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REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION PLAN TAKING SHAPE

Two White Papers Outline Metrolinx Vision to Improve Travel Around the Region

TORONTO (May 8, 2008) – Metrolinx is seeking public input to help shape a strategy to create a better transportation system across the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area (GTHA).

Two new White Papers set out a vision, goals and objectives and propose specific policies and concepts for a new Regional Transportation Plan (RTP). The White Papers are posted online and are accessible 24/7 for review and comment by the public until early July at www.metrolinx.com. E-engagement is one of Metrolinx's popular green initiatives.

“The White Papers move everyone from talking about our region's transportation challenges to developing real solutions,” said Rob MacIsaac, Chair of Metrolinx. “Based on the input we receive, we will be able to set out a clear plan to improve transportation choices and travel experiences for the six million people who rely on the system every day.”

“We are looking at bold and innovative options in the White Papers,” MacIsaac said. “Ultimately, the final RTP will be an ambitious combination of policies, programs and investments to support a comprehensive, seamless and sustainable transportation system.”

A few examples of potential initiatives outlined in the White Papers include: expanding the transportation system so that more people will be able to access rapid transit less than five kms from their home; creating comprehensive walking and cycling networks; building a high-speed rail link between Pearson Airport and downtown Toronto; and new regional trip-planning services.

MacIsaac emphasized that the White Papers, and the final RTP, go far beyond just infrastructure investments in addressing the region's transportation needs.

“We need to encourage people to embrace alternative ways of getting around,” he said. “Building new infrastructure will certainly be one of the priorities of the plan, but at the same time we will also be looking at new policies, legislation and public education programs to support more innovative approaches.”

The White Papers also set out ways to measure the success of the plan when implemented. For example, change in the number of transit riders versus automobile users, and the increased percentage of the population that will be able to easily access rapid transit have been identified as potential barometers.

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“We will continue our commitment to listen to the public through our extensive consultation process,” MacIsaac said. “The best judges of our work are the people who travel across the GTHA. We intend to develop a plan that meets their needs by working collaboratively with them.

Once the consultation on the White Papers is completed, a draft RTP and a companion Investment Strategy will be developed. When approved by the Metrolinx Board in late July, the drafts will also be available on-line for input from August to early October. A series of public meetings across the region in September will provide additional opportunities for input.

The final RTP – a master plan for an improved transportation system in the Greater Toronto and Hamilton region– will be released in the fall of 2008.

Metrolinx is a Crown agency of the Province of Ontario, operating within the legislative framework of the Greater Toronto Transportation Authority Act, 2006 and the provincial Growth Plan.

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