

POLICY PROPOSAL PACKAGE



PROPOSAL TOPIC: HYPERLOOP ADVOCACY POLICY

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INTRODUCTION

The SU invites undergraduate students at the University of Calgary to submit policy proposals on important issues that affect their post-secondary education experience. The SU exists to serve and represent students. Policy proposals provide students with the opportunity to voice their concerns and identify solutions to important issues.

INFORMATION FOR PROPOSAL AUTHORS

1. Well-researched and comprehensive policy proposals can play a crucial role in the creation and amendment of Union Policy. The SU uses policy proposals to:
 - Identify student concerns;
 - Track issues over time; and
 - Make informed and timely decisions regarding issues that are important to students.
2. Proposal authors will receive an initial response from an SU Executive within five business days after a proposal has been submitted to the SU Main Office.
3. SLC, its Committees, the General Manager, and Chief Returning Officer have the authority to make Union Policy decisions as outlined in the Union Bylaw and the SU's Policy Development and Review Policy. Valid policy proposals will be forwarded to the appropriate governing body for consideration. Proposal authors will receive notice regarding timelines and decisions made in response to their proposals.
4. Policy proposals that are incomplete or outside of the of the SU's policy making authority will not be considered.

The Students' Union urges all proposal authors to review all relevant SU policy prior to writing proposals, including the SU Constitution, Union Bylaw and the Policy Development and Review Policy. These documents provide additional information regarding the policy approval process.

PLEASE FORWARD YOUR COMPLETED PROPOSAL TO:

*Attn: SU Policy Analyst
251 MacEwan Student Centre
2500, University Drive NW
Calgary, Alberta T2N 1N4*

Office hours: Monday to Friday 8:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.

Once received, proposals are forwarded to the appropriate SU governance body for review and consideration.

PROPOSAL CRITERIA

All valid policy proposals must:

- Include the submission of this policy proposal package, completed in its entirety;
- Address all of the questions contained in this policy proposal package;
- Be in regard to a post-secondary education issue that impacts the majority or a specific, measurable demographic of undergraduate students at the University of Calgary; and
- Propose a policy change that is in accordance with the SU's policy making authority.

POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND REVIEW PRINCIPLES

The SU may adopt new or revise existing policy to:

- Comply with legislative requirements;
- Ensure consistency with other Union Policy;
- Respond to and establish a policy stance on issues that impact undergraduate students;
- Align with the SU's strategic plan;
- Give substance to the SU's vision, mission, and values;
- Inform and guide the implementation of existing Union Policy;
- Provide SLC with parameters for effective governance; and
- Communicate the SU's vision, mission, and values to Active Members, the campus community, and the public.

All Union Policy shall:

- Adhere to the Alberta Post-Secondary Learning Act (PSLA) and regulations, policies, and orders issued under its authority;
- Adhere to any other relevant municipal, provincial, and federal legislation;
- Adhere to relevant University of Calgary policy and procedures;
- Be consistent and coherent with other existing Union Policy;
- Support the SU's vision, mission, and values;
- Encourage increased transparency and accountability;
- Reflect community values;
- Enable appropriate and meaningful involvement of Active Members;
- Permit the General Manager to exercise professional judgment in discharging responsibility for the administration and operations of the SU;
- Be broadly stated to provide guidance and the flexibility to address diverse situations while ensuring consistency across the system;
- Be capable of implementation, review, and evaluation; and
- Be developed and reviewed with appropriate stakeholder consultation, thorough research, and analysis.

Existing Union Policy may only be repealed if no longer relevant due to changes in legislation, university policy, or within the SU.

Existing Union Policy may only be amended or repealed in accordance with the principles described above.

IMPORTANT DEFINITIONS

Union Policy is defined in the Union Bylaw as any official statement of values, beliefs, principles, or processes of the Union as outlined in the Constitution, Union Bylaw, Procedures, Resolutions, or Terms of Reference which are amenable in the proper form dictated by either the Constitution or the Union Bylaw. Policies and procedures may be used as guides in interpretation of the Constitution and Union Bylaw.

Governance Policy is defined as Union Policy which provides strategic direction and sets boundaries for management of the organization's affairs. Governance policy includes how the Students' Legislative Council (SLC) defines and delegates authority, how SLC governs itself, and its expectations of Active Members (all undergraduates at the University of Calgary).

Advocacy Policy refers to how the SU represents the interests of Active Members regarding post-secondary education issues to external groups including university administration, government, media, and other organizations. Advocacy Policy may seek to challenge the development of, improve existing, or establish new, policies or legislation that may impact undergraduate students.

Operational Policy refers to the procedures and guidelines established by the SU's General Manager to direct the implementation and achievement of desired outcomes dictated by other Union Policy.

Procedures are defined as a type of Union Policy approved by SLC, a Committee or the General Manager that specifies a series of actions or operations to be executed in the same manner to always obtain the same results in regard to the implementation of Union Policy.

Stakeholders refer to individuals and groups affected by Union Policy and have a vested interest in its implementation. Stakeholders may include but are not limited to Active Members, student clubs, SU staff, university faculty and administration, members of the Calgary community, and other campus organizations.

APPLICATION CHECKLIST

Prior to submission please ensure your proposal is complete:

- Is your contact information complete and accurate?
- Have all written sections been completed?
- Have all supporting documents (e.g. endnotes, tables, charts, bibliography, etc.) been attached?

CONTACT INFORMATION:

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Address: 123 Apple Grove Way

Are you currently a: Student SU Staff

Faculty: Schulich School of Engineering

Year of Program: 2

PROPOSAL SUMMARY:

1. Identify the issue that your proposal is addressing.

Travel by air, road, water, and rail is expensive, slow, and not environmentally sustainable. Students commuting to the University of Calgary have been forced to rely on travel by road and/or rail under the auspices of Calgary Transit (CT). This proposal serves to suggest that these travel options are deeply inappropriate for the needs and mandate of undergraduates, the university, and Calgarians at large.

This proposal suggests that in response to this issue, the Students' Union (SU) should adopt a Hyperloop advocacy stance to urge the city to incorporate this archetype of modern transportation. The Hyperloop is a self-powered transportation system comprised of magnetically levitated pods with the ability to travel at airline speeds at a fraction of the cost. The concept was introduced in 2013 by inventor Elon Musk, founder and CEO of Tesla Inc. and SpaceX. This design can replace the current LRT line, easing city-wide discontent with CT.

2. What is your recommended course of action? What is the policy change that you are asking the SU to make?

This proposal urges the SU to step up to its strategic vision, mission, and values and advocate on behalf of the Hyperloop in Calgary. The required policy change for this is the creation of a Hyperloop Advocacy Policy.

The design of The Hyperloop is incredibly complex, and I am by no means proposing that the SU becomes expert on this. This will be a job for energy and engineering leaders on campus. However, I am proposing that the SU condemns the ways in which post-secondary students have suffered due to lack of imaginative design with current transit options.

Does the SU believe in investing in the future of undergraduate students? Does the SU believe in accessible transportation? Does the SU believe in climate change? Does the SU believe in every 90's child's dream of travelling like the Jetsons? If the answer is yes to any of these questions, the logical response from SU policymakers is advocating for The Hyperloop to replace the current LRT line.

3. Why is it important for the SU to make a policy decision regarding this issue at this time?

Public transportation has historically been a priority for the SU, and there is no reason it shouldn't be a priority in coming years. It is of the utmost importance for the SU to implement The Hyperloop Advocacy Policy specifically at this time for two reasons:

Firstly, Hyperloop advocacy aligns perfectly with the SU's 2016-2019 Strategic Plan. So perfectly in fact, that the mandate of the SU cannot be considered complete without this policy implementation. For example, the Strategic Plan states that the SU "imagine[s] a society where the student voice is respected and has an immediate and long-lasting impact."¹ The Hyperloop is an investment worth making, and is a long-term solution to a long-term priority. Similarly, the SU's mission and values of unwavering advocacy and courage will be realized if they implement this policy change. Nothing says unwavering and courageous like promoting transportation by magnetically levitated pods, with the ability to travel 42.9km per minute.²

¹ "2016-2019 Strategic Plan," Students' Union (2015), <https://www.su.ucalgary.ca/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/2016-2019-SU-Strategic-Plan.pdf>.

² "Hyperloop Alpha," Tesla Motors (2013): p. 6, https://www.tesla.com/sites/default/files/blog_images/hyperloop-alpha.pdf.

Secondly, the SU should implement this advocacy policy now because it will be the first of its kind amongst post-secondary institutions. If the SU, and the university as an institution, wants to maintain its reputation as a leading school in engineering and innovation, it must be the first to implement this policy. It is only a matter of time before other universities come to their senses and develop their own stance on this. Allowing another university to tackle this advocacy issue before us tarnishes our reputation as an institution prized for an innovative and research-oriented ethos.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

4. Discuss the history of this issue. What factors have contributed to the issue? What additional factors should be taken into consideration?

In 2013, CT released RouteAhead, its long-term strategic plan for the next 30 years. Proponents of this plan have claimed that it represents “the best public transit ideas in the world,” based on the ideas and desires of Calgarians.³ I beg to differ. RouteAhead is exemplary of the way city governments have neglected undergraduates in the past; how are university students supposed to benefit from mundane promises such as affordable fares and regular transit maintenance? This is not where undergraduate interest lies.

The issue is that the innovative vision of undergraduates is not reflected in the city government’s plan for transit. In part, this is due to the negligence of the SU and the university. Both parties, one being the representative of student interests and the other representing the leaders of energy and innovation, have allowed mediocrity to persist. In addition, issue is perpetuated by the economic climate in Alberta. As we are still recovering from an economic downturn, it is understandable that Calgarians are afraid of investing billions into unprecedented transit technology. However, conservative estimates of a several billion-dollar investment is not absurd if the long-term returns are considered.

The Hyperloop is exemplary of the kind of innovation Calgarians want, even if they haven’t quite said so in as many words. For example, RouteAhead found that a transit concern for Calgarians is the issue of more frequent transit accessibility.⁴ The ability of The Hyperloop to reach destinations that would typically take 30+ minutes in mere seconds would obviously solve this problem.

5. Who are the various stakeholders regarding this issue? How does the issue affect each of these groups?

Undergraduate students

54.2% of undergraduates at the University of Calgary use public transport as their primary mode of transportation.⁵ This has been the dominant trend for the past six years.⁶ Furthermore, as of 2014, adult transit riders (ages 18-64) make up 68% of riders, and are highly focused on travel to and from work and school during

³ “RouteAhead: A Strategic Plan for Calgary Transit (Part 1)”, City of Calgary (2013), p.2

<http://www.calgarytransit.com/sites/default/files/content/PDF/2013-0118strategyaheadweb1.pdf>.

⁴ Ibid, p. 8.

⁵ “2017 SU Survey Report,” Students’ Union (2017): p. 15, <https://www.su.ucalgary.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/2017-SU-Survey-Report-Final.pdf>.

⁶ Ibid.

peak times.⁷ As such, current and prospective undergraduates should be considered a major stakeholder in the implementation of this policy. Furthermore, the representative of undergraduate interests, the Students' Union, has frequently engaged in transit representation, dating back to UPass advocacy and implementation in 2002.⁸ The same issues of accessibility and affordability apply in the case of The Hyperloop. If the SU invested in advocating for the UPass, they should see that their stake is equally present in Hyperloop advocacy.

Students from all over the city access the University using transit, and total travel times from the farthest distances (i.e. Somerset Bridlewood) are typically over 40 minutes. This is completely unacceptable, especially if there is a faster alternative that could travel this distance in seconds. As Musk himself put it, The Hyperloop is "the only option for super-fast travel."⁹ This would enable students to get more sleep and reserve their energies for their course loads rather than their commutes.

The University of Calgary

The university administration also has a personal stake in this policy proposal. The Schulich School of Engineering claims that their place as the energy and engineering capital of Canada has necessitated a reputable focus on Calgary's infrastructure expansion and enhancement.¹⁰ For some strange reason, no action has been taken regarding The Hyperloop in this focus.

If the SU implements a Hyperloop Advocacy Policy, the university can capitalize on this spirit of innovation by encouraging research and funding opportunities related to The Hyperloop. Similarly, the reputation of the university will sky-rocket (no pun intended) if they provide the institutional framework for this. CT has also stated that the university is an area "suitable for the introduction of transportation technology not yet utilized in Calgary."¹¹ In short, this means that the university campus should be the heart of Hyperloop technology. Squandering this opportunity to take advantage of this vocation as a university community would be incredibly foolish.

Calgarians accessing CT

The easiest and most affordable way of constructing The Hyperloop is to do so on the existing lines of CT. Thus, it would benefit all current users of CT. This is of interest being that Calgary's population is projected to increase to 1.75 million in the next 30 years.¹² The result of a larger population is increased transit ridership, which the current LRT does not have the capacity to serve. The ability of The Hyperloop to travel long distances in seconds would allow for greater trip frequency, which would mitigate the negative implications of increased ridership.

6. What has been previously done to address this issue at the University of Calgary? Please describe how these solutions have been effective or ineffective.

Nothing has been done previously to address this issue at the University of Calgary.

⁷ "Calgary Transit Funding and Fare Strategy Review," Calgary Transit (2014), p. 16,

<https://www.calgarytransit.com/sites/default/files/content/PDF/transit-fare-strategy-review-final-report-feb-2014.pdf>.

⁸ "Results of Referendums and Plebiscites (1960-Present)," Students' Union (2015): p. 45.

⁹ "Hyperloop Alpha," Tesla Motors (2013): p. 3, https://www.tesla.com/sites/default/files/blog_images/hyperloop-alpha.pdf.

¹⁰ "About Schulich: Leader in Engineering Education and Research," Schulich School of Engineering (2017), <https://schulich.ucalgary.ca/about>.

¹¹ "RouteAhead: Strategic Plan for Calgary Transit (Part 2)," City of Calgary (2013), p. 151,

<http://www.calgarytransit.com/sites/default/files/content/PDF/2013-0118strategyaheadweb2.pdf>.

¹² Ibid.

POLICY OPTIONS:

7. If applicable, how have other post-secondary institutions addressed this issue? How have their solutions been effective or ineffective?

No other post-secondary institution has addressed this issue. The implications of this are two-fold:

Firstly, this is of benefit to the SU because they can flagship the implementation of technologically conscious legislation. Secondly, this is a slight disadvantage to the SU because there are no previous attempts to model our own after. Nonetheless, this is not reason for hesitation in implementing the policy. The Hyperloop is a practical step towards technological sustainability, and the SU should not shy away from the opportunity to assume leadership in this.

8. Discuss a variety of strategies that may address this issue. What are the pros and cons for each option to be considered?

Unfortunately, since the SU does not have the funds or capacity to construct The Hyperloop on its own, the only viable policy option is one of advocacy. This is the most effective means by which the student body can alert the university and the city government to address the severe deficiency in transportation. In addition to this advocacy strategy, the SU should consider the following techniques to underpin their advocacy efforts:

Hyperloop Educational Campaign

Educational campaigns are a tried and true technique of enhancing advocacy efforts. For example, the SU has frequently reinforced its stance on civic participation by hosting electoral candidate forums and incentives to participate, most recently in the 2017 GOTV Campaign. The SU can take a similar approach to Hyperloop advocacy with educational pamphlets, blog posts, and swag to familiarize students with the technology.

- Pros: Ensures Hyperloop literacy and competency on campus.
- Cons: Educational campaigns can be expensive and time consuming and would require coordination with other SU events and campaigns.

VP-Hyperloop

The SU should consider amending the Union Bylaw to include a new position for a Vice-President Hyperloop (VP-HL). Just as academics and student life are important enough that they necessitate their own elected official, so too should The Hyperloop, if the SU wants to be taken seriously in this advocacy effort. The VP-HL would work closely with the VP-External in lobbying the government, and with the VP-Student Life in the educational campaign. However, the VP-HL should be unique as a technical Hyperloop expert to represent the competency of the SU on the technology.

- Pros: This position will ensure that the SU has a dedicated elected official whose sole, full-time purpose is The Hyperloop. This concentrates resources and expertise on the issue at hand.
- Cons: Adding an executive position would incur new salary costs and amendment to long-standing SU legislation.

Funding and awards

The SU should consider adding scholarships and grants specifically for those participating in Hyperloop research or activity. This can also be incorporated into existing SU funding and award mechanisms. For example, the current policy on the Teaching Excellence Awards selection criteria could be amended to include specific recognition of instructors on campus who have fostered and encouraged Hyperloop culture on campus.

- Pro: Provides an SU sanctioned incentive that focuses student efforts on the city-wide realization of The Hyperloop. This is also an opportunity for research engagement on campus.
- Con: Expanding funding opportunities requires an increased financial burden on the SU. Further, the SU's award opportunities might appear monopolized by this technological endeavor.

9. Discuss the implications for each option described above. How will the implementation of each option positively or negatively affect students?

An implementation barrier to the advocacy techniques above is the costs that they incur. Educational campaigns, additional EO salaries, and increased funding are all expensive strategies. The SU could consider adding a Hyperloop fee additional to their current general one in order to support these efforts. However, the addition of a Hyperloop fee will pose an even higher cost of education to students, which is obviously not in the best interest of both students and the SU. To mitigate this, the SU could make this fee optional. If the educational campaign is successful, most students will undoubtedly subscribe to Hyperloop advocacy efforts, and will likely, out of their own volition, choose to contribute to this fee.

Another implication of these strategies is push-back from the public. Critics of The Hyperloop have suggested it is likely to result in death, is difficult and expensive to construct, and is especially vulnerable to terrorism.¹³ These criticisms have made up the majority stance on the innovation since The Hyperloop has not been successfully constructed yet. However, it is important to remember that no battle worth fighting is easy. The Hyperloop battle is like the battle supporters of the original LRT line would have faced against primitive modes of transportation, such as the horse-and-buggy. The LRT has become the horse-and-buggy of our generation, and it would be foolish to maintain it simply because more traditionalist members of society are accustomed to it. It is important that the SU remains grounded in the science of The Hyperloop, rather than being swayed by the potential resistance of those unwilling, unable, or too ignorant to envision leaps in technological capability.

CONCLUSIONS:

10. What is your recommended course of action? Why?

The most suitable course of action is the creation of a SU Hyperloop Advocacy Policy. While it is not in the capacity of the SU to undertake the construction of the Hyperloop themselves, it is wholly within their purview to advocate on behalf of undergraduate students who are impacted daily by the quality of public transportation. As demonstrated above, this policy is an important step that has the potential to benefit virtually every citizen in Calgary, and will be especially beneficial to the reputation of the University of Calgary as a leader in energy and innovation.

¹³ "Scientist Lays Out 5 Huge Problems with Elon Musk's Hyperloop," The Daily Caller (2016)
<http://dailycaller.com/2016/07/26/scientist-lays-out-5-huge-problems-with-elon-musks-hyperloop-video/>

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS:

11. List any additional documents that you are attaching to your application to support your request.

“RouteAhead: A Strategic Plan for Calgary Transit (Part 1)”, City of Calgary (2013),

<http://www.calgarytransit.com/sites/default/files/content/PDF/2013-0118strategyaheadweb1.pdf>.

“RouteAhead: Strategic Plan for Calgary Transit (Part 2),” City of Calgary (2013),

<http://www.calgarytransit.com/sites/default/files/content/PDF/2013-0118strategyaheadweb2.pdf>.

“Calgary Transit Funding and Fare Strategy Review,” Calgary Transit (2014),

<https://www.calgarytransit.com/sites/default/files/content/PDF/transit-fare-strategy-review-final-report-feb-2014.pdf>.

“Hyperloop Alpha,” Tesla Motors (2013), https://www.tesla.com/sites/default/files/blog_images/hyperloop-alpha.pdf.