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DRAFT REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION PLAN
SEPTEMBER 2008

Stakeholder Workshop Summary

The Big Move:

*Transforming Transportation in the
Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area*



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**Summary of Metrolinx
Stakeholder Workshops Regarding
the Draft Regional Transportation Plan and
Draft Investment Strategy,
October 14 – 28, 2008**

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This document summarizes the discussion/feedback of the stakeholder workshops convened by Metrolinx in October 2008 to discuss the Draft Regional Transportation Plan and Draft Investment Strategy for the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area.

1. CONSULTATION PROCESS

On September 26, 2008, the Metrolinx Board released the Draft Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) and Draft Investment Strategy (IS) for the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area (GTHA) for consultations. Thereafter Metrolinx convened six stakeholder workshops to discuss the Draft RTP and Draft IS. The dates and locations of each workshop is listed below:

- October 14, 2008 Hamilton
- October 17, 2008 Brampton
- October 21, 2008 Whitby
- October 22, 2008 Toronto
- October 23, 2008 Oakville
- October 28, 2008 Vaughan

Participants in the stakeholder workshops included representatives from municipal governments, provincial ministries, transit agencies, federal agencies, chambers of commerce/boards of trade, conservation authorities, business improvement areas, residents' or neighbourhood associations, environmental non-governmental organizations, trade associations, labour unions, universities and planning and engineering consultancies.

Based on the series of questions attached as Appendix A, Metrolinx staff facilitated and documented small group discussions at the workshops. Participants were also encouraged to submit comments using the workbook each was provided upon registering.

2. SUMMARY OF COMMENTS

Workshop participants were encouraged to indicate priorities for implementation among the Strategic Directions in the Draft RTP, as well as to suggest refinements or alternatives to them. The comments most frequently heard are divided by theme into three subsections:

- Regional Rapid Transit and Highway Network;
- Strategic Directions; and
- Investment Strategy.

2.1 REGIONAL RAPID TRANSIT AND HIGHWAY NETWORK

Participants in stakeholder workshops in all parts of the GTHA expressed support for transit service that is faster, more frequent, more reliable and more convenient. They also expressed support for bold action in making this reality.

There was discussion among the stakeholders about how priorities should be set among the many rapid transit projects proposed in the Draft RTP. Some argued that priorities should be based on forecasted ridership and/or revenue-cost ratio for individual projects. Others suggested that it was most important to provide transit service to new developments so that their residents and tenants feel that they can rely on transit and develop a “transit culture.”

Individual projects that the stakeholders highlighted as priorities are discussed below, as are the refinements to the projects and alternatives they raised.

Durham

Priorities for implementation in Durham were the following network projects:

- faster, more frequent, electric Express Rail in the Lakeshore corridor;
- completion of the Highway 407 East extension; and
- rapid transit on Highway 2.

Chief among the modifications to the network suggested in Durham were the following:

- extension of the Simcoe Street rapid transit line to the University of Ontario Institute of Technology (UOIT) and Highway 407;
- extension of the Brock Road rapid transit line to Seaton and Highway 407;
- earlier implementation of the Steeles-Taunton rapid transit line; and
- eastward extension of the Highway 2 rapid transit to Bowmanville.

Halton

In Halton, the highest priorities for implementation were:

- Express Rail service in the Lakeshore corridor;
- rapid transit on Dundas Street;
- more frequent regional rail service on the Milton and Georgetown lines; and
- a link between Oakville GO and Pearson Airport via the 403.

Modifications to the network suggested included improved north-south service within Halton Region, particularly to Milton and between the Lakeshore GO corridor and Downtown Burlington.

Interest was also expressed in improved links to destination outside the GTHA.

Hamilton

Priorities for implementation in Hamilton included:

- all-day, two-way Express Rail in the Lakeshore corridor; and
- rapid transit through Downtown Hamilton in the King/Main corridor

Support was also expressed for a north-south rapid transit line in the James/Upper James corridor, but there was debate on whether the line should begin in Downtown Hamilton or on the waterfront, and whether it should end at the edge of the currently built-up area or extend further south to the airport.

Several modifications were suggested and occasioned discussion:

- rapid transit to Stoney Creek, where many seniors reside. Related to this was the suggestion for developing a mobility hub at the eastern end of Hamilton, near Fifty Road;
- rapid transit between Hamilton and Waterdown, possibly extending as far as Kipling Station in Toronto, along Dundas Street;
- extension of rapid transit beyond the GTHA, particularly from Hamilton to Niagara; and
- development of a mobility hub at Hamilton International Airport and a rapid transit link between it and Pearson Airport.

Peel

In Peel, priorities for network improvement included:

- Express Rail service in the Lakeshore corridor;
- Express Rail service between Downtown Brampton and Union Station;
- more frequent regional rail service on the Milton line and the outer segment of the Georgetown line.

Also strongly supported were:

- the rail link between Union Station and Pearson Airport
- extension of regional rail to Bolton;
- rapid transit in the Hurontario-Main corridor;
- rapid transit on Dundas Street; and
- the 407 Transitway.

Support was expressed generally for direct links between 905 communities that by-pass Union Station.

Among the modifications suggested to the network proposed in the Draft RTP were the following:

- designation of a mobility hub at Mount Pleasant GO Station in Brampton; and
- rapid transit on Steeles Avenue from Lisgar GO Station to Humber College.

Toronto

Priorities for implementation among participants in the Toronto workshop were:

- a rail link of some description between Union Station and Pearson Airport;
- a subway through Downtown Toronto on Queen and/or King Streets, connecting to the Bloor-Danforth subway east and west of the core—in part to relieve crowding on the Yonge and Bloor-Danforth subways;
- rapid transit on Eglinton Avenue;
- extension of rapid transit on Sheppard Avenue to Scarborough Town Centre;

More general support was expressed for the other Transit City projects

In part because of concerns about capacity constraints at Union Station, support was also expressed for direct region-to-region rapid transit linkages that do not proceed through Union Station.

Chief among the modifications to the proposed network at the Toronto workshop were:

- implementing the Downtown subway as part of the 15-year plan rather than the 25-year plan; and
- installing standard technology on the Scarborough RT, so that it can connect directly to other rapid transit lines, such as the Eglinton or Sheppard lines, thereby reducing the need to transfer.

York

The network projects highlighted as priorities for implementation in York included:

- extension of the Yonge Subway from Finch Station to Richmond Hill/Langstaff Gateway;
- VIVA rapid transit service on Highway 7; and
- VIVA rapid transit service on Yonge Street.

Support was also expressed for extension of the Spadina Subway to Vaughan Corporate Centre, although opinion was split.

In terms of suggested modifications to the Plan, interest was expressed in:

- improvements to the Richmond Hill GO line, in particular the introduction of Express Rail, which was seen by some as a fifteen-year priority;
- east-west rapid transit on Major Mackenzie Drive, which some would like to see in service within twenty-five years; and
- construction of the Bradford By-pass.

2.2 STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

One overarching theme arising from stakeholder discussions regarding the Strategic Directions is that they need to be implemented together in order to be effective. There is widespread agreement that none of these initiatives will be successful in isolation. An integrated transit fare system, for example, will not attract new riders if the buses and trains are slow and unreliable.

The five Strategic Directions that appeared to garner the greatest support were:

- SD#8 Build Communities that are Pedestrian, Cycling and Transit-Supportive
- SD#1 Build a Comprehensive Regional Rapid Transit Network
- SD#15 Develop an Investment Strategy
- SD#6 Create a Customer-First Transportation System
- SD#9 Develop a System of Mobility Hubs

In most cases, the level of support for the Strategic Directions was similar across the GTHA. One notable exception was SD#2, Promote Active Transportation, which appeared to be more strongly supported in Halton, Hamilton and Toronto than in the other regions.

Among the higher-level, more general suggestions made about refining the Strategic Directions were the following:

- the responsibilities of Metrolinx and its partner agencies need to be clearer in the RTP, particularly around land-use planning;
- timelines for the various deliverables outlined in the RTP should be specified; and
- social marketing should be prioritized in the RTP with particular attention being paid to public education regarding the indirect costs and environmental impacts of transportation and land use choices.

Comments regarding *specific* Strategic Directions and Actions were numerous. Below, in order by Strategic Direction, is a summary of the refinements most often suggested by participants.

SD#2 Promote Active Transportation

- There were numerous calls for a program to complete sidewalks in areas where they are intermittent or absent altogether.
- It was felt that active transportation needs to be better integrated with transit. In particular, access to and accommodation at transit stations for pedestrians and cyclists needs to be improved.
- There was strong interest in increasing the emphasis on getting kids of all ages walking and biking to school.

SD#5 Create an Ambitious Transportation Demand Management Program

- Some participants felt that the RTP needed more specific actions regarding the implementation of TDM measures.
- Public education about the full range of transportation options was seen as essential.

SD#6 Create a Customer-First Transportation System

- Several requests were made for personal safety and security to be given more attention. Transit vehicles and facilities need to be well-designed, well-lit and monitored, it was suggested, so that customers feel safe and secure.

SD#7 Implement an Integrated Transit Fare System

- There was particular interest in travellers being able to transfer from one transit provider to another without paying a full second fare.
- There was debate about distance-based fares. They are supported and seen as equitable by some, in that users pay for the quantity of the service they use. Others, however, see them as socially detrimental, since many people travel long distances between home and work because of a lack of affordable, centrally-located housing. Additionally, there is concern that they might discourage longer-distance commuters from switching to transit from driving. On the other hand, some wonder whether subsidizing longer commutes will just encourage people to live farther from where they work, shop and play.
- Support was expressed for reduced fares in off-peak periods.

SD#8 Build Communities that are Pedestrian, Cycling and Transit-Supportive

- The importance of linking land use planning and transportation planning came up frequently at every session and is seen as crucial to the success of the Plan. To

this end, many noted the need for close integration between the RTP and the Province's *Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe*.

SD#9 Develop a System of Mobility Hubs

- Participants recommended focusing on the development of a limited number of key mobility hubs.
- Municipalities requested assistance in the preparation of studies related to the development of mobility hubs. Guidelines and/or templates on how to develop appropriately were one suggested support.

SD#11 Improve Transportation Understanding Through Research

- The development of a comprehensive parking strategy was supported. It was suggested that an annual per-stall levy for owners of non-residential parking region-wide would help rationalize the supply of and demand for parking.
- The development of a long-range land protection and/or acquisition strategy, particularly to protect for future goods movement corridors in the GTHA, was supported.

SD#12 Plan For Universal Access

- It was felt by some that the concept of universal access should include financial accessibility to all regardless of means.

SD#13 Improve Goods Movement Within the GTHA and With Adjacent Regions

- A sense of urgency was attached to the establishment of a roundtable, with representatives from the goods movement industry, to steer the development of a goods movement strategy.
- Rationalization of access to rail corridors between passenger and freight services (per ***SD#13.1***) was supported.

SD#14 Develop a National Strategy for Transportation in Urban Regions

- There was support for identifying concrete opportunities to align regional and national transportation objectives, including linking regional networks to national and international networks. More specifically, the coordination of GO rail service and VIA rail service was urged.

SD#15 Develop an Investment Strategy

- The lack of financial support for local transit systems in the Draft RTP and Investment Strategy is a particular concern. Without a greatly increased fleet and ongoing operating support, local transit will be unable to feed the regional network, which people will continue to access by car, if at all.
- There was significant interest and discussion about SD#15, about which there is more detail in section 2.3.

2.3 INVESTMENT STRATEGY

The main, recurring themes that were received with respect to the Draft IS included:

- support for the “Results First” approach;
- request for a faster report-back schedule for revenue and financing tools;

- long-term need for sustainable, dedicated revenue and financial tools; and
- industry capacity.

Generally, most of the feedback received had strong support for the “results first” imperative. Many agreed that a fast implementation move is essential, and that as a region, we cannot afford to wait for the critical transportation improvements outlined in the RTP.

Other comments also identified a “credibility gap” generally attributable to government, where projects, particularly transportation related are announced repeatedly before any implementation action occurs. This gap represents a significant obstacle that Metrolinx and all of its partners must work to overcome.

Other comments along these lines included:

- a desire to eliminate intergovernmental squabbling that was seen to lead to delays;
- a need to demonstrate results in open, transparent manner, such as web-based construction progress *and* budget updates; and
- full disclosure on project decision-making and prioritization process.

While stakeholders understood and support a results–first approach, many wanted to advance the discussion about long-term revenue and financial tools to a quicker timeline. Ontario’s fast-changing economic and fiscal climate could warrant an earlier review of transportation funding principles and policies. Rationale cited for beginning the funding conversation earlier included:

- a sustained, multi-year effort to develop public support;
- some technical implementation and operational issues are complex; and
- guarantees needed to ensure initial projects will be funded from start to completion.

Securing long-term, dedicated and sustainable revenue and financial tools was frequently mentioned as a prerequisite to implement the 25-year RTP to full completion. Funding stability is equated with sound long-term planning and implementation strategies and many thought tools should extend to include:

- all aspects of transit funding, including local transit capital and operations; and
- highways and roads.

Many business stakeholders identified industry capacity as a concern. The RTP is viewed as a bold public works undertaking by international standards and could stretch collective GTHA capacity to deliver RTP projects on time and on budget. The impacts were noted to be broad, across-the-board from trades to project management.

2.4 ADDITIONAL FEEDBACK ON THE DRAFT RTP AND RESPONSES

This report is a general overview of the stakeholder workshops convened by Metrolinx to discuss the Draft RT and IS. Feedback was also received via seven public meetings, a meeting of the Metrolinx Technical Advisory Group (TAG), an online consultation portal; and regular mail, e-mail and fax.

More detail on all feedback received , as well as how it was addressed in the final RTP, can be found in Management Report to Metrolinx PP 08-016, which is posted on the

Summary of Metrolinx Draft RTP & IS Stakeholder Workshops

Metrolinx website at http://www.Metrolinx.com/Docs/Agendas/Nov28_08/PP_08-016_RTP_IS.pdf.

Appendix A: Questions for Stakeholder Workshops

Session 1

Question 1: What, if anything, would you do to improve the elements of the network and enhance its connectivity/overall effectiveness? Indicate your comments below or on the attached map.

Question 2: Which lines are most important and/or should be built first? Which ones can wait? Why?

Session 2

Question 1: On which of the strategic directions would you place greatest emphasis? Why?

Question 2: Do you have any suggested refinements or additions to the strategic directions?

Session 3

Question 1: What comments, if any, do you have on the proposed approach to financing the transportation system?

Question 2: How can we best ensure that the proposed approach is effective and gets results?