



## **Referendum on the Hamilton Street Railway (HSR) Bus Pass Agreement with McMaster's Graduate Students for 2017-2020**

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The McMaster Graduate Student Association (GSA) negotiated with the Hamilton Street Railway (HSR) regarding the Graduate Students bus pass for the next three years.

### **Historically**

Since 2014, graduate students have paid the following fees:

|                         |   |
|-------------------------|---|
| 2014 – 2015 = 12 months | \$182.70  |
| 2015 – 2016 = 12 months | \$182.70  |
| 2016 – 2017 = 12 months | \$198.66 which is equivalent to 210% of the monthly adult bus pass fee. |

Currently, Graduate students pay a fee of \$109.66 for the 8-month pass (Fall and Winter Semester) with an additional \$89 for the summer pass fee, for a total amount of \$198.66. The bus pass costs are calculated at a percentage of one adult monthly bus pass (2016-2017- Monthly Adult Bus Pass- \$101.20).

### **The 2017-2020 new HSR bus pass agreement with McMaster University's Graduate Students Association**

Over the last several months the GSA has partaken in discussions about a new agreement, which were held not only with the HSR, but also the University's administration, and the MSU. The GSA negotiated the bus pass fees for graduate students alongside the MSU. The HSR noted that a fee increase was necessary due to a defeat that was being created in a model that is intended to be breakeven; whereas, the tax payers do not subsidize student ridership and visa versa. However, the challenge as noted with both the MSU and the GSA was that HSR was not able to offer analytics on student usage. However, HSR did present information on other Academic campus bus passes and we were indeed one of the lowest transit passes in Ontario. The MSU and the GSA with the support of the University were able to negotiate lower rates for McMaster Students by presenting arguments such as but not limited to the fact that there is an inherent difference between our campus and the comparators - we have a high commuter population, and those not commuting often live in close surrounding areas like Westdale (creating less usage on all lines), among a plethora of other arguments.

Accordingly, the GSA and the HSR were able to agree on the following:

- Whereas the adult bus pass costs \$101.20 per month since September 2016, graduate students will pay only \$232.70 for twelve (12) months for the year of 2017-2018 (See the Table below).
- The twelve (12) months bus pass fee proposed by HSR will be equivalent to two (2) months of regular adult bus pass.
- The new bus pass fee will include an administrative fee of \$5 for the Presto Card. The HSR intends to implement the Presto Card system for McMaster Students to better track and forecast ridership and improve services provided to students.

**The 2017-2020 HSR bus pass fee for graduate students will be based on the following calculation**

|           | The rate based on the monthly adult bus pass | Base     | Total with PRESTO Integration (\$5 for Presto) |
|-----------|--|----------|--|
| 2017/2018 | 225%   | \$227.70 | \$232.70                                       |
| 2018/2019 | 239%   | \$252.38 | \$257.38                                       |
| 2019/2020 | 254%   | \$279.40 | \$284.40                                       |

This calculation was assumed based on anticipated usage with concessions being made understanding that the city has a vested interest in students exploring Hamilton as it has a significant effect on population retention in the city. McMaster Graduate students have one of the lowest transit passes in Ontario, by a significant margin compared with other post-secondary institutions and, HSR has ensured its commitment to improving services for students. For instance, Route 51 has extended services into downtown until 3am, which will continue through this contractual obligation until 2020.

Now that the GSA and the HSR have arrived at what is believed to be a fair and equitable bus pass fee agreement for graduate students, you are invited to vote on whether or not to accept this agreement.

**The referendum question**

*Do you agree to pay the following fees for HSR service over the next three years?*

2017 - 2018: **\$232.70** per annum

2018 - 2019: **\$257.38** per annum

2019 - 2020: **\$284.40** per annum

**N.B:** In the absence of approval of the above fees, graduate students will not receive an HSR bus pass at a preferred rate for the three years.

**Potential results of the referendum**

The results of the vote will be the following:

- If you vote “YES” to the fee increase, you will mandate the GSA to sign the 3 year agreement with the HSR following the fee increase indicated in the table above.
- If you vote “NO” to the fee increase, there will be no agreement between the GSA and the HSR. Graduate students will then have to pay for their bus passes individually at the full adult rate (should they choose to travel via this method). THEREFORE, A NO VOTE WOULD CONSTITUTE HAVING NO BUSS PASS FOR GRADUATE STUDENTS.

There is still more to be done with respect to the HSR contract in terms of determining how much the University and the GSA receive from the charge in terms of administrative fees from the overall collection (bus passes and Presto Cards). However, the stakeholders are enthusiastic that we are all on the same page.