PREAMBLE
On January 30th, 2014, McMaster students voted for enhanced service on the University 51 line for an additional cost of $6.50 per student and a twelve month bus pass for an additional cost of $6.00 per student. These changes brought the total per student bus fee to $138.65. Although this enhanced service represents a positive change for students, there is work that can be done to further improve the efficiency and efficacy of transit both on and around McMaster’s campus. Thus, this policy provides the MSU’s stances regarding transit, and includes discussions surrounding on-campus bus shelters, accessibility of transit, the implementation of Light Rail Transit, and the cost of transit. Below are the principles, concerns, and recommendations that the McMaster Students Union holds regarding these issues, summarized from the official general policy titled Hamilton Public and On-Campus Transit.

PRINCIPLES
The MSU believes that:

• Transit must be cost-effective for all members of the McMaster Students Union
• Bus shelters and campus transit should be accessible to the entire McMaster community
• Students should be adequately sheltered when taking public transit to and from the McMaster campus
• High service levels of transit are crucial to the McMaster student experience and student retention
• The implementation of Light Rail Transit (LRT) will positively benefit all members of the McMaster Students Union
• Students with disabilities should have the same ease of convenience when travelling to and from campus as all other McMaster students

CONCERNS
The MSU is concerned that:

• The cost of future HSR bus passes is potentially susceptible to increases
• Current bus shelters do not meet the minimum accessibility needed by students
with physical disabilities
• Bus shelters on campus are not equipped to adequately shelter students
• Buses do not operate late enough to adequately meet the needs of students
• Light Rail Transit has lost momentum in Hamilton City Council
• Universities tend to close campus due to weather midway through the day, which makes it difficult for students with disabilities who use D.A.R.T.S. to make it home
• The amount of locations in which D.A.R.T.S. currently drops off students on campus is very limited, and is a barrier for students with disabilities from getting to classes easily and on time

RECOMMENDATIONS
The MSU recommends that McMaster University:
• The MSU and HSR shall continue to strive to maintain a deal that is both cost effective and of high value to students
• All future projects, such as transit terminals on campus, should be placed in a centralized area on campus and be designed to accommodate students with disabilities
• The construction of higher capacity bus shelters on campus should occur to ensure all students are accommodated while waiting for transit
• The HSR should extend late night service and the frequency of buses
• Hamilton City Council should continue to support the implementation of Light Rail Transit in Hamilton
• Universities should announce school closures due to weather concerns in the morning when possible, and when not work with D.A.R.T.S. to ensure students with disabilities have available transportation
• D.A.R.T.S. should drop students off at as many campus buildings as possible, and have drop-off signs in place so that students are clear where these locations are

FURTHER READING
For more information about Access Copyright, visit the General Policies section of the MSU website to read the full Policy Paper.
POLICY PAPER

MSU Policy on Hamilton and On-Campus Public Transit
Background

Adequate and cost effective Hamilton public transit boasts significant value to students during their time at McMaster University. With concerns regarding student retention and the student experience growing in importance, this policy will set out a number of recommendations to ensure future negotiations with the HSR are acceptable to students. In addition, this policy hopes to set the direction for improving the accessibility and quality of McMaster on-campus transit.

In February of 1997, the Student Representative Assembly (SRA) initiated a referendum to seek an increase in the annual membership fee, for the purpose of establishing a Hamilton Street Railway (HSR) transit levy for all students. In the fall of 2013, the MSU successfully re-negotiated our agreement with the HSR on behalf of McMaster students. These negotiations occurred with the intention of presenting options for service enhancement to McMaster students. On January 30th, 2014 McMaster students voted for enhanced service on the University 51 line for a cost of $6.50 per student (7.5% increase) and a Twelve Month Bus Pass for a cost of $6.00 per student (7% increase). More specifically, the number of buses on the University 51 line would be increased between 9 am and 2 am each day, resulting in significantly improved service for students along the main community corridor. These changes will come into effect during the 2014/2015 academic year.

With these new changes voted in, full-time undergraduate students will pay a total of $138.65 for their twelve-month universal bus pass as per MSU Bylaw 5, Sections 2.2 and 2.3. To this end, this policy is intended to set guidelines for lobbying efforts for the MSU concerning future contract negotiations with the HSR as well as be the official stance of the MSU regarding campus transit.

Based on these concerns, students put forward the following recommendations:

- Cost effective transit for all MSU members
- More accessible campus transit for MSU members
- Increased capacity and number of bus shelters on campus

The MSU shall be guided by the following principles, concerns and recommendations when discussing campus transit.

Hamilton Street Railway (HSR) Contract

**Principle 1:** Transit must be cost-effective for all members of the McMaster Students Union.

As outlined above, the MSU has negotiated a deal with the HSR that both extends the number of service hours as well as the number of buses on the University 51 route for an additional cost of $12.50. This deal provides great value to MSU members and is a very cost-effective transit option for students. Moreover, cost effective transit shall be defined as transit that provides significant value for students in relation to its cost.
Cost effective transit has significant benefits for McMaster students. Firstly, a cost effective bus pass promotes McMaster students to discover their city, which in turn, fosters a stronger relationship between the McMaster and the Hamilton community. Moreover, the ability to get around Hamilton as well as to and from campus plays an important role in the retention of students after they graduate. Additionally, cost-effective transit is extremely beneficial to students that have debt and are unable to afford alternative transportation options.

**Concern 1:** The cost of future HSR bus passes is potentially susceptible to increases.

Every three years the MSU Board of Directors and representatives from the HSR are required to renegotiate the 12-month bus pass provided to full-time undergraduate students. Due to their efforts, the MSU Board of Directors 2013/2014 was able to negotiate a 12-month bus pass that provided great value to students while still being cost effective.

Students are concerned that future agreements between the MSU and HSR will not result in transit that provides value and is cost effective for students. This is because as the cost of education increases, students may not be able to afford public transportation in and around McMaster’s campus, while the use of this transportation is still a necessity.

**Recommendation 1:** The MSU and HSR shall continue to strive to maintain a deal that is both cost effective and of high value to students.

In order to maintain the level of value that the HSR is currently providing McMaster students, strong and constant communication must be maintained between the MSU and the HSR. Secondly, through the direction of the Student Representative Assembly (SRA), the MSU Board of Directors should meet with the local city councillor in order to ensure the best interests of students are being met.

**Transit Infrastructure**

**Principle 2:** Bus shelters and campus transit should be accessible to the entire McMaster community.

Accessible transit shall be defined as Hamilton transit that exists as a viable option for all McMaster students. In addition, on-campus transit includes bus shelters, D.A.R.T.S service, and transit options that transport students to and from McMaster’s campus. Moreover, meeting a greater range of transportation needs of the McMaster community will help build transit ridership. This will also help enhance the student experience of students attending McMaster as well as help to foster student retention upon graduation.

**Concern 2:** Current bus shelters do not meet the minimum accessibility needed by students with physical disabilities.

Future transit projects must be accessible to all members of the McMaster community. Shelters on campus lack the ability to accommodate a significant number of students with
physical disabilities in addition to non-disabled students. In particular, the bus shelters on campus are not completely accessible to students in wheelchairs and other physical disabilities. For instance, the bus shelter in front of MUSC is not accessible for those with physical disabilities, as the gap on the ground makes it difficult to enter. In addition, none of the bus shelters on campus have adequate signage for persons with visual impairments to be able to benefit from them. In terms of future changes, the Ontario Ministry of Transportation suggests that when refurbishing or building new bus shelters, accessibility can be taken into consideration by ensuring that the floor space can accommodate wheelchairs and scooters turning 180/360 degrees and that walkways have visual cues for people with low vision.¹

**Recommendation 2:** All future projects, such as transit terminals on campus, should be placed in a centralized area on campus and be designed to accommodate students with disabilities.

Given that current campus transit and bus shelters are not all as accessible as they should be, students recommend that all future transit projects and bus shelters (on campus) should be designed to accommodate students with disabilities. Furthermore, current campus bus shelters designated for campus use should be re-designed to be more accessible. This would include making sure there are ramps for entrance, and appropriate signage so that persons with visual impairments can more easily identify them.

A large part of this challenge is identifying key problem areas. The first way to do this is to do an accessibility audit of on campus bus shelters as well as HSR buses. The next step would be to work with McMaster University and the HSR to implement changes as soon as possible.

As an example of an ideal model, the city of Kingston has a very clear set of criteria in order to determine whether or not a bus shelter is accessible. Overall, the city of Hamilton should look into adopting these criteria in order to increase its accessibility to the McMaster and Hamilton community. An example of one of the criteria used by Kingston when determining whether or not a bus stop is accessible is a linkage from the bus pad (across the boulevard) to existing pathways and sidewalks.²

**Principle 3:** Students should be adequately sheltered when taking public transit to and from the McMaster campus.

Bus shelters with sufficient capacity are necessary if students are to be kept safe and comfortable during poor weather conditions while waiting for busses. Furthermore there is a lack

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[http://www.cityofkingston.ca/documents/10180/19838/Transit+Accessibility+Handbook/d9481953-5c14-4e0d-b86efd13bb1b1c2](http://www.cityofkingston.ca/documents/10180/19838/Transit+Accessibility+Handbook/d9481953-5c14-4e0d-b86efd13bb1b1c2)
of high capacity shelters on campus, which would allow for a significant number of students to take refuge during inclement weather.

**Concern 3: Bus shelters on campus are not equipped to adequately shelter students**

Not all bus stops on the McMaster campus have accessible bus shelters nearby. As a result, students are not always able to be kept safe during poor weather conditions. Moreover, the bus shelters that are on campus are not of a high capacity to adequately service all MSU members.

An example of a bus stop without an accompanying shelter can be seen just outside the McMaster University Student Centre (MUSC), near the Sterling entrance to the McMaster campus.

**Recommendation 3: The construction of higher capacity bus shelters on campus should occur to ensure all students are accommodated while waiting for transit**

Students are often waiting at campus bus shelters for long periods of time throughout the academic year. Additionally, during peak travel times the number of students waiting at bus stops often exceeds the capacity of bus shelters. With student enrolment increasing every year, future bus shelters will need to be built to accommodate an increase in the McMaster community ridership. Therefore, the MSU recommends that bus shelters in the future should be built to accommodate more students and should be maintained to accommodate an increase in the McMaster student population.

**Principle 4: High service levels of transit are crucial to the McMaster student experience and student retention.**

As stated in the principle above, high service levels shall be defined as frequent bus service during periods of high demand for students. During the academic year, high service levels are critical to enhancing the student experience of McMaster students for a number of reasons. Firstly, higher service levels of transit encourage students to break out of the “McMaster bubble” and discover the Hamilton community. Furthermore, higher transit service levels give students the opportunity to travel efficiently between destinations and thus foster a culture of student retention.

**Concern 4: Buses do not operate late enough to adequately meet the needs of students.**

As mentioned in the Background the MSU and HSR have made significant strides in terms of providing enhanced service (increased frequency and extended late night hours) for the University 51. Though this is surely a step in the right direction, more can be done to ensure the safety of students. This will be expanded upon in recommendation 4.

During the academic year students often stay on campus past the current HSR service times. This creates a safety issue because:
- Students are walking at late and unsafe hours of the night
- The travel time of students during late hours becomes significantly longer because buses do not run as frequent as they do during the day

In addition, the McMaster Students Union provides a late night walk home service for students who would prefer to be accompanied on their walk home. The service operates from 7 pm to 1 am from Sunday to Wednesday, while operating from 7 pm to 2 am from Thursday to Saturday. ³ Although this service provides an excellent resource for students, the lack of late night buses after 2 pm becomes a more prominent issue when students cannot also access this walk home service.

**Recommendation 4:** The HSR should extend late night service and the frequency of buses.

As outlined previously, with the new changes in place MSU members will now receive increased service and extended hours starting in the 2014/2015 academic year. While commitment by the HSR is a great start, the MSU also recommends increasing service and extending hours of other bus routes with a high ridership of students. These routes include:
- Route 1/A – King
- Route 5/C – Delaware
- Route 10 – B-line Express

The MSU will continue to lobby the HSR for increased bus service at peak hours to accommodate the needs of students. As mentioned in previous recommendations, one way to help facilitate these recommended and potential future changes is strong and continued communication with the HSR. Through open and clear communication, the MSU Board of Directors can communicate whether or not the current levels of service adequately meet the needs of students and if not, what needs to be changed.

**Light Rail Transit (LRT)**

**Principle 5:** The implementation of Light Rail Transit (LRT) will positively benefit all members of the McMaster Students Union.

The opportunities for students presented by the proposed LRT expansion include faster access to the City of Hamilton, 24-hour transit service to the downtown core and an environmentally friendly transit solution. Light Rail Transit will decrease travelling times, ease congestion on heavily used routes and directly benefit the lives of McMaster’s off-campus student population. LRT will also directly benefit the student population of McMaster and the community as a whole by developing another method by which students can interact with the community.

After conducting an extensive two-phase feasibility study into LRT in 2008, the Hamilton City Council voted unanimously to support the implementation of Light Rail Transit in Hamilton and

³ https://www.msumcmaster.ca/services-directory/3-student-walk-home-attendant-team-swhat
move forward with a Light Rail Transit Plan. The final report was strongly in favour of LRT as the preferred “rapid transit” option.  

**Concern 5:** Light Rail Transit has lost momentum in Hamilton City Council.

In the fall of 2013, Metrolinx identified LRT as one of its high priority projects. Aside from establishing a later ‘funding strategy’ for LRT, there has not been consistent support from Hamilton City Council. Recently in fact, Hamilton City Council considered a request for a 302 million funding amount from the provincial government for new express buses in Hamilton. Mayor Fred Eisenberger has publicly declared that this request could place Hamilton’s LRT dreams in jeopardy, as it would potentially put LRT funding low on the priority list for the provincial government. Thus since the LRT initiative is still being challenged in Council, the MSU believes Hamilton City Council should uphold its 2008 unanimous decision to move forward with a Light Rail Transit plan in Hamilton.

**Recommendation 5:** Hamilton City Council should continue to support the implementation of Light Rail Transit in Hamilton.

The implementation of Light Rail Transit will positively benefit students of the McMaster community by:

- Providing faster access to the City of Hamilton
- 24-hour transit service to the downtown core
- Providing an environmentally sustainable transit solution

To help emphasize the MSU’s stance on the issue of LRT in Hamilton, clear and consistent communication must be maintained between the MSU and Hamilton City Council. Secondly, the MSU also recommends the prioritization of the B-Line (LRT line) as it will have the largest positive impact on McMaster students.

On the provincial level, in March of 2014 Premier Kathleen Wynne announced that gas tax and HST will not be increased in order to generate the $2 billion needed to fund the LRT project. More than a year later in 2015, Kathleen Wynne’s government promised to fully fund the 811 million required for light rail transit stretching from McMaster University to the City’s Eastgate Square. This announcement was met with high approval by the MSU, and thus students

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4 General Issues Committee Report 13-006 February 25 2013  
http://www.hamilton.ca/NR/rdonlyres/5C53CB7F-B4F4-4AD7-8DE9-4FE1671A5F49/0/Feb25_GIC_Report_13006.pdf


http://www.hamiltonrapidtransit.ca/index.php/project-information/b-line-key-facts/  

7 Van Dongen, Matthew. Mayor says Hamilton has provincial support – behind closed doors. The Spectator, 2015. Retrieved from  
strongly recommend for Hamilton City Council to work towards ensuring this funding is provided quickly and efficiently to build LRT infrastructure in Hamilton.

**On-Campus Accessibility**

D.A.R.T.S. (the Disabled and Aged Regional Transportation System) is a service contracted under the HSR department called Accessible Transportation Services. The purpose of D.A.R.T.S. is to provide specialized transit for those with disabilities, and is an important service for many students commuting to and from McMaster’s campus. While recognizing its importance, the MSU has also identified some areas where D.A.R.T.S. positive effect can be amplified. Many of the following concerns and recommendations were voiced after the MSU’s Accessibility Forum, hosted for the first time in November 2014.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Principle 6: Students with disabilities should have the same ease of convenience when travelling to and from campus as all other McMaster students.</th>
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</table>

Students with disabilities often have different challenges when commuting to and from campus than other McMaster students. In recognition of these differences, the transportation, infrastructure, and policy in and around McMaster should reflect this reality, and actively work towards improving the mobility of all students, with specific attention paid towards those with disabilities. These challenges of transportation are not limited to any one area of the student community, but include on-campus and off-campus bus terminals, as well as bus pathways leading into campus, into student housing areas, and the City of Hamilton too.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Concern 6: Universities tend to close campus due to weather concerns midway through the day, which makes it difficult for students with disabilities who use D.A.R.T.S. to make it home.</th>
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Before entering post-secondary education, many students are used to the high school policy of school closures due to weather being declared in the morning, before students have left for school. At McMaster however, university closures often occur midday, meaning that many students have already arrived on campus. Specifically, for students with disabilities who use D.A.R.T.S. to travel home, these unexpected and unpredictable school closures can make it difficult for them to plan their transportation home. The main reason for this is because D.A.R.T.S. rides need to be booked up to seven days in advance as it is a first-come first-serve service, and that is why unpredictable closures may disrupt the process and be a barrier for students getting home.

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8 [http://www.dartstransit.com/about-darts](http://www.dartstransit.com/about-darts)
The MSU recognizes that McMaster University wants to provide classes when possible without jeopardizing the safety of students, faculty, and staff. To accomplish this goal the MSU also recognizes that the university may often find this compromise in providing morning classes before weather has worsened and cancelling evening classes once it has beneficial. However, these announcements should be more clearly articulated to students to ensure that those with disabilities have the means of arriving home safely and efficiently. For instance, if university officials have the knowledge to decide at what time university will be closed, this information should be announced at the earliest possible time. Ideally this would be before classes have begun, but if this were not possible students would still welcome earlier announcements to better plan out their travel home. Moreover, if classes are cancelled midway throughout the day, McMaster should enter talks with D.A.R.T.S to expand service so that students with disabilities can arrive home efficiently. Also, these announcements should be delivered to students in a variety of ways, including through email, the McMaster website, twitter, and on-campus announcements.

**Recommendation 6:** Universities should announce school closures due to weather concerns in the morning when possible, and when not work with D.A.R.T.S. to ensure students with disabilities have available transportation.

Namely, D.A.R.T.S. drops users off at MUSC and JHE. Depending on where their classes are, students who are dropped off at these locations may have a difficult time arriving to their classes without being late. In addition, at the MUSC location there is no D.A.R.T.S. drop off sign, which can make it difficult for these vehicles to load their passengers. Overall, both of these concerns combine to make it hard for most students using D.A.R.T.S. to attend their classes on time and travel to and from campus from their place of residence.

**Concern 7:** The amount of locations in which D.A.R.T.S. currently drops off students on campus is very limited, and is a barrier for students with disabilities from getting to classes easily and on time.

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**Recommendation 7:** D.A.R.T.S. should drop students off at as many campus buildings as possible, and have drop-off signs in place so that students are clear where these locations are.

By having more locations than just JHE and MUSC to drop off students, D.A.R.T.S. can ensure that students are not late for classes, while also saving students from having to travel potentially long distances after being dropped off. Depending on weather conditions, this saved distance can be particularly meaningful for many students. In addition, by setting up appropriate signs at each location, the university can help students avoid confusion as to where to meet D.A.R.T.S.
vehicles, which also saves time and eliminates any changes that students will miss these vehicles when needing rides back to their place of residence.
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