

MEMO

To: Jeremy Levi – Mayor of Hampstead, QC

From: Michael Frajman – Transit planner

Subject: Support for new commuter rail station on exo2/Saint-Jérôme line

Date: March 5, 2024

Hampstead should “throw-in” behind our peers in neighboring Côte Saint-Luc in lobbying the City of Montreal and the Autorité régionale de transport métropolitain (ARTM) to commit to studying the creation of a new commuter rail station near the northwestern corner of our town. (Côte Saint-Luc, 2022) This proposal will see a new commuter rail station open along an existing right-of-way within Côte Saint-Luc. Hampstead should consider collaborating in this to have the station moved closer to our borders or for a station of our own to be considered as well. “Inner” Côte Saint-Luc is currently only served by two arterial roads, one of which must also serve most of “New” Hampstead (See Fig.1 and 2). These areas represent half of both our Town’s developed land. The high proportion of our populations that it serves leads to adverse traffic conditions. Pursuant to the closed-door meetings last month between the Planning Advisory Committee (PAC) and our Town’s elected officials, the PAC deems it necessary to pursue transit alternatives to decongest our historically car centric suburb.

The current conditions that merit the need for longer term capital solutions include:

- Hampstead’s status as a **bedroom community whose residents commute primarily by car** to jobs in Downtown Montreal or to industrial parks in the west of Montreal;
- **Unwillingness of residents and politicians to sacrifice parking and right-of-way to cycling infrastructure** (Madger, 2023);

- Hampstead's **hemmed-in geographic position and circuitous street grid which make trips by car inefficient** and have motorists bottlenecked and competing with drivers from next-door Côte Saint-Luc to reach nearby highways (CAA, 2017) (See Fig.2 and 3).

This is a **politically opportune moment to advocate for improved commuter rail and attempt to build a multi-municipality and multi-agency coalition to do so.**

- *Côte Saint-Luc* has been in the process of **advocating for a new commuter rail station for several years** to alleviate its own roadway bottlenecks. They are currently in the midst of revising their own town plan to account for more mixed-use zoning and transit diversity (Madger, 2015) (*Côte Saint-Luc*, 2022).
- *Montreal* progressive administration have also been strong advocates for public transit since first taking power in 2017.
- The progressively aligned administration in the adjacent burrow of *Notre-Dame-de-Grâce–Côte-des-Neiges* could also be sold on the idea of **taking traffic off arterial roads that abut their territory and diverting usership from already crowded bus lines** like 51 that their residents heavily rely on (Again see Fig.3, they too must access A15 and Côte Saint Luc Road).
- *ARTM*, which governs regional transit planning, currently prefers more traditional transit technologies when it comes to capital planning, when compared to the REM's autonomous vehicles, and is studying commuter rail on the East End of the Island of Montreal (CBC, 2024).

This capital project has some **attractive advantages**:

- The **rail right-of-way already exists** and has commuter service (exo2/Saint-Jérôme) meaning **only the station(s) and accessible pathway need to be constructed** (see Fig.4);
- Further, **no on-street parking will need to be eliminated** to create new right-of-way as with bike or bus lanes;
- **No park and ride facility will be necessary** as the station can directly serve the residents of Inner Côte Saint-Luc and New Hampstead who live in walking distance, and the few who need to drive can make use of Hampstead free and abundant on-street parking;
- **Diverting Inner Côte Saint-Luc and New Hampstead residents to commuter rail will take traffic off of Fleet Road** which suffers from a large volume of fast-moving traffic in a residential milieu, calming it can open up new planning opportunities down the line.

As Hampstead nears the end date of its master plan in 2030, we must begin thinking anew how the Town can keep pace with the times. **The PAC recommends exploring improved public transit access and building partnerships with our municipal neighbors to put us in a strong position when our master planning process begins.** Supporting commuter rail expansion through our neighbors' ongoing efforts can also help to expedite its eventual implementation which, in turn, will help to reduce car traffic and improve pedestrian safety in Hampstead. Conducting a traffic study of the New Hampstead area should be a next step.

APPENDIX



Figure 1: Diagram showing one proposed location of a new commuter rail station in Côte Saint-Luc. Hampstead, through collaboration and support, can alternatively push for the site to be further up the line or perhaps for a secondary station altogether.
(Source: Côte Saint-Luc, 2022)

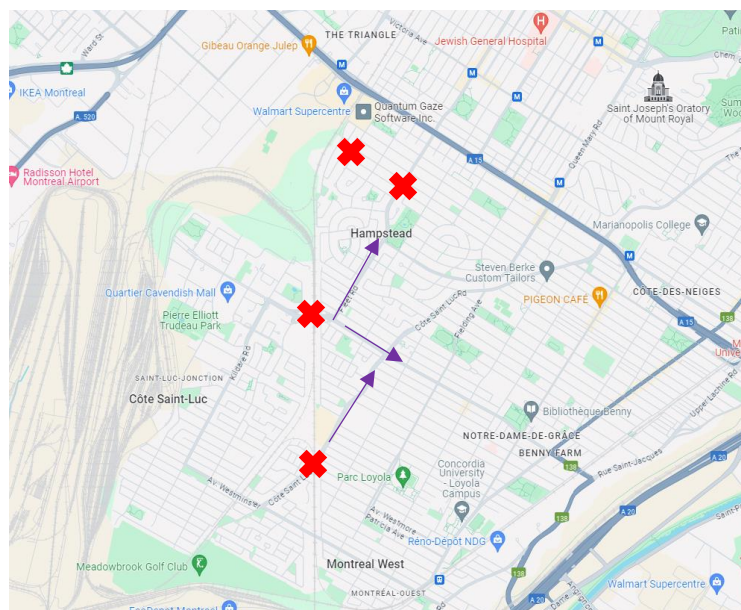


Figure 2: Inner Côte Saint-Luc (north of the rail track) and New Hampstead (north of the upper most purple arrow) are car dependent with the red “x”s showing bottlenecks in the road network. The upper most purple arrow represents Fleet Road with residents of both towns must crowd onto to reach the nearest highway access, A15.
(Map source: Google Maps)



Source: CPCIS analysis of data provided by HERE and provincial/local departments of transportation.

Figure 3: Canadian Automobile Association listed the traffic bottlenecking around A15 as some of the worst in the country. No doubt traffic coming from Hampstead along Fleet Road is contributing.
(Map source: CAA 2017)

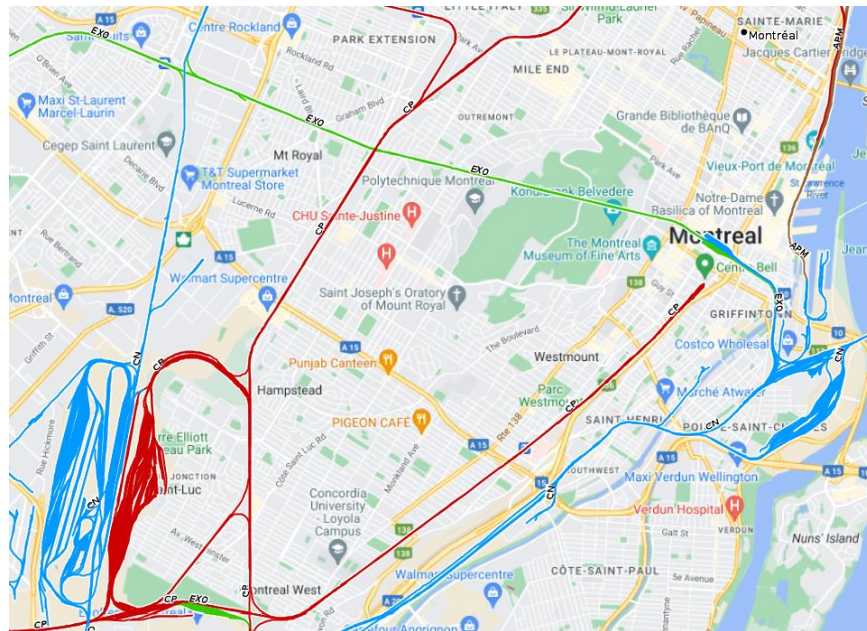


Figure 4: Existing rail rights-of-way in the West End of Montreal. Commuter trains currently use the light green and red alignments belonging to exo and Canadian Pacific.
(Map source: Canadian Rail Atlas)

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