

May 23, 2007

Chair's speech to the Clean Air Committee

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

Slide 1 – Opening

Thank you for that very kind introduction, and my thanks to you for asking me to speak to you this afternoon.

I met just this earlier this week with Michael and Eva, and I can tell you I'm very impressed with the important work you have been doing and the ability of the Clean Air Partnership to engage and mobilize groups from all across the Greater Toronto Area.

I have been spending a great deal of time these days listening to those who have worked on this portfolio for a long time. Passengers, community planners, transit operators and advocates of public transit and of course folks, like yourselves who have been working hard to put in place real solutions to protect our environment.

I'm also spending a lot of time giving speeches and interviews about the importance of transportation issues in the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area because I genuinely believe that this might be our last best chance to get it right.

Not that life will end for us if we don't succeed. But, our current course is gradually foreclosing on our opportunity to be a world-class city region. We are at a crossroads in my view and our choice is between being a secondary regional centre in the North American market...

...or becoming this country's offering as a region that will compete with the best cities in the world.

That is certainly what it's about these days, competing effectively with the rest of the world. And, it's not so much about Canada competing with other countries, as it is city regions competing against other city regions.

I always bristle a little when I hear folks suggest that the communities in the 416 and 905 are competing economically. In point of fact, we are all part of the same regional economy, and together we are competing against other city regions like Chicago and New York and Atlanta, or a dozen other cities we've never heard of in China.

I think it's really important going forward that we take the attitude that we are all in this together as a region, and that each part of the region is depending on the other parts to succeed.

That's because succeeding is not going to be easy. The competition is tough.

One thing is clear though, we are going to need a proper transportation infrastructure to be competitive, and that is something we don't currently have. Why not?

the fact is, pure and simple, we have under funded transportation infrastructure in the GTTA Region for decades.

And while we have been under-investing, other city regions around the world, our competitors, have been investing more money, and in more strategic ways than us.

Our funding for transportation infrastructure has been far too small. And the funding that has flowed has been sporadic in nature and not nearly strategic enough in its application.

Slide 2 -Challenges

And, our challenge is about more than just catching up; it's also about keeping up. This region is growing, and it's growing fast.

Looking ahead, we expect at least three million more people to arrive in the next 25 years. Three million people, and at least 1.5 million cars. That is like everyone living in Greater Montreal picking up and moving here.

We need to do some serious planning for all those people.

To its credit, the Province is moving on these issues. My agency, the GTTA, was created as part of a larger strategy to deal with infrastructure and growth management needs in this area.

Slide 3-1 Stool

The GTTA is in a sense the third leg of the stool that is the government's plan to prepare this region for the growth that is coming.

Slide 3-2 Greenbelt

The first leg is the Greenbelt, which protects 1.8 million acres of valuable farmland and natural areas at the heart of the Greater Golden Horseshoe.

Slide 3-3 Places to Grow

The second leg is the Places to Grow initiative that coordinates population and job growth for municipalities.

Slide 3-4 GTTA

But to be sustainable, each of these initiatives needs a first class transportation system. This new organization, the GTTA, has been created to be an agent of change and a key enabler of the government's planning policies.

Slide 4-1 GTTA

Now, we are still a start up organization. There are 12 of us at the moment – the vast majority of these people are seconded from various ministries of the provincial government as a transitional team.

Slide 4-2 Michael

And, as you might have heard, we recently announced the appointment of Michael Fenn as Chief Executive Officer of the GTTA.

This is a great appointment. Michael commands a great deal of respect in the OPS, the municipal world and in the private sector. He is just the kind of CEO we're going to need.

We are working at getting our corporation up and running and organized. We are designing a structure for a management group that can deliver on our objectives.

We are beginning to develop a strategic plan. And, we are beginning to dig into the substantive issues around how we are going to make this region into a place you can get around reasonably easily.

Our directors have had their first two meetings. And it is quite a notable board.

Slide 4-3 Board

Our Vice Chair is Peter Smith, the chair of GO Transit. Other board members are the Mayor Fred Eisenberger, Regional Chair of Halton, Gary Carr, Mayor Hazel McCallion from Peel, Mayor David Miller, Councillors Brian Ashton and Adam Giambrone and, Paul Bedford from Toronto and Bill Fisch, Chair of the Region of York and Durham Regional Chair, Roger Anderson.

That is quite a board. And I think that the fact that all those heads of council, and the chair of the TTC, have elected to come to our board shows a serious intention to make this work.

Slide 5 – GTTA Region Map

You can tell by our board membership that we serve a massive region of some 5 ½ million people bounded by Durham to the east, York Region to the North, and the City of Hamilton to the west.

Now, if you spend much time studying the transportation situation in the region it's pretty easy to become alarmed.

There is plenty of bad news if you want to focus on it. Today, we are in the top five most congested cities on the continent. We are on a trajectory that will see us vying for the most congested city in North America with Los Angeles assuming we keep on with business as usual.

Our current path will result in a 45 percent increase in average commuting times arising if we persist in business as usual.

Slide 6 Existing Traffic Congestion

Just take a look at the next few slides.

The dark purple lines represent roadways that are currently at or near full capacity. The next slide shows how congested our roads could be in 2031 if we don't take action now.

Slide 7 2031 Congestion

That's a lot of purple. If we allow this scenario to play itself out, it will have profound consequences for all aspects of this region.

To begin, this place will be a lot less liveable. Just going about your day to day affairs will be a lot more difficult. It will mean less family time and less time in your community.

Our economy will be shackled by a transportation system that diminishes the productivity of employees, and hinders the ability of businesses to get their products to market. Without doubt, many businesses will simply leave to relocate in a competitor city.

As the old saying goes, business votes with its feet. So in a perverse way, one way to solve congestion would be to do nothing and allow our economy to wither with an uncompetitive and outdated infrastructure.

Our environment will also suffer.

Slide 8 Gas Emissions

Greenhouse gas emissions by road transportation are increasing. It is estimated that a business-as-usual approach would result in a 42 percent increase in auto emissions.

Slide 9 Health Outcomes

We are also beginning to better understand and quantify the relationship between traffic congestion, air pollution and the health outcomes associated with air pollution.

The Ontario Medical Association estimates that the five common air pollutants contribute to approximately 5,800 premature deaths, 16,800 hospital admissions, more than 59,000 emergency room visits and as many as 29 million minor illness days. This 2005 study also pegs the cost of these health outcomes at 7.8 billion dollars. And, that does not include the costs associated with a visit to the doctor's office.

In addition, we are also getting a clear picture on the impact of our continued reliance on the automobile. Take for example, the heavy price our youth are paying for our current transportation practices.

Slide 10 The Price Children Pay

Less than half of Canadian children now walk to school.

Two out of three Canadian children do not meet the average physical activity guidelines to achieve optimum growth and development.

More than a quarter of Canadian children and youth are overweight.

And, traffic fatalities are the leading cause of death for children over the age of one year in Canada.

Slide 11 Scary

All of which is kind of scary.

On the other hand, if you begin to think about what the possibilities are for this region, if everyone pulled together towards a common goal...

...well that's an opportunity that I believe is genuinely exciting. So, what is our opportunity?

Slide 12 Transit Map

From a customer's standpoint, the opportunity is to ensure that people can get to where they need and want to go with reasonable ease.

So many people today have no choice about how to get around – they have to use their car because there is no public transit that meets their needs. Or alternatively, their transit choice is so miserable they avoid it at all costs.

Slide 13: Crowded Transit

I met a woman recently who told me that her transit ride home is so uncomfortable, that she closes her eyes and wishes it was over from start to finish. No wonder people use their cars.

Our opportunity is to rethink public transit in a way that is more customer focussed so that people will be more inclined to use it.

Our opportunity is to ensure that in an incredibly competitive world market with razor thin margins, businesses can get their supplies just in time and their products to market in order to satisfy demand.

Our opportunity is to change our region in a way that gives us cleaner air and reduces greenhouse gas emissions. There is no doubt public transit can play a big role in this.

Every bus takes 50 cars off the road. Using buses to transport people, as opposed to cars, reduces greenhouse gas emissions by approximately 75 percent.

Slide 14-1: Principles for Change

But realizing this opportunity will require us to fundamentally changing the manner in which transportation is planned and delivered across our region. I think there are three principles we ought to embrace moving forward if we really want to see change.

Slide 14-2: Regional Economy

First, transportation should be planned and delivered on the basis of our regional economy rather than municipal boundaries because that's how people live their lives.

Slide 14-3: Capital Plan grounded in Public Policy

Second, transportation infrastructure in our region should be delivered on the basis of a long-term capital plan grounded in good public policy. You can't build a system to deal with the immensely complicated needs of this city region with an ad hoc approach. You need to take a long term strategic approach and stick with it.

Slide 14-4: Predictable funding

Finally, there should be confidence the plan will be delivered. That means finding long term predictable funding.

Elected officials love announcing infrastructure projects. I know this. I use to be an elected official. And, that will not end anytime soon. You will never take the politics completely out of transportation. But I think we can nurture a far closer relationship between good public policy and good politics by changing the way we plan for and fund transportation.

Slide 15 Short Run

As much as long-term approaches are ultimately going to be the solution for us, we cannot focus exclusively on the long term. I will be looking for both short run and longer term wins at the GTTA.

In the short run, GTTA's opportunity is to optimize our existing infrastructure in smart ways that aren't currently happening. That is the low hanging fruit.

Slide 16 HOV Lanes

Things like networks of HOV lanes and intelligent highway systems should be considered to maximize throughput on our road system. Transit systems should be better integrated to allow customers to seamlessly traverse municipal boundaries.

Slide 17 Medium Term

In the medium term, GTTA should prioritize existing projects to maximize the benefit we are getting for our dollars. There are lots of good projects out there. We need to be strategic about which ones go first.

Slide 18 Longer Term

Over the longer run, GTTA needs to envision and build a world-class regional transportation system. In my view, we need to be looking around the world to see how others are coping with their transportation challenges. Naturally though we want a solution made right here in the GTA.

It is fascinating though to look at what others have done. If for example, we consider the development of subway systems as a proxy of the importance that society places on transit, we can get a glimpse of the challenges and opportunities before us.

Slide 19 London

London England, or

Slide 20 New York

New York, or

Slide 21 Tokyo

Tokyo, you realize we have a long way to go.

Slide 22 TTC

Compared to those, a map of our subway system looks like a stick figure beside a collection of Picassos.

Creating a world-class transportation system will mean building some additional roads but it will undoubtedly mean far more reliance on public transit...subways, Light Rapid Transit, Bus Rapid Transit and the like.

Not that GTTA is only about forcing people out of their cars. We simply don't have enough space to build enough roads to accommodate all the people who are coming.

Slide 23 Modal Split Graphic

Unfortunately, our current modal split – the number of people getting around using their cars versus other modes of transportation - paints a sad picture of reliance on the automobile, and that's something we are going to have to change.

Slide 24 Choice

We need to get going on giving people real choices for how they can get around. Because if we continue on with our near exclusive reliance on the car, our region will be impossibly congested.

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 you could spend 650 million dollars per year in additional spending for the next 20 years without having an appreciable impact on congestion. Beyond that, there's no way to know until we put some plans in place, and we're not there yet. But here's the thing:

As big as the numbers are, they aren't nearly as expensive as the cost of not making these investments. The TD Bank Financial Group estimates that just in the Greater Toronto Area, the costs of congestion and delays resulting from a lack of infrastructure investment are in the order of \$2 billion every year.

Slide 25 Many people

And when put in context, the numbers become quite manageable. We need to view these expenditures over many people over many years.

This is a huge region - a lot of people are going to help pay for these assets. And these assets will last us a long time.

I also think there is a role for the private sector to play as we move forward. One of

the great ironies of our day is that we have massive pools of capital in search of projects. We also have massive infrastructure projects in need of capital.

The GTTA presents an opportunity to bring these two worlds together by structuring our plan and our projects appropriately to allow private sector capital to be used so as to lever public sector dollars.

However we do this, we can't be scared by the numbers.

Slide 26 Resourceful

Ontario is a resourceful, prosperous, industrious Province. It is frustrating to me that people even ask whether or not we can afford this. There is no good reason why we can't do this. We just need to get on with the job.

So how do we proceed? Well, I know people's concerns about the GTTA. I know that we look pretty skinny right now for the journey we are about to undertake. But the fact that we aren't bogged down with operational responsibilities is an opportunity for us to get the plan right.

Slide 27 Last best chance

In my view, as I said earlier, this is our last, best chance to get transportation right in this region for generations to come. We need to be bold. And we can certainly take some lessons from what is happening in other great cities around the world. There is a lot going on elsewhere that we can learn from.

Slide 28 Madrid map

Madrid, for example, has added more kilometers of subway in the past 10 years than Toronto has in its entire existing network.

Slide 29 London

Several cities around the world have road pricing systems that reporting great success. London England, has dramatically changed transportation in their city by using congestion charges.

We need to consider all these ideas in developing our plan. There should be no sacred cows.

Slide 30 Priorities

Our top priority is the development of an integrated long-range transportation plan. We will also be developing an investment strategy and a funding plan at the same time. I want to have these plans in front of Minister Cansfield in the first quarter of next year.

We have already started some broad brush planning work and the development of a framework that could serve as a tool for setting priorities. And we've begun to assemble the work that is out there.

The GTTA Board will be establishing a series of Advisory Committees that will allow

broad input and dialogue. Because, ultimately our plan needs to be developed in consultation with, and with input from, the broadest possible range of stakeholders.

At the end of the day, I want the support of a broad based coalition across this region. I need environmentalists, and social activists, labour leaders and captains of industry lined up in support of this effort. And of course, I especially want the support of the people who, day in and day out, are going to use the system we are building.

Beyond the planning responsibility, GTTA will also be a service delivery organization.

Slide 31 Farecard

We're going to have responsibility for the region-wide fare card system currently being developed by the Ministry of Transportation.

This is a smart card that will allow you to access transit systems across the GTA and Hamilton using the same card.

Slide 32 GO Transit map

The GTTA will also eventually take over responsibility for GO Transit.

Slide 33 Bus Purchases

In addition, we will coordinate a cooperative vehicle purchasing system for interested transit authorities across the province. Six municipalities recently participated in a common purchase arrangement with one supplier, resulting in savings of more than \$15,000 per bus.

So ladies and gentlemen, that's what we're going to be up to over the next little while.

And it really is so important that we do this right.

Slide 34-1 Hamilton

Think of the three things – the three broad areas – that can be affected by what we're doing.

Slide 34-2 Economy

Slide 34-3 Environment

Slide 34-4 People

My time as mayor taught me that balance in government means always considering the economy, the environment, and people in everything we do. Transportation is certainly no exception to that.

The economy. The environment. People and their quality of life.

If we get this right, we're going to improve all three. A stronger economy, a healthier environment without question.

Slide 35 More Time

Perhaps most importantly for me, if we get this right, we are also going to give people the most precious of things imaginable – more time. If we can find people even just another half hour in their busy day by speeding up their trips to and from work, I think that's worth its weight in gold.

Thirty minutes. Maybe that doesn't sound like that much. But 30 minutes a day over the course of a week, a month, a career, it's a lot.

Slide 36 Various Scenes

To get there, we are all going to have to make some changes. It's going to take leadership, planning, cooperation and determination. It's a big job, with big challenges, but also a really big payoff. Thanks for listening today.

Thank you.