when the population reaches 462,000 in 2031.
- If LRT is installed, the numbers show it will be a financial disaster. With 15,000 daily boardings rather than the estimated 57,000, subsidies will skyrocket over those forecast. In 2002, after 24 years, Edmonton’s LRT had 36,000 boardings with an annual subsidy of $13.7M (see “ETS Light Rail Transit” bulletin). With less than half the boarders, the region’s subsidy will be about $21.7M instead of the $3.8M forecast (see ‘Connecting to the Future’ Summer 2009).

The region has decided that due to the huge cost of LRT, they will have to delay many of their planned enhancements to bus routes until 2018. This will affect the ridership estimates for LRT because buses are needed to get commuters to the LRT.
The effect on taxes

This is how the region presents information about its preferred option (link):

Notice the “average annual incremental household impact (for six years)”. It says it’s only $22.63. This was accepted for months until an investigative article in the Waterloo Chronicle revealed that “incremental” means that the $22.63 figure is valid only for the first year. In the second year the tax increase is \(22.63 + 22.63\), and so on, so by 7th year, the tax increase is close to $200.

But that figure is also suspect, for the following reasons:

- We pay one-third the capital costs of LRT up to $810M. If there are any cost overruns we pay 100% of the overrun. That means that a cost overrun of 33% will double what we pay. Recent North American LRTs have been 40% over cost, on average.

- Interest rates are rising. The regional figures assume low interest rates will continue.

- The figures are based on a region-wide average home assessment of $225K, which is much lower than many of our homes, especially in the city of Waterloo.

- It’s unclear how to calculate the tax after the first year because we don’t know if it will be compounded. For example, if the tax increase was 2% on $100, then the first year the tax is $102, but the next year it’s not \(100 \times 0.02\); it’s \(102 \times 0.02\). This can have a big effect by the 7th year.
False claims about public opinion

During the spring of 2011 the region held public forums at which they distributed comment sheets. These comment sheets listed 11 options for participants to evaluate. The comment sheets were not valid surveys. However, the region is claiming that their analysis of these comment sheets is an accurate measure of public opinion. For example:

- In the Preliminary Preferred Rapid Transit Implementation Option report says things like, "Staff have identified that rapid transit is preferred over business-as-usual... This is supported by the public response, with 78 per cent of all respondents stating support for rapid transit."

- A recent Record article says: “Councillors heard Tuesday that of the 705 people who attended region-held public meetings on transit in February and March and completed a questionnaire... "Based on these findings, there is strong support for rapid transit and specifically for light-rail transit," Nancy Button, regional director of rapid transit, told councillors."

The results of the comment sheets are invalid as a measure of public opinion, for the following reasons.

- **The question was biased** — The only option on the comment form that was not rapid transit was phrased like this:

  "**BU11 - Business as usual - no rapid transit (not considered feasible, especially because of its quality of life impacts, disruptive road expansion and because it does not align with the Council-approved Regional Official Plan and Regional Transportation Master Plan).**"

  I spoke with several people who are opposed to LRT but chose one of the other options because they thought the description meant that they weren’t allowed to choose that option. In any event, you can’t tell people that an option is not feasible and then use the results to claim that they don’t want that option.

- **The options were never real, comparable options** — The 11 options presented on the option sheet were described in the report Preliminary Preferred Rapid Transit Implementation Options. The 11 options included nine for light rail, one for BRT, and one for neither. The route for the single BRT option was longer than the LRT options, making it impossible to compare costs. Plus, there was no option for aBRT for the entire route. What we needed were real, comparable options that people could think about. The 11 options seemed designed to manipulate the discussion towards LRT.

- **The respondents were not a representative sample** — The first round of LRT forums were held two years ago, and many Waterloo region residents were extremely put off by them. They seemed to be little more than public relations exercises that talked down to attendees. Consequently, many people who are not pro-LRT simply refused to go to this round of forums.
Impact on the City of Waterloo

A Waterloo politician recently said to me, “I’m afraid that LRT is going to destroy the City of Waterloo both physically and financially.” This rest of this report details why that may be true.

In North America, the last few decades have shown us just how fragile downtown cores are. Uptown Waterloo is facing competition from new Wal-Marts, malls, and big box store complexes. Waterloo Town Square is currently losing nearly half its stores. Uptown Waterloo is a beautiful, friendly place and is much beloved by local residents, but we can’t assume that it will continue to flourish without great care.

There are people who believe the solution to our environmental problems is to make driving so inconvenient that people leave their cars at home. That's not how it works. There are wide roads and big parking lots at the Wal-Mart that was built just outside the boundaries of Waterloo. The expressways go right to the malls, the big box stores, and the industrial parks.

When you make it difficult to drive and park in a downtown core, you kill the downtown. Once it's killed, it is really difficult to revive it. We need improved transit, but we need transit that coexists with other uses of the roads: cars, buses, bikes, and pedestrians. Even the financial district of Toronto, arguably the busiest area in Canada, provides multiples lanes and is as convenient as possible for drivers. Creating traffic congestion in uptown Waterloo is not going to increase the use of transit; it will just decrease the use of the uptown.

**Impact of LRT on traffic in Uptown Waterloo**

The following sections describe problems with the currently planned LRT route at some of the uptown’s major intersections. Here is a map showing the route through the uptown. The red line in the map (on the right) shows the LRT route from Kitchener heading through the uptown towards north Waterloo, and the purple line shows the LRT heading back towards Kitchener. There is one uptown stop on each side of the loop, and each is near Willis Way (marked here with rectangles).

![Map of Uptown Waterloo showing LRT route](image)

**Impact of LRT on the King-Erb intersection**

The major intersection in uptown Waterloo is King and Erb. It is the busiest intersection in uptown, both for cars and pedestrians. Of all the problems that the proposed LRT will cause for uptown, this intersection may be the most serious issue.

The proposed LRT tracks run along the right side of King (the east side), and then turn left across the Erb Street intersection to run along the north side of Erb. The region's map is a little difficult to read, so here's my rendition of what the LRT planners are proposing for this intersection:

Currently Erb has three lanes that continue across King Street and is very busy: Erb is the main east-west artery across town. The LRT plan has only two lanes on Erb Street approaching King. One is a left turn lane, so only one lane on Erb will cross King. That single lane is also a right-turn lane. In addition, the LRT is estimated to run every 7 minutes, so every 7 minutes all traffic at King-Erb is going to come to a halt to let the LRT through. That is in addition to regular traffic signals.

Impact of LRT on the junction of Albert and Erb

When Erb crosses Bridgeport-Caroline, it becomes a one-way street heading east. It is a very busy street, taking traffic from the west end of the city to the Conestoga Parkway, as well as taking people to destinations uptown and elsewhere.

As it approaches King Street, two lanes of Erb Street split off to the left and become Albert Street. At the moment there is an orderly flow of traffic onto Albert. The region's LRT proposal, however, creates a problem here, because the LRT is going to run against traffic right through the lanes that are splitting off.

Here is a snippet of the region's LRT map with some annotation by me:

Erb Street is one-way with traffic running towards the top of this map. The LRT (represented by a thick pink line) is also one-way but is running towards the bottom of this map, against traffic.
Traffic on Erb that wants to split off to Albert will have to cut across the LRT tracks. The LRT is scheduled to run every 7 minutes, but there are no traffic lights to protect cars turning on to Albert: they have to drive on the tracks towards the oncoming trains. It's not even possible to put a stop sign here, unless they put one in the middle of Erb Street. A lot of cars turn off Erb on to Albert. This will cause traffic problems, but also it appears to be extremely unsafe. This plan could cause accidents.

Impact of LRT on the Erb-Bridgeport-Caroline intersection

Bridgeport Road becomes Caroline Street when it crosses Erb. It's a very busy intersection, and will get much busier when the Barrel Yards development is completed 100 meters to the west on Erb; the Balsillie School across the street is open; and the west-side subdivisions are built, as Erb is the main route across town to the Conestoga Parkway.

Here's a drawing I've prepared that reproduces the Region's LRT map for this intersection:

The heavy dashed lines are the LRT, with one line coming from King Street and heading into Waterloo Park, and the other line coming out of the park and heading back to Kitchener. The map also shows the current train tracks; these are infrequently used and a train employee walks across the road ringing a bell when the train crosses.

"Railway gates" will have bars that come down and flashing lights, like this: As you can see, there will be three railway gates at this intersection (marked in red), on Bridgeport, Erb and Caroline. The LRT is estimated to run every 7 minutes, but there are tracks running in two directions so a train will go by every 3.5 minutes. That means that every 3.5 minutes the gates will come down, lights will flash, bells may ring, and everyone will have to wait until the LRT goes by. That is in addition to the normal red lights that regulate traffic.

These changes to this very busy intersection are obviously going to cause mayhem for cars, bikes, and pedestrians. I myself drive, bike or walk through that intersection every day: it's extremely busy, and it will get busier as Waterloo densifies. Besides long backlogs of idling cars, this is going to cause motorists to flood onto side streets to avoid the mess, and to cut through the Waterloo Square parking lot. That means that the disruption is going to spread far beyond this one intersection.
Other potential problems of LRT in Uptown Waterloo

The following issues should be seriously examined to ensure that LRT does not harm the uptown.

North Uptown (King Street north of Erb)

What will the impact of LRT be on the part of uptown on King Street north of Erb? The northern part of uptown is being bypassed by LRT, which may make it appear more of a backwater. On the north-bound uptown loop, the LRT stop (at King-Willis Way) is not convenient to North Uptown, and the station on the south-bound loop (at Caroline-Willis Way) is really inconvenient.

The core of uptown: King between William and Erb

LRT will remove 30 to 50 parking spaces on King Street between William and Erb: all the parking.

Waterloo recently spent a lot of money creating a pleasing streetscape on King between William and Erb. The building of the LRT will require that the trees, planters, etc on King between William and Erb be destroyed. Waterloo has no budget to replace the streetscaping. The region is apparently not planning to pay for such reconstruction.

Because of the length of the trains, LRT stops are planned to be 180 feet in length. The King Street uptown LRT stop runs on the east side of King from Willis Way to Janet Lynn’s restaurant. This is not a wide sidewalk so it’s not clear how pedestrians can get by.

South Uptown (King Street south of William)

King Street between William and Union is on the verge of becoming “Uptown South” with all sorts of new development. None of that development will be served by LRT (as there is no stop in that stretch), but LRT will go down King Street in that area, disabling left turns into driveways and most streets, and disrupting traffic. Because LRT stops are so infrequent, buses will have to run alongside LRT, which will cause even further disruption to traffic.

Caroline south of William; and Allen between Caroline and King

LRT will potentially cause a great deal of traffic congestion on William, Caroline, Allen and Park streets at the same time as a 23-story condo and a townhouse development are being built in the area.

LRT is planned to run along Caroline, turn left at Allen, and then turn right onto King to head back to Kitchener. The tracks are planned to run along the west side of Caroline. Norman, Fullerton, and Freemont streets will all be closed at Caroline, so that they are dead end streets with access only from Park Street. It is unclear how the residents of the Catalina townhomes will be able to get garbage pickup. Car access to their residences will be difficult from Park.

Truck access to Vincenzo’s, Brick Brewery and the Erb & Good Funeral Home will all be negatively affected by LRT. The parking for the Adult Recreation Center will be decreased markedly. The Iron Horse Trail, which runs along Caroline, may be affected as it is unclear how LRT can coexist with two lanes of traffic without cutting into the trail.
**Waterloo Park**

In the following map, I have marked the LRT route through the park in red. That corridor currently has train tracks for an infrequent train and a wide walking/biking path.

The proposed LRT route cuts Waterloo Park in two. As with most parts of the LRT route, the park does not benefit from LRT (there are no stops) but it will be materially harmed by having LRT run through it.

Regional transit staff have not committed to whether fencing will be required alongside the LRT tracks. Given that a walking path runs alongside the train tracks, the zoo is beside the path, and there are usually children and dogs there, it seems likely that fences will be required. This “Berlin wall” could be an eyesore and will make it difficult to move between the two halves of the park.

Waterloo Park is the jewel of Waterloo. The current train traffic through Waterloo Park is infrequent, slow, and picturesque. We can’t allow Waterloo Park to be cut in two by LRT.

In the following photo, the path and tracks cross the entrance to the park across Silver Lake. The path is on the bridge to the right.
Creating density nodes in Waterloo

Public transit needs density to be successful, which is a major factor in why our regional sprawl doesn’t have successful transit. Density nodes are a much-needed development for Waterloo Region. In Waterloo, the proposed LRT stops do not seem to be well-located to increase density nodes. The proposed stops are:

- **Uptown** — The core is booming without any assistance. LRT is actually a threat to the densification of uptown because of the negative impact on car, bike and bus traffic.

- **University of Waterloo** — UW has LRT stops planned at Seagram Drive, the main campus, and the R+T Park on the north campus. As almost all the surrounding land for those locations is university owned, I’m not sure how LRT will help densify this area. Will LRT cause UW to enroll more students?

- **Northfield/Parkside** — This site may have densification potential. It is near the expressway.

- **Conestoga Mall** — This area is booming all on its own. LRT is not convenient to the mall; the buses stop right by the entrance, but the LRT station is up on King Street - quite a hike. Also, the region appears to be assuming that commuters will park at the mall and then take the LRT, which could force the mall to introduce parking fees. LRT could very well hurt the mall.

Let’s take a step back and consider how to create useful density nodes in Waterloo. From the perspective of creating density nodes, a better route might go down King, making uptown north of Erb more attractive; and have stops at King-University, King-Columbia, and on King north of Weber. That would create density nodes that might actually draw commuters out of their cars, instead of the current route which seems to be designed to give UW students a convenient way to live farther from campus.

**David Johnston Research &Technology Park**

The LRT is going to replace the existing iXpress bus route. As the following map shows, the iXpress currently stops in the middle of the David Johnston R+T Park (the bus stop is labeled iXp). The LRT, however, has to run along the rail tracks, so it stops in the north-east corner of the Park – more than a kilometer from some buildings. The university is planning to run a shuttle to take employees to their buildings.

When I was at Open Text there was insufficient parking and so some employees had to park behind the Optometry Building (in Lot X). Lot X is much closer to Open Text than the LRT stop will be. There was a
shuttle that stopped only at Open Text (not a dozen buildings, as the LRT shuttle will), and yet employees were disgruntled about having to park there, especially in winter. Women in particular were uncomfortable getting to their cars after dark. Open Text handed out free movie passes to try to placate employees who had to park in Lot X, and promised that the situation was temporary.

We are not going to lure commuters out of their cars by providing inconvenient transit. In this climate, a large percentage of our days are cold or rainy. Employees in the Park can easily afford vehicles; they work long hours; and they have no place in walking distance for lunch. They are hardly prime candidates for transit, and currently virtually no-one other than coop students takes the iXpress to the Park.

Currently, the R+T Park is booming — lots of construction, and much more announced. To continue to attract highly skilled workers, the Park needs to provide adequate parking and convenient transit. The proposed LRT stop is not convenient for the majority of buildings in the Park.

**Conestoga Mall and Fairview Mall**

The LRT is going to replace the existing iXpress bus route. At Conestoga Mall and Fairview Mall, the iXpress stops right by the entrance to the mall. The LRT stops will be on the main road, a hefty walk from the entrances.

The following map shows Conestoga Mall in purple. The iXpress stop (X) is conveniently located right by the main entrance of the mall. The proposed LRT stop (asterisk) is up on King Street. The red line shows the route LRT riders will have to walk to get to the closest mall entrance.

The walking distance, according to the legend at the bottom, is about 300 meters – well under the 600 meters that the region considers an acceptable distance from an LRT stop to a destination. However, if you have shopping or children, if you are elderly or have mobility issues, or if it is winter or raining, this distance is a problem. The LRT is much less convenient than the iXpress bus that it is replacing.

The situation is similar at Fairview Mall. The LRT stop is on Fairway Road, while buses stop conveniently close to the main entrance of the mall.

For both malls, another issue is that LRT riders will be able to park at the mall and take the LRT into town. This could result in the malls charging for parking, which is what happened at several Toronto malls that doubled as transit hubs.
May 24, 2011

Chair and Members of Council
Regional Municipality of Waterloo
Office of the Regional Clerk
150 Frederick Street
Kitchener, ON N2G 4J3

Attn.: Kris Fletcher, Director of Council and Administrative Services/ Regional Clerk

Dear Mr. Chairman, Members of Regional Council,

Re: LRT

There should be no doubt that we need LRT to handle the Region’s transportation needs under the growth expected over the coming decades. LRT will encourage intensification of our core areas along the spine of the cities, and will take some of the development pressure off our outlying areas. This will strengthen the principle of the countryside line that separates urbanized from non-urbanized areas, as laid out in the ROP. It should result in less urban sprawl and fewer unneeded shopping malls mushrooming along the fringes of the cities.

Is LRT the right choice for our needs, and is it flexible enough? A bus system would be more flexible, but it would fail in the key objective of providing a magnet for the core development that we need to take the pressure off the countryside line. Although the system will continue to evolve, it needs a core of permanence that people can plan on, that will be there today and tomorrow. For examples, we might look at some European cities – most have developed in a compact form, with high-density inner cores, and integrated transportation networks, including LRT. It works. Although Waterloo Region will not become a European city, we can still learn from them. But business as usual, with simply building more subdivisions and roads, will not work.

Will enough people use the rails? Students will certainly use it. But why would someone living in the east or west of Waterloo want to take a bus to the LRT line and then a train to, say, Fairview Park? The real value of the LRT will be to serve a different kind of ridership, namely those who will want to live within easy reach of the line and will use the train to reach downtown destinations or perhaps their place of work. This brings on the-chicken-or-the-egg argument: do we start with the LRT to boost downtown intensification that will draw the young upwardly mobile folks who will make the train a part of their daily routine (while possibly running partly empty trains for a while until that happens) – or do we first build up a viable downtown population that will justify the LRT and guarantee sufficient numbers from the start? In other
words, should we wait until there is a clear need? Can we promote the downtown intensification we need, without the LRT up front? I hope that among the emotionalism that has built up around the LRT issue, this question will be considered.

The real critical issue, however, is cost. Where will the money come from? According to Staff Report E-11-044 dated April 12, 2011, the preferred option is L3, with a cost of $818 million. Government grants would cover $565 million, leaving $253 million to be found. In addition, there are also the transit service enhancements planned under the RTMP. The staff Report suggests that these be delayed until the LRT is in place and that during the 2012 to 2018 period, only 40% of the planned transit expansion be implemented (Option L3b). The cost of this option is to be covered by a 10.5% increase in property taxes phased in over 7 years, or a 1.5% ramp-up per year. According to the Staff Report, this tax increase is considered to be “affordable”.

The 10.5% increase over 7 years is, however, not the end of the story, and this is where the Staff Report becomes vague. First, taxes will not stay at the level reached after 7 years. The Staff Report states that the implementation of the RTMP under the LRT scenario will lengthen to approximately 23 years, which would bring it up to about 2034. This means that we may be faced not with a 10.5% increase phased in over 7 years, but a 34.5% increase phased in over 23 years. For an assessment value of $225,000, a 1.5% annual increase over 7 years amounts to $175, and over 23 years it comes to $575. However, a $225,000 assessment is probably more near the bottom of the scale, particularly for Waterloo, so actual increases may be higher.

Secondly, inflationary increases will come on top of that. The cost of other services will increase as usual, staffers will expect salary raises, and more staff may have to be hired in response to growth. Just like the recent increase to pay for more police, these costs will have to be borne by the taxpayer. So again, the yearly jump will likely be considerably more than 1.5%.

Waterloo taxpayers in particular have reason to be concerned, as they have been burned before by the RIM Park fiasco. Just like now, the real costs of that project were not well understood until it was too late. Council then took the easy way out and socked it to the taxpayer, with a 21% tax increase phased in over 3 years. We are still paying that one, with no end in sight.

A 34.5% tax increase above the level of inflation, over 23 years, may not be a problem for some Waterloo income earners. But for people on fixed incomes, it means that an ever-increasing part of their incomes is eaten up by taxes, leaving less money for buying food. It could mean that some seniors – those who lived in their modest homes and paid their taxes all their lives to build this community, and who now subsist on small pensions – may be forced out of their homes because they may no longer be able to afford their taxes. It means that what the Staff Report calls “affordable” may not be affordable for some.

The staff report also mentions the possibility of “contribution from development charges, reduction of debt charges, and upload savings from the Province” which might bring the tax increase down slightly. That’s good news, but we need something more than vague possibilities.

The LRT, just like more policing, is part of the cost of growth. We are now asked to pay up front for more growth. If we have to pay for growth with ever-increasing taxes, there is something
wrong with the system. Should growth not pay for itself through the increase in the tax base? Are
development charges too low? Development charges should pay not only for water, sewers, and
roads, but also for the necessary upgrades in the transportation system that new growth will
require. Low greenfield development charges are probably one of the reasons why we now have
so many sprawling subdivisions covering our countryside. The Region, and in particular the City
of Waterloo, has no need to compete with other communities for investment through low
development charges – we have other advantages in the form of our unique high-tech sector and
our world-class educational institutions.

Who benefits from this growth? Investors and developers who undoubtedly have already bought
up property along the proposed LRT route will reap an immediate windfall profit. Toronto has
addressed a similar situation by imposing a development surcharge on properties along the new
Sheppard line. Throughout Waterloo Region, businesses will benefit through an increased
customer base. The amount in question, the $253 million shortfall at current estimates, is not a
huge amount for our world-class tech businesses that play in the billion-dollar range on the world
stage. Some of these are located at the UW Research Park, where LRT will have a stop. Will any
sponsors from the business community come forward? Will the “Barnraisers”, a group of
influential business people, step up to the plate?

But it is not the folks on fixed incomes who benefit from growth. These people mostly
experience the downsides of growth, such as higher crime rates, but rarely the benefits. It would
be highly unfair to ask these folks to fork out part of their meagre funds to pay for the capital
costs of LRT.

Finally, there is also the question of growth itself. Can we afford exponential growth at the
present rate, where the population doubles every 40 years, and where we will sooner or later run
against the limits of our resources? This is a question that will have to be faced some day. But I
will not go into that here.

Waterloo Region is a wealthy community. There is ample money around, but we need to look for
it in the right places. The LRT should be part of our future, but before we buy it, we need to
know where the money comes from.

I don’t think we need a referendum. If there were to be a referendum, the only question should
the one that the Staff Report neglects, namely who should pay for the upgrades in the
transportation system that are needed to pay for future growth.

What we need is leadership – leadership that can only come from elected Council. I trust Council
will find a responsible and fair solution.

Emil Frind, PhD, P.Eng.
Distinguished Professor Emeritus