

Statement by  
The Honourable Harinder Takhar  
Minister of Transportation

Greater Toronto Transportation Authority  
First Reading

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(CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY)

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Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to rise in the house today to talk about legislation I am introducing to create the Greater Toronto Transportation Authority, GTTA.

Most of us live and work in different places. And we all want to spend less time commuting. GTTA will make it as easy to take public transit as it is to drive the car!

The Greater Toronto Area occupies less than one per cent of Ontario's land area. But nearly half of the province's 12.5 million residents live in the region.

Mr. Speaker, traffic congestion on GTA roadways is a significant concern for the whole province.

The 400 series highways that pass through this area are some of the busiest in North America. Much of the \$900 million in two-way trade that crosses the Ontario / US border every day, travels on these roads. Delays threaten our prosperity.

Mr. Speaker, it is in everyone's interest to reduce congestion and keep traffic moving quickly, reliably and safely. It is critical to our economic success and quality of life.

In the next 25 years it's estimated we'll see an increase of nearly two million vehicles in the Greater Toronto and surrounding area. The amount of time spent stuck in traffic could increase by four times and drive the cost of congestion as high as \$28 million a day.

Mr. Speaker, we can't let that happen.

If passed, our legislation will create an agency to bring together the province, the

Regions of Durham, Halton, Peel, and York and the Cities of Hamilton and Toronto as well as local transit agencies to create a seamless and convenient transportation network. One that takes into account road, rail and transit service.

Mr. Speaker, we need to take a region-wide approach to transit and transportation. One that meets the growing number and the growing needs of commuters in this region.

This is consistent with the government's overall approach to planning as outlined in the Places to Grow Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe.

Our transit and transportation problems and solutions are inter-regional in nature, crossing municipal boundaries. GTTA will play a critical role in planning for a seamless, integrated transit network so that people can use public transit to travel easily from Hamilton to Newmarket to Oshawa.

What does this mean for commuters? Convenience. Better value. Less time waiting for a connecting bus or train.

Mr. Speaker, when people take public transit they don't think about municipal boundaries. They just want to get from one place to another.

Under our proposal, GTTA will also be responsible for the GTA Fare Card System, purchasing public transit vehicles on behalf of municipalities and manage GO Transit.

Mr. Speaker, it makes sense to transfer GO Transit to GTTA. As the province's largest inter-regional transit provider, GO Transit supports GTTA's mandate of planning and identifying strategic investments. It also supports our goal of integrating transit and fare card systems.

The highly successful Provincial Gas Tax program has increased ridership by 3.4 per cent across Ontario. This program has allowed transit agencies to purchase new buses, hire new drivers and add new routes.

To put it in perspective, that's the equivalent of eliminating 18 million car trips a year!

The proposed GTTA will report to the Minister of Transportation. The authority will be overseen by a board, appointed by Lieutenant Governor in Council.

Under our proposed legislation, GTTA will be governed by representatives from

Durham, Halton, Peel, and York Regions, and the Cities of Hamilton, Toronto and the province. An advisory committee of stakeholders representing seniors, students, persons with disabilities and the business community will also be created.

One of the board's first tasks will be to create region-wide, multi-modal transportation plan. Annually the agency will submit a rolling five-year capital plan with an investment strategy.

Mr. Speaker, our government is bringing forward legislation that, if passed, will fulfill another election promise to integrate transportation in the GTA and Hamilton and relieve congestion and gridlock.

That will take much more than a quick fix. We need a broader, comprehensive vision.

We need to ensure that the transit and infrastructure are in place to support strategic growth throughout the Greater Golden Horseshoe. We need a vision that puts transit in areas where we need future growth to happen. Our economy depends on how quickly and efficiently we can move people and goods through the region. Transit is our first priority.

Mr. Speaker, now is the time to move forward. This is an important and exciting day for Ontario. I encourage all members to support the legislation I have introduced today.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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See also:

Legislative Assembly of Ontario: [Bill 104 2006](#) - An Act to establish the Greater Toronto Transportation Authority and to repeal the GO Transit Act, 2001 (First Reading)