

June 5, 2007

Chair MacIsaac at the June 2007 American Public Transportation Association Conference

[See presentation slides](#) (PDF format)

Slide 1 – Opening

Introduction

Thank you for that very kind introduction, and my thanks to APTA for asking me to speak this afternoon. Given that I am a newcomer to the transit business, to have a chance to speak to one of the oldest and largest transit trade organizations in the world is quite an honour. I am especially pleased to speak about the role strategic planning can play in advancing the transit agenda. As a former Mayor of a municipality that was perhaps the first in Canada to adopt strategic planning as standard operating procedure. I am a big believer.

My board became fully constituted only just 3 months ago. I will tell you, frankly, we are still in the very early stages of getting our act together as an organization. But despite our infancy, despite the fact that we have a million things to do before we reach any level of maturity as an organization, my first priority is the development of a strategic plan.

Slide 2-1 Strategic Plan

2-2 Daydream

2-3 Nightmare

So what do I mean when I talk about a strategic plan. There is an old Japanese proverb that says vision without action is a daydream. And action without vision is a nightmare. For me, strategic planning determines where an organization is going, how it's going to get there, and how it'll know if it got there or not.

Slide 3-1 Vision & Action

3-2 Walter

3-3 Freddy

Strategic planning marries up vision and action allowing you to avoid both the Walter Mitty and the Freddy Kruger scenarios for your organization.

Now in the relatively short time I have this morning I thought I might focus on some of the key factors I anticipate will be informing and influencing our strategic planning at the GTTA.

Defining a Vision

Strategic planning starts with a vision for your organization.

What is the vision for the GTTA? Well, my board is meeting later this month to discuss that very thing. But we will obviously be strongly

guided by the legislation that created us.

Slide 4-1 Intergrated
4-2 Quality of life
4-3 Economy
4-4 Environment

Our raison d'être is to plan and develop an integrated multi-modal transportation system for this city region. That gives us an immense opportunity to improve people's quality of life, make our economy stronger and more competitive, and protect and enhance our environment.

Slide 5 Champion

In my view, GTTA needs to position itself as the champion and the hero of the commuters in this region. Fundamentally, I want to develop a constituency for our organization among the travelling public where we are regarded as relentlessly pursuing their interests. So how do we get there. Well, let's start by examining some of the key transportation issues facing this city region.

Key Issues

1) Severe Congestion

Slide 6 Congestion

Traffic congestion is the certainly most obvious. This city region is one of the top five most congested cities on the continent.

Slide 7 Worse, not better

And it's getting worse, not better. We are on a trajectory that will see us vying to be in the top two most congested cities in North America sharing that dubious honour with the city of Los Angeles.

2) Funding and Planning Problems

Slide 8 Plan & Fund

We are in this situation largely because the way we currently plan and fund transportation is simply not working.

Slide 9 Transcend

Our regional economy has transcended municipal boundaries over time resulting in a lack of coordinated planning and service delivery. And we have under funded transportation infrastructure, especially public transit, for decades. So we have a lot of catching up to do.

3) High Growth

But catching up is not enough. Our problem is compounded by the fact that we then have to keep up.

Slide 10 Population

Another key trend forcing our hand for change in transportation policy is population growth in this region.

Slide 11 Three million

We are one of the fastest growing places in North America. Looking ahead, we expect three million more people to arrive in the next 25 years.

Slide 12 - Globalization

4) Globalization – Competing effectively
Globalization is another major driver of change for us.

Slide 13 Compete

The reduction in international trade barriers has meant that we need to compete effectively with the rest of the world. We are headed for a population of almost 10 million people here in the GTAH. We need to ensure our transportation systems are as good or better than other similar cities around the world or we will not be able to compete effectively.

5) Fossil Fuel Dependence

Slide 14 Fossil

There are two really important trends we are facing as a society related to our dependence on fossil fuels.

Slide 15 Peak Oil Theory

The first is often referred to as peak oil. Without going into details, Peak Oil Theory predicts we are about to or already have entered into a period of steep and sustained price increases for oil. As far as I can see, few people are disputing that Peak oil is a sound theory, the debate centers on when we reach the peak.

When it does happen, there can be little doubt that we will have to change many of our current habits. Driving a car will become very expensive. And many of the products we consume today that are energy intensive to produce, like food, will become a lot more expensive.

For those reasons, it will surely take us a long time to comfortably wean ourselves off of cheap oil. In my view, it is only prudent for us to be anticipating the impacts of expensive oil and to plan mitigation strategies.

6) Climate Change

Slide 16 Climate Change

The other significant trend directly related to our dependence on fossil fuels is Climate Change. The transportation sector presents a significant challenge for Canada in responding to the Kyoto Protocol.

Slide 17-1 to 17-4

Transportation is the single largest source of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions in Canada, accounting for 26 per cent of the total. If current trends continue, GHG emissions from transportation are expected to exceed 1990 levels by 32 per cent in 2010 and 53 per cent by 2020.

Clearly, if we are going to reduce our emissions of greenhouse gases, changes to our transportation system are going to have to play a very large role in the solution.

7) Public Health

Slide 18 Health

Another set of trends that I find really compelling relate to human health. Our society is seeing dramatic and sustained increases in the rates of respiratory disease, obesity, and diabetes.

Slide 19-1 8 Million

19-2 Premature deaths

19-3 Hospital

19-4 Emergency

19-5 Sick days

The Ontario Medical Association estimates that air pollution alone costs us nearly 8 billion dollars each year in the way of premature deaths, hospital admissions, emergency room visits, and sick days. Transportation is one of the largest sources of air pollution in Canada. So if we are going to improve respiratory health in this region, transportation will have to play a big role.

Beyond air pollution, we are also getting a clear picture of the impact of our continued reliance on the automobile. Our youth are seriously overweight in part because they are driven everywhere they go. Improving public health will undoubtedly require new healthier approaches to transportation.

Strategies

Slide 20 - 1 Strategies

So having identified some of the key issues facing this region, what are the strategies GTTA might pursue to address those trends?

Slide 20- 2 Biking

1) Biking and Walking

In developing our plan, my view is that we need to take walking and cycling far more seriously than we have in the past.

If we can get people incorporating these physical activities into their daily lives, the public health impacts will be enormous.

Exercise has an enormously positive impact on issues like obesity and diabetes. And by biking and walking we will be using our cars less thereby assisting in both climate change efforts and air quality improvement.

Slide 21 Invest

We need to invest in the infrastructure and develop the policies and the systems that will make biking safe and convenient. Things like bike lanes and bike lockers at Go stations could make a huge difference.

2) Public Transit

Slide 22 Public Transit

Now, I know I am preaching to the choir here when I say that I believe public transit will play the most significant role in responding to the issues I have identified earlier. The implications of a better modal split towards transit for all those issues are enormously positive.

Increasing public transit usage should help free up highway capacity to ensure businesses can get their supplies just in time and their products to market in order to satisfy demand.

Public transit use reduces greenhouse gas emissions and reduces noxious emissions leading to smog.

And as gasoline prices rise, public transit will be a key for inclusive cities as car ownership and operation become more expensive.

Slide 23-1 More Transit

23-2 Enhance experience

In my view, strategies that will change the dynamic around public transit fall into two discrete categories. The first category relates to the supply of transit. We need to provide more transit in more places to give people more choices about how they get around.

The second category deals with the quality and image of transit. We need to rethink public transit in a way that is more customer focussed – we need to enhance the transit experience for our riders. We also need to give transit a sexier image. Sex appeal is certainly what the automakers sell.

3) Funding

Slide 24 Funding

Slide 25 How much more?

This is all going to cost a lot of money to be sure. How much more? I don't know exactly.

Billions, certainly. Many billions, probably. Our preliminary work shows that 650 million dollars per year in additional spending for the next 20 years in this region would not have an appreciable impact on many of the issues we are facing. Beyond that, there's no way to know until we put some plans in place, and we're not there yet.

Slide 25-2 Income tax

25-3 User fees

25-4 Private sector

A key part of our strategic response to the issues facing us will be the development of an investment plan. I anticipate we will consider a host of potential revenue sources ranging from income taxes to user fees before we make our recommendations. And I also expect we will look to the private sector to play a significant role in financing the improvements we will recommend.

4) Consultation

We recognize the urgency of the need for our work. We want to have our plans before the Minister by next spring.

Slide 26 Consultation

But despite this urgency, we still intend to be thoughtful and inclusive in our process. We will be establishing a series of Advisory Committees that will allow broad input and dialogue. We would like to have these up and running by this fall.

Slide 27-1 Broad input

27-2 Business

27-3 Labour

27-4 Environment

27-5 Social Justice

Because, ultimately our plan needs to be developed in consultation with the broadest possible range of stakeholders. If we do this well, we will have allies from business, labour, the environment, and social justice for our plan.

Accomplishing this will mean innovative, leading edge, public and stakeholder participation in our planning process along with the more customary approaches.

Closing

So if we have some success in pursuing all these strategies, I think

we will have a pretty good shot at becoming the champion for commuters in this region.

Slide 28-1 Don't know where

Slide 28-2 Not Likely

But taking the time at the beginning of this process to do a strategic plan is a key milestone for the organization. Because as the old saying goes, if you don't know where you are going, you're not likely to get there.

Thanks so much for your attention today.

Slide 29 Thank you & Credits.