

Sustainable Transportation Coalition

ONTARIO SMART GROWTH
NETWORK
TRANSPORT 2000 ONTARIO
EARTHROOTS
FRIENDS OF THE FAREWELL
CITIZENS ENVIRONMENTAL
ALLIANCE
GREENTRANS
PRESERVATION OF
AGRICULTURAL LANDS SOCIETY
PRESERVE 16TH
CITIZENS OPPOSED TO PAVING
THE ESCARPMENT

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Dear Mr. MacIsaac:

The following is a submission from the Sustainable Transportation Coalition on the seven green papers issued by Metrolinx for comment.

About the Sustainable Transportation Coalition

The Sustainable Transportation Coalition is an alliance of organizations working to redirect funds from unsustainable transportation infrastructure, specifically roads and highways, towards sustainable modes. These modes include: urban public transit, regional and inter-regional public transportation (bus and rail) and walking and cycling. The following organizations support the goals of the Sustainable Transportation Coalition:

Ontario Smart Growth Network
Transport 2000 Ontario
Earthroots
Friends of the Farewell
Citizens Environmental Alliance
GreenTrans
Preservation of Agricultural Lands Society
Preserve 16th (Markham)
Citizens Opposed to Paving the Escarpment

Overview of the Green Papers

The Sustainable Transportation Coalition is pleased with the direction taken by Metrolinx to develop a Regional Transportation Plan (RTP). The plan's Vision and Supporting Principles are sound. The documents are well written, well researched, well thought through, and generally quite thorough.

Some of our recommendations require action by the Province. We believe Metrolinx should be open and candid to the Province about policies and actions it requires of the Province so that the RTP can be implemented and succeed.

Factors to Ensure Success of the Plan

The main focus of the RTP should be shifting travel to public transit and active transportation in a context of city planning that emphasizes compact land use. This requires frequent transit services at the local level integrated into a region-wide network through transit hubs. Fast travel across the region requires a network of rail-based train services on the model of such networks found in cities like Paris (mentioned in Discussion Paper #1), Berlin, Sydney, and Madrid, for example. Active transportation requires parallel local and regional infrastructure development for walking and cycling. We emphasize that the public must see infrastructure going into place soon so that any new taxes put in place either as funding sources and/or as incentives to change travel behaviour will not be viewed as tax grabs unrelated to meeting the region's sustainable transportation needs.

We believe that the success of a bold plan depends upon several factors. These are:

- Political commitment at all levels of government to reducing car dependence. In the short term, scarce tax dollars must be moved away from expansions and extensions of 400 series highways and placed into developing and coordinating a regional transit system and increasing rates of walking, cycling and other forms of active transportation among residents of the region. The experience from around the world shows that deliberately increasing travel times, creating a less dense network of main roads, and reducing traffic speeds do break down car dominance.
- Development and implementation of social marketing and education campaigns to break down the social barriers to active transportation that exist among the public, decision makers and the media.
- Establish a “Centre of Excellence for Transportation” at an Ontario university that has a credible transportation planning department to research international best practices and success stories.
- Integration of land use planning principles with transportation planning to ensure a long term/big picture approach. This, for example, means planning ahead and purchasing land as it becomes available in order to develop primary and secondary mobility hubs in the future. Abandon the practice of building new highways as well as widening existing highways and roads as a means to reduce gridlock because congestion generally returns within five years due to the sprawl development usually associated with such highway and roads development.
- Overhaul fiscal policies to reduce subsidies to drivers. These include: Pay-As-You-Drive (PAYD) pricing on vehicle insurance, registration, taxes and leasing fees that directly reflect a vehicle’s annual mileage.
- Implement road and congestion pricing when alternative public transit services are in place.
- Taxes on vehicles, vehicle fuel, and road use should reflect real roadway costs and petroleum use externalities and would also encourage energy efficiency and technological innovation.
- Develop clear criteria of provincial infrastructure support to municipalities to ensure that funding is based on advancing the RTP instead of basing funding decisions on advocacy by local governments for support of “pet projects.”
- The province and municipalities need to adopt complete streets policies. Municipalities that retrofit their streets to better accommodate all users should be eligible for financial support from the province.

- None of the three pillars (Economy, Environment and People) should take precedence over the other two; currently the economy always seems to take precedence. Metrolinx must seek ways to avoid undue influence of economic interests in developing a transportation plan. For this reason it should be wary of those companies promoting projects, contracts and partnerships from which they can profit.
- Require municipalities to instruct local police forces to enforce traffic violations, particularly those that have a negative impact on walking and cycling. These violations include parking on the sidewalk, parking in cycling lanes, running red lights and driving over the speed limit. In conjunction with effective enforcement, implement policies that reduce the convenience of the car such as traffic calming, speed reductions and increasing the costs of parking.
- Metrolinx should reject Alternative Financing & Procurement/Public-Private sector Partnerships (AFP/PPP) - Brampton Hospital, Hwy 407 are examples that have not worked. Since the Province can borrow at the lowest interest rates available, adding a private sector partner that provides costly short or long term financing is not a public benefit. The private sector is already used for consulting, supplies, and construction. Private sector involvement should be limited to additional services such as retailing and car sharing at stations, not core services like fare collection and owning and operating transportation systems. Hubs and stations with amenities, even small office complexes or other public uses (e.g. libraries) would help attract ridership.
- Keep things simple to avoid unproven technology and keep costs down. See our comments below on zone-based transit fares versus fare by distance, and parking charges versus automatic tolling. The Scarborough RT would have been much more reliable and less costly had it been originally built using streetcar technology.
- Metrolinx should minimize the use of consultants, perhaps using a ratio of \$1 consulting per \$10 in construction costs.
- We strongly support striving for the Bold Alternatives. While we may not agree with all of the specific 'Bold' recommendations (e.g. we do not support Private-Public partnerships to finance and operate additional road capacity), in general there needs to be major change in how transportation services are delivered in this part of the province in order to increase the share of sustainable modes.
- Retain all of the best practices/innovations from other jurisdictions as an Appendix to the main RTP. Some of the best practices/innovations that will work in large municipalities will not necessarily work in smaller municipalities or rural areas. Encourage municipalities to implement practices that best fit their situation, something that will also encourage a sense of place and individuality.

Omissions from the Green Papers

Ensure ongoing funds are available for strategic acquisitions and 'rough in' construction in advance of planned infrastructure development.

Strategic acquisitions are long term outlays made to acquire assets that come onto the market before infrastructure is built, sometimes decades in advance. In most cases land assembly begins when a project commences. Instead, Metrolinx staff should actively monitor sites that will be future hubs and stations and seek to acquire them quickly when they come on the market. This could include approaching landowners directly to ask them to allow an offer to be made before listing with a real estate agent, rail line abandonments, critical missing pedestrian/cycling links (e.g., golf courses along Don and Highland, houses blocking pedestrian access to stations) and other assets that are listed for sale. A significant amount must be included in the provincial

every year to allow for strategic acquisitions. This budget could be increased during economic downturns when real estate prices decline.

'Rough in' construction means using foresight to design into infrastructure possibilities for future expansion, change of use or additional modes (much like many builders 'rough in' drains for a future bathroom in the unfinished basement of new homes). The best past example of this was the Don River crossing by the Bloor Viaduct which allowed for a future subway underneath it. For a future example, consider the LRT line along Eglinton which will likely be tunneled in the vicinity of Yonge Street. Under Eglinton Station these tunnels should be built large enough to allow for a future four track station anticipating future increased demand of this hub location. Developers along future subway corridors could be offered incentives (e.g. extra density) to 'rough in' subway stations, or connections to stations, under their buildings which they could use in the interim as parking or storage for the building occupants. This would likely be a key selling feature of the building and allow parking to be reduced over time as transit service improves. To ensure that this happens the roughed in station should be conveyed into public ownership at the time of construction. Structural design should strive for maximum strength (e.g. to easily allow a future upper level to be constructed) and maximum flexibility (allowance for walls to be easily moved, new entrances to be added, etc.).

Investigate how Metrolinx can have its own funding base by studying how other jurisdictions provide dedicated funding sources for regional transit agencies such as in Vancouver, Montreal, and in the U.S, and Europe. Investigate how development generated by transit hubs and stations can deliver a return to Metrolinx that would partially off-set the public funds used to build hubs, stations, and associated transit infrastructure.

Quick Win Projects

Simplify transit fares and reject the smart card for now by implementing a zone system (see comments on Transit Paper). Try various pilot programs on some initiatives, such as mobility hub demonstration projects and improved pedestrian access to selected suburban stations. Implement two regional express all-day passenger train lines as pilot projects. We suggest one north-south (Richmond Hill - Newmarket) and the other east-west (York subdivision Pickering - Brampton or CP Agincourt—Brampton via Summerhill), in addition to more frequent service on the Lakeshore route of GO Transit.

Role of Metrolinx in Implementation

Metrolinx should not take over the operation of GO Transit because this will distract it from its role of overall planning and coordination for the region. It risks absorbing GO's bureaucratic culture and inflexible mindset. We need a champion of frequent, 24 hour, 365 day, bi-directional, integrated, cross regional transit service. GO and the other transit agencies need to be pushed by an independent Metrolinx to do this. In particular, Metrolinx needs to explore equipment alternatives for frequent off-peak rail service in the GTA and how electrification can be accelerated.

Comments on Mobility Hubs Paper

We compliment Metrolinx on including this as a topic for a discussion paper. Successful mobility hubs are key to changing travel patterns and mode choices.

A few demonstration sites are needed to show the potential. Public sector buildings and future higher education expansion should locate adjacent to mobility hubs. Inappropriate uses such as drive-throughs and automotive dealerships should be encouraged to relocate away from these sites. The idea is to shape the land use at hubs to high density uses such as office complexes and apartment living. Bylaws with teeth are needed to keep away inappropriate development before the hubs can be established. Parking should be limited and

controlled. Mobility hubs should be used as part of an integrated strategy to revitalize nearby streets by attracting new development and retailers along the sidewalks.

We should not allow past poor planning decisions to dictate mobility hub locations. For example, Durham College/UOIT should never have been located on the periphery of Oshawa. Metrolinx should push the province to have any expansion to this and other large institutions take place in more appropriate locations such as an existing downtown or adjacent to a GO rail station. Some existing transit stations should be moved or new ones built to facilitate the creation of mobility hubs. For example, Bronte GO station would be much better located at Bronte Road where there are three hotels within a short walk. An additional GO stop could be created in old Unionville to allow weekend visitors to reach this tourist attraction by train. Perhaps these additional stops could be 'walk or bike to only' without any parking at all (parking would likely exist nearby).

As discussed in the paper, the amount of development activity in the GTA is large, but finite. Policies inducing growth, particularly employment, in key mobility hubs may be needed.

Comments on Active Transportation Paper

We strongly support the creation of spine bicycle routes across the region. A 'Quick Win' easy to establish project would be bike lanes from Brampton to Oshawa along Steeles Avenue/Taunton Rd. We however, do not support the widening of Steeles through the Rouge Park, preferring to keep its rural character.

Active transportation investment should be increased from the current five to 10% of the road infrastructure budget. We need dedicated pedestrian infrastructure funding and an ongoing process to improve pedestrian access to all transit stations. It is especially important to acquire land for pedestrian access/short cuts.

Some recreational uses in the region might provide an opportunity for active transportation seasonally. In winter skating and cross-country ski corridors might provide active transportation, weather conditions permitting and assuming funding for maintenance. Similarly, some dock locations might serve commuter paddlers along watercourses. These would promote a green image for the region and attract outdoor enthusiasts to live and work here. However, we still affirm that walking and cycling have the greatest potential of all forms of active transportation.

Comments on Transportation Demand Management Paper

High tech solutions run the risk of cost over-runs. Choose simpler methods using proven technology.

Pricing of road use, parking and transit are key levers needing further exploration. Some pilot tests could be tried immediately. For example:

- Congestion pricing on a key artery, using cameras to record license plates and bill drivers where transit alternatives are clearly available;
- Parking fees at a mall, combined with a shopper's rebate for transit use, to ensure the exercise is revenue neutral;
- Parking fees at a major employer, combined with a cash bonus or transit allowance to reward non-drivers;
- Free public transit (on Monday's, for example).

Comments on Moving Goods and Services Paper

Just-in-time inventory is a major contributor to our mobility problems. Consideration should be given to exploring the role of emerging logistics centres (a form of warehousing containers) to permit shifting freight from road to rail in selected corridors for greater energy efficiencies. Railways in Ontario remain under-utilized for the movement of freight. Some demonstration project investment in this sector is called for.

Because maintaining a healthy economy is a key element, and efficient goods movement is critical, we recommend a high level of collaboration with key stakeholders in this regard.

Comments on Highways Paper

Completing "missing links" should not take precedence over environmental or socio-economic factors. Some missing road links should never be built. These include Pine Valley Drive through Boyd Park and Morning-side Avenue to connect to Markham. The proponents of these projects want to use them to facilitate sprawl. If built they would harm the local environment and add traffic to older communities. We urge Metrolinx to go on the record opposing such projects and devise transit solutions to the traffic problems that these road projects are supposed to address. On the other hand, completing some other "missing links" would be a positive action, e.g. certain crossings over 400 series highways and railways.

Expansion of 400 series highways should be curtailed unless definitively justified by comprehensive travel demand modeling that builds in modal shift alternatives for both people and freight. It is now mandatory to consider the looming energy crisis in modeling and the necessary policy change to shift transportation to energy efficient modes (rail, marine). This means also modeling the sprawl inducement that follows highway expansion. The expansions should be compared to a broad range of alternatives using broad criteria. Such highway expansion brings more rural and suburban sprawl, air pollution, climate change, accidents and public expense.

Road widening through established residential areas should be opposed, even if designated for transit/HOV lanes. The negative impacts outweigh the positive. Widening roads leads to barrier effects as local roads are turned into arterial speedways that induce further traffic from adjacent sprawl development. Metrolinx should be promoting a planning shift towards even local compact urban designs.

The Metrolinx paper needs to discuss "infiltration." Infiltration of traffic from arterial roads to local roads is often cited by road-expansion proponents as a reason for the expansion. In our view, some degree of infiltration is acceptable, and allows more efficient use of the entire road network. Road expansion actually is no cure as more traffic generates more infiltration.

Institutional challenges Exhibit 2-3 on page 14 is excellent and should be retained for the white papers.

Clean air corridors on smog days are a good idea. This would get the message out to the public and encourage behavioural change.

Tolling the 400-series highways in the GTA has been mentioned in the media. In Europe and Japan, tolling of inter-city four-lane highways is common. These parts of the world, however, have well-developed alternative passenger rail systems, including expanding high-speed rail. Currently in Ontario, the road systems municipal and provincial do not pay either their capital or operating costs through user fees (gas taxes, registration fees). The looming energy crisis suggests that we need rail and transit alternatives to the 400-series of highways. These alternatives for the GTA and elsewhere require very large public investment. Thus, tolling meets the need to find an efficient means of paying for the real costs of the road and highway system other than through general taxation, as well as providing a possible funding source for building and operating the

new sustainable transportation infrastructure that our region requires. This revenue tool deserves full discussion and consideration.

Free parking at malls and office buildings works against transit-oriented public policy as a subsidy to auto-dependence. The tolling of such parking needs to be studied in order to select a policy tool that will work with respect to these spaces that are on private property.

We agree that the key unknown is the public's willingness to embrace lifestyle changes in transportation.

Comments on Transit Paper

Fares and fare collection: Simpler is better.

The fare structures need to be decided before fare technology. It appears that the decision to use the smart card has pushed the decision to use fare by distance. A zone fare system is much simpler to implement and does not require a major technological investment. Many European cities have used zone systems successfully for decades. In Madrid, a low cost zone fare system led to a dramatic increase in ridership.

Zones must be easily understood by riders and should follow municipal and natural boundaries. There could be three or four rings with Toronto (416) as the central zone. A zone system should be accompanied by more use of transit passes and the honour system. Increased use of passes would be accomplished by pricing them low enough to encourage much higher rates of adoption. The honour system should be adopted region-wide for faster boarding. Ten ride tickets and passes need to be standardized across the region and be valid on all systems, including GO. A person crossing a zone boundary would require an additional fare. Premium services such as express trains and buses could require an extra cash payment of \$1 or \$2 to be collected by personnel on board or by ticket vending machines. (round dollar amount to ease collection) or with a premium sticker pre-purchased by pass holders.

The Lisbon Intermittent Bus Lane concept (p. 11) is an elegant solution for improving transit service without widening roads or permanent reserved lanes.

The discussion on LRT vs BRT (p 24) needs to include detachable trolleybuses (articulated if desired). They have the ability to briefly detach from the grid to go around obstacles or provide express service. Trolleybuses offer the combined benefits of LRT (quiet, use renewable energy, capacity) and BRT (flexibility). In North America, articulated trolleybuses are used in San Francisco, Seattle and are on order for Vancouver.

The Preliminary Network Assessment (sec 5.3) is an excellent first pass, and is an example of the type of detailed modeling analysis that is needed. It clearly points out that we need to move beyond modeling based on "trends" which go up forever.

Other Comments

Summer is not a good time for the public to review the draft regional transportation plan. We need to get this right as it underlies all future plans. We recommend that consultation on finalizing the plan be moved to the fall of 2008.

In conclusion, the members of the Sustainable Transportation Coalition thank you for providing the opportunity to comment on these discussion papers. We are available and willing to work with Metrolinx to develop an effective transportation system that will meet the needs of residents of this region.

Yours sincerely,

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