

Leading with Transit (LWT) Position Paper – November 2018

“The future is not predicted or projected. It needs to be invented.”

- Adapted from Northrup Fry

Our future as a city, region, and province depends on the commitment we make to public transit. Leading with Transit (LWT) is a community-based initiative spearheaded by more than 20 public, private, institutional, and non-governmental organization partners. Leading with Transit means that:

- > We have to make bold transit choices now to shape HRM’s long-term vision.
- > We need to invest in transit first. Then ridership and development will support it.
- > We will have fewer cars and less parking and, consequently, more room for people, bikes, commerce, and life on the street.

Public transit is the key to change. Transit is an essential public service that connects people and places. It touches each of our lives. It’s more than buses – it includes light rail, ferries, trains, etc., and exists beyond the needs of the commuter. It can be the vision which determines HRM’s future. Ultimately, investment in great transit is not a choice. It is the only way to meet our collective expectations for healthier, more environmentally responsible and economically vibrant communities. It also makes it possible to rethink public spaces (particularly streets) as places that are not increasingly dominated by cars, focused on parking and designed primarily for movement. For those who can’t afford a car and for those who may be too old or too young or just not up to driving, transit is key to connecting with friends, discovering the city, and providing access to jobs and services.

To accomplish this, **transit needs to be for everyone and it needs to be the obvious best option and the first choice.** It can only meet these expectations if it is smart, frequent, reliable, and easily accessible. These qualities mean that transit needs to be separated from other traffic and the alignment needs to be seen as permanent and basic infrastructure that provides an essential public service.

The case for transit is consistent with HRM Council’s priorities and is highlighted in the Integrated Mobility Plan. Leading with Transit builds on existing short-term operational plans and is distinguished in three significant ways:

1. **Scope:**
 - a. The time horizon is longer, i.e. 50 as opposed to 5 years.
 - b. The boundaries are more extensive. It extends to the suburbs and reaches rural communities.
 - c. The targets in terms of population growth and ridership are much more aggressive.
2. **Permanence:**
 - a. Transit is seen as basic, fixed, and integrated infrastructure linked to land use and city form.
 - b. Transit alignment/stops are fixed. Buildings can incorporate transit.
 - c. Transit can be effectively integrated into plans and streetscapes now in preparation.
3. **Investment:**
 - a. It requires a major commitment by the public and private sector.
 - b. It needs to start now. New buildings can help pay for it.
 - c. It benefits individuals, redirects public expenditures on mobility/services, and contributes to improving the environment, health, and social equity.

Leading with Transit will only happen because it reflects community values. Our intention is to engage the community in designing, promoting, approving, and building LWT. To that end, Leading with Transit needs to be highly visible, clearly understood, and broadly supported.