

DEVELOPMENT OF A REGIONAL
TRANSPORTATION PLAN FOR THE
GREATER TORONTO and HAMILTON AREA

TOWARDS
SUSTAINABLE
TRANSPORTATION



TOWARDS SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORTATION

THE REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION PLAN

Technical Advisory Group
White Paper Workshop Summary

May 28, 2008

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This report summarizes the feedback received at the Technical Advisory Group (TAG) stakeholder workshop convened by Metrolinx on May 28 to discuss *White Paper 1: Vision, Goals and Objectives* and *White Paper 2: Preliminary Directions and Concepts*.

1. Context

The Technical Advisory Group (TAG) is a group of approximately 100 specialists. It includes planning staff and transit operators from municipalities across the region, as well as staff from provincial ministries and agencies. Through workshops, the TAG provides technical input on the research and analysis done in support of the RTP. A series of topical workshops were convened to provide input on the Green Papers through December 2007 and January 2008. Technical input on the White Papers was received at a single workshop, a summary of which is contained in this report.

On April 25, the Board of Metrolinx approved two White Papers prepared by Metrolinx staff as part of the process to draft a Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) for the GTHA.

Over 30 participants attended the TAG stakeholder workshop from regional municipalities, single-tier municipalities, provincial ministries, and transit operators.

At the workshop, Metrolinx staff provided an overview of the White Papers in three presentations:

- First discussing the proposed vision, goals and objectives introduced in White Paper 1;
- Next discussing the preliminary policy and program directions introduced in White Paper 2; and
- Finally discussing the test network concepts introduced in White Paper 2.

At the end of each presentation, workshop participants were asked specific questions pertaining to the material that had just been introduced and Metrolinx staff facilitated and documented the ensuing small group discussions. The questions asked of workshop participants are attached as Appendix A.

Workshop participants were also invited to participate in a “dotmocracy exercise,” wherein “votes” could be cast for or against the preliminary policy and program ideas introduced in the White Papers, the results of which are included in Appendix B, below.

Finally, workshop participants were also encouraged to submit comments via the workbook each was given upon registering.

This report summarizes the content of all three sources of stakeholder input: small-group discussions; the dotmocracy exercise; and workbook submissions. This input will be considered by Metrolinx as part of the process of drafting the RTP.

2. Commentary

Response to the White Papers was generally very positive. Recurring general themes were repeated in many of the break-out discussions, throughout the specific questions posed.

Link Land Use and Transportation Planning

In recognition of the fact that the transportation choices individuals make are very closely related to land use and development patterns, particular support was evident for the integration of land use and transportation planning. There was widespread agreement that mixed land uses and higher densities are key strategies to demands on the transportation network. Several participants also commented on the need to offer incentives and disincentives to attract the types of development that will support more dense communities.

Prioritisation is Important

Many elements of the White Papers received broad support, from objectives and indicators to projects proposed. However, TAG members also expressed the desire to see more succinct pieces in the RTP, showing some degree of prioritisation amongst the elements.

Regional Co-ordination, Standards and Funding

Support was strong for the White Papers' focus on providing co-ordination across the region in terms of standards and funding. Related to this notion, many participants stressed the importance of local transit networks to feed the regional system. The significance of local networks, and their funding needs, was re-iterated in a number of conversations throughout the day.

2.2 Goals and Objectives

In White Paper 1, 19 goals and 41 objectives were presented as possible options for the RTP, grouped under three pillars:

- A high quality of life;
- A thriving, healthy and protected environment; and
- A strong, prosperous and competitive economy.

With this in mind, workshop participants were asked for their best advice about what the RTP should focus on.

Generally, there was emphasis that Metrolinx needed to prioritise and scope the list of goals and objectives; however, few participants were able to identify specific priorities. A focus on quantitative and measurable goals and objectives was suggested as one way to concentrate the list. Overall, several participants expressed that balance between and equal weighting of the three pillars was important for the goals and objectives of the plan.

Environment

Though the White Papers' environmental goals and objectives were often cited as the number one priority among workshop participants, they were less discussed than the goals and objectives related to quality of life and the economy.

Quality of Life

The goals and objectives related to quality of life in White Paper 1 were discussed at great length at the workshops. Some participants felt that goals important to the other two pillars, environment and economy, were part of achieving a high quality of life.

One of the primary ideas to come through was that the idea of “quality of life” needs to be more defined. Because it can mean different things to different people, participants felt it would be helpful to have a more clear understanding of what Metrolinx defines as such.

Stakeholders expressed strong support for an increase in the range of transportation choices available in the GTHA—not only for passenger travel, but for goods movement, as well. The multi-modal nature of the plan needs further emphasis. In addition, the necessity of controlling sprawl, protection of rural and agricultural land, and stronger links between land use and transportation planning were mentioned at several break-out tables.

Economy

Though few stakeholders flagged the White Paper's economic goals and objectives as the number one priority, they still produced discussion at the workshop.

Several stakeholders asked that goals and objectives on with focus on goods movement be added to the RTP.

One of the most widely discussed ideas was that of Objective 38, “Transparent and fairly allocated passenger transportation costs, across modes”. There was some concern that, because of the high investment from government in transit, it would become uncompetitive if passengers were asked to bear the full cost. Similarly, Goal Q (Efficiency and Fiscal Responsibility) and the closely related Objective 32, “Better reflect the costs of transportation services in the prices paid by users,” were widely discussed. There was a concern that transferring the full cost of transit to passengers would make it unattractive and uncompetitive with the private vehicle.

2.3 Indicators

One-hundred-and-twenty (120) potential indicators were introduced in White Paper 1, grouped under the three aforementioned pillars. With the indicators in mind, workshop participants were asked how they would judge whether the RTP was successful and what would be tangible signs of progress, and whether their municipalities or organizations currently took steps to measure them.

Prioritisation

Some of the discussion referenced specific performance indicators, but much of it was more general in nature. The over-arching comment received was that there were too many indicators and Metrolinx was urged to prioritise between them. To that end, several workshop participants cautioned against using indicators which are difficult to measure or that had only indirect links to transportation—particularly those related to health, which is influenced by many other factors in addition to transportation choices and impacts.

There was concern amongst participants that some of the possible indicators were difficult to measure or not directly relevant to the transportation system. There was also recognition that it would be a challenge for Metrolinx to balance the need for standard measurements and indicators across the region, given the different operators and authorities, while leaving some flexibility in the targets to accommodate the different local contexts across the region. As an example, rural regions would be greatly challenged to achieve the same modal splits as urban areas.

Of specific possible indicators, participants highlighted the need to include a measure of efficiency, through metrics such as people-moving capacity, land use patterns, or occupants per vehicle. Modal share for all modes was also stressed as an important indicator to track.

Existing Metrics

The majority of participants felt strongly that Metrolinx should focus on using indicators and data that currently exist and are already collected. Data on live-work relationships collected by Statistics Canada, for example, and MTO maintains studies on travel time every two years. In addition, municipalities currently collect data for their own monitoring and assessments. In addition to focusing on pre-existing data, the group agreed that the list presented in White Paper 1 was too long; the list should be scoped by collapsing similar indicators and removing duplicates.

A number of specific indicators were cited by TAG members as items currently tracked, including on-time performance, customer satisfaction, and total length of sidewalks. However, it was clear from discussions that few metrics are assessed in all jurisdictions across the GTHA, and there is little consistency in how different indicators are measured.

2.4 Preliminary Directions

White Paper 2 introduced 45 policies, programs, legislative changes and other initiatives for potential inclusion in the RTP. These preliminary directions were organized into six thematic groups:

- A System for Complete Mobility;
- Placemaking and Mobility Hubs;
- Excellent Customer Service;
- Sustainable Financing;
- Innovation through Research; and
- Partnerships and Decision-Making.

New Ideas

The workshop asked participants to identify important directions not reflected in White Paper 2. Amongst many directions, an increased emphasis on technology, and a greater role for IT was strongly supported. In particular, participants suggested connecting with Transport Canada on its work in Intelligent Transportation Systems architecture study to further flesh out technology directions.

There was also a great deal of support for more directions that went further to encourage TDM and for people to live close to their work, and reduce average trip times and distances through a better mix of live/work land use patterns. Participants felt that greater discussion on coordination and implementation of the RTP is critical to its success, with more information on the details of who will be undertaking different parts, how it will be rolled out, and where the funding will come from.

Workshop participants questioned both a requirement for transit advisory committees, and the creation of an urban development agency. Both measures were perceived as increased levels of red tape and bureaucracy, which would ultimately slow projects down, rather than provide greater support for implementation of the RTP.

Priority Directions

Participants were asked to identify, of the possible directions presented and identified in the previous question, which are relatively more important in terms of measuring success. The concept of a transportation hierarchy, as a guiding principle for planning and project development, received strong support. Sustainable financing was also identified as a very important direction for the RTP to highlight and focus on, given its importance in allowing operators and municipalities to plan and maintain the transportation system.

Other preliminary directions to receive support at several tables at the session were the protection or acquisition of corridors for future transportation needs, the coordination of transportation projects, across the region, projects that would emphasize the optimisation of existing facilities and networks, including using existing road network to better accommodate all modes. A number of participants also flagged the value of supporting regional transit with local networks. The question of whether the RTP would include funding for local transit networks was a widespread topic of conversation during the workshop.

Existing Projects

The workshop participants were asked to identify any programs or directions that they believe could serve as models or best practices. Many local examples were offered for discussion. Highlighted amongst a long list of projects were VIVA's transit priority measures, complete streets legislation and implementation in American cities, as well as mobility hubs and integrated planning concepts being incorporated into specific projects in Brampton, Richmond Hill & Oakville

Areas for Leadership

There was broad consensus that, when asked to identify what role Metrolinx would be most effective in playing a leadership role for implementation, regional coordination and standards was of chief significance. The need for coordination across governments

throughout the GTHA is possibly the greatest role participants felt that Metrolinx should play. This extends to policy and financial coordination, which were mentioned frequently.

Second only to a role in regional coordination was a role in supplying long-term, sustained financial commitments. Participants felt that funding from Metrolinx would allow municipalities to plan further into the future on a variety of infrastructure investments.

Implementation of region-wide projects was also seen as a major role for Metrolinx. Examples given ranged from a complete network of HOV lanes to the operation of a common fare card and related fare integration and restructuring. Marketing and public education were also identified as programs that should be carried out in a coordinated way across the GTHA, as well as supplying data and information to local governments on international examples and best practices.

A variety of potential roles received moderate support at multiple tables. Many suggested that Metrolinx should be in a position to plan and support the implementation of transportation infrastructure that will positively influence development. A role in regional mediation and assisting to address inter-regional issues generally received support, though there was some disagreement as whether this was truly a priority for Metrolinx.

2.5 Test Concepts

Three hypothetical future transportation networks or “test concepts” were introduced in White Paper 2 along with the results of a modelling exercise that was undertaken for each concept. Workshop participants were asked for their comments on the test concepts. In particular, they were asked to identify the region’s most important nodes and corridors and whether any had been missed in White Paper 2.

Missing Linkages

The TAG was generally supportive of the elements tested in the various concepts. They felt the concepts were comprehensive, and that projects that had been identified locally as priorities were addressed in at least one of the concepts.

Workshop attendees identified a number of specific projects that they felt should be further examined in the test concepts, including MTO’s HOV network, and extension of GO train electrification to the ends of Lakeshore line. Some participants identified Steeles and Taunton roads, connecting Durham to the City of Toronto, as a connection that should be addressed.

More generally, increased rapid transit to all airports and an increased number of North-South linkages.

One conception, that highways should be better highlighted to balance against the emphasis on transit and create a true multi-modal plan, generated much discussion. While some participants felt that the concepts presented were too far skewed to active transportation and transit, others argued that this was necessary to overcome a historical imbalance of planning for cars.

Project Prioritization

A couple of common themes emerged across the tables when participants were asked what criteria should be used to prioritize infrastructure projects. Performance of a project, and its role in shaping the urban fabric, came to the forefront, as many proposed using either return on investment or cost-benefit analysis, combined with examination of where and when population and job growth is occurring. Combined, these conditions would prioritize areas with more projected growth to get people to change before habits are engrained and ensure the infrastructure is well-used. Project readiness and its ability to contribute to congestion relief were also identified by a number of participants as criteria for consideration.

Appendix A – Stakeholder Workshop Questions

Session 1: Vision, Goals and Objectives for the RTP

Question 1: White Paper 1 sets out a broad and comprehensive suite of goals and objectives, all based on the three pillars of: a high quality of life; a thriving, healthy and protected environment; and a strong, prosperous and competitive economy. What is your best advice about what the Regional Transportation Plan should focus on? How should trade-offs or competing interests be addressed?

Question 2: Section 4 of White Paper 1 presents a series of possible indicators for measuring progress in achieving the goals and objectives. Which of these do you feel would be relatively more valuable or important? Of those that you feel are most important, which do you already measure? How difficult would it be to collect information for the others?

Session 2: Preliminary Directions for the RTP

Question 1: Are there any directions that you feel are important that are not reflected in Section 2 of White Paper 2?

Question 2: Of all the directions that are presented in White Paper 2, or that have been identified by your group in response to question 1, which in your opinion are relatively more important?

Question 3: Of those directions that you have identified as being of particular importance in question #2, which are you already undertaking that could be a model for others to follow?

Question 4: Of those directions that you have identified as being of particular importance in question #2, which do you think Metrolinx should play a leadership role in implementing?

Session 3: Transportation System Test Concepts

Question 1: Looking at the three Test Concepts in Appendix C of White Paper 2, what in your opinion are the most critical road and transit linkages, and what is missing?

Question 2: What criteria would you use to prioritize which road and transit projects should be built in the next 5 years?

Question 3: Do you have any other comments or thoughts about any of the Test Concepts presented in White Paper 2?

Appendix B – Dotmocracy Results

Workshop participants were invited to participate in a “dotmocracy exercise,” wherein “votes” could be cast for or against the preliminary policy and program ideas introduced in the White Papers.

	Green (In Favour)	Red (Against)
2.1 Complete Mobility		
Direction 1: Transportation hierarchy	7	0
Direction 3: Active transportation	4	1
Direction 4: Regional transit network	19	0
Direction 5: Improved local transit	10	0
Direction 2: Ambitious TDM	10	0
Direction 8: Complete streets	3	0
Direction 6: Improve goods movement	3	0
Direction 7: Land protection and/or acquisition	15	0
Direction 10: Create new markets for transit	0	0
Direction 11: Promote ride-sharing and car-sharing	2	0
Direction 9: Improve incident clearing procedures	1	2
2.2 - Placemaking and Mobility Hubs		
Direction 1: Complete communities	11	0
Direction 7: Direct growth away from natural areas and agricultural land	12	0
Direction 3: Incorporate mobility hubs into planning policy documents	10	0
Direction 4: Mobility hub master plans.	1	0
Direction 2: Identify a system of mobility hubs	4	0
Direction 5: Enhance the roles of Union Station and Pearson Airport	7	3
Direction 6: Comprehensive parking strategies.	2	2
2.3 - Excellent Customer Service		
Direction 2: Seamless transit/transportation experience	15	0
Direction 3: Simplify the payment of transit fares	3	0
Direction 1: Online regional transportation information system	6	0
Direction 5: Improve access for those with special needs	4	0
Direction 4: Establish region-wide transit service standards	3	3
Direction 6: Direct marketing and promotions	3	1
Direction 7: Improve safety of all modes	1	0
2.4 - Sustainable Financing		
Direction 1: True cost pricing	4	0

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Direction 4: Financial incentives to promote transit use	6	1
Direction 5: Developer-pay for all modes	8	0
Direction 2: Dedicated user-fees	3	2
Direction 6: Leverage private sector resources	3	1
Direction 3: Eliminate free and subsidized parking	4	8
Federal and provincial funding	n/a	n/a
Direction 7: Land values capture	3	1
Do nothing	n/a	n/a
2.5 Innovation through Research		
Direction 1: Goods movement	3	0
Direction 5: Inter-dependence between transportation and human health	1	1
Direction 3: Relationship between land use and transportation	2	0
Direction 4: Trends and opportunities in active transportation.	0	0
Direction 7: Pilot and demonstration projects.	5	0
Direction 9: Specialized transit	2	1
Direction 2: Barriers to short sea shipping	1	4
Direction 6: Clean fuel technologies and green vehicles	3	0
Direction 8: Transportation modelling	1	1
2.6 - Partnerships and Decision-Making		
Direction 1: Coordinate transportation planning and delivery	19	0
Direction 3: Informed decision-making	5	0
Direction 4: Best practices in transportation planning	2	0
Direction 2: Expand role of municipal transportation advisory committees	0	20
Total	231	52