

City of Hamilton Public Works Department Climate Lens

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In this webinar, Andrea McDowell from City of Hamilton presented on the City's Public Works department climate lens, sharing insights into the development and implementation of the lens, and how it helps to ensure climate change considerations are integrated into decision-making.

Presenter

- Andrea McDowell, Senior Project Manager, Sustainability, City of Hamilton

Key Findings

- The goal of the City of Hamilton's Public Works (PW) climate lens is to avoid addressing climate issues in isolation (at the start, middle, or end), as this would not ensure effective implementation. Instead, the lens is woven into each stage, allowing for the right questions to be asked at the right time, ensuring meaningful impact.
- By applying the climate lens throughout the process, the lens can help to avoid making changes late in the project when foundational assumptions are already set and difficult to adjust.
- Projects begin with budget submissions and project charters, which set the foundation for integrating the climate lens right from the outset.

Presentation Overview

- The climate lens addresses greenhouse gas emissions and adaptation throughout various stages of projects, including construction, maintenance, and impact assessments.
- Climate considerations are incorporated early in the project process, including in budget submissions and project charters, ensuring climate goals are addressed from the start.
- Disposal and decommissioning are excluded from the climate lens due to their distant future timelines. It's difficult to predict future technologies and regulations for these stages.
- There is a need to ask relevant climate-related questions at every stage of a project, ensuring climate considerations are integrated at the right times during the project lifecycle.
- While operational emissions (e.g., energy use) are often well-addressed, focusing only on internal emissions misses the broader impact of city choices on the community's emissions. The goal is to include the full life cycle of activities to drive community-wide emissions reductions.
- Successes and failures can be used to improve future projects and refine strategies.

- There is a need for adaptation strategies both within the city's infrastructure (e.g., building resilience to climate impacts) and for the community (e.g., protecting residents from climate risks)
- Staff are adept at addressing climate impacts within their areas of expertise, but the climate lens was designed to encourage staff to consider broader climate issues outside their usual focus areas.
- A mandatory project charter template for new projects asks project managers to consider both emissions and adaptation, by identifying emission sources during the project (e.g., energy) and considering how the project can help the community reduce emissions (e.g., fuel switching).
- A mandatory field has been added to budget submissions, asking how the project aligns with Hamilton's climate action strategy. This helps with tracking climate contributions and prioritizing projects for funding, although not all projects will be climate-focused
- The next phase focuses on the tools that to connect those beginning phases to the end phases. The two major ones are environmental assessments and planning and design.
- It will shortly be a requirement for any project that does need an environmental assessment in the department to include a discussion of the climate lens in that environmental assessment. Anything that was identified in the project charter template, or in that earlier climate lens. The matrix screening will have to be discussed in the environmental assessment with the options for dealing with it.
- In planning and design, how are we looking at incorporating those needs into the design so that they can be carried forward into the tender process? Part of that includes a checklist of options for addressing emissions and impacts.
- The climate lens is intended to help identify and document gaps. This documentation helps advocate for the necessary resources to meet climate goals in future projects.
- Non-infrastructure projects (no construction, maintenance, operations)
- The climate lens can be applied to ensure that climate commitments are included in procurement and tender processes, so the right services and actions are secured.

Additional Resources

- [Hamilton Climate Action Strategy](#)

Contact Information

Please reach out to us at any time with questions, input, or for additional information.

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