

NEWS RELEASE

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METROLINX FOCUSES ON ROADS, HIGHWAYS AND TRANSIT IN LATEST ROUND OF CONSULTATIONS

Final Green Papers issued in development of Regional Transportation Plan

TORONTO (March 7, 2008) – Metrolinx has issued two new Green Papers as part of a process to create a better transportation system for the Greater Toronto and Hamilton area. The papers lay out issues related to two of the most crucial components of the transportation network: roads and highways, and transit.

As with the previous five Green Papers, Metrolinx is seeking ideas, insights and suggestions from the public and stakeholders. Both Green Papers have been posted for public review and comment on Metrolinx’s interactive consultation website at <http://metrolinx-consult.limehouse.com/portal>. Metrolinx staff will be meeting broadly with stakeholder organizations to gather further input for a comprehensive Regional Transportation Plan.

“Our transportation system is used daily by more than five million people,” said Metrolinx Chair Rob MacIsaac. “We are confident that with better coordination and planning, we will be able to provide better transportation choices throughout the system.”

Green Paper #6 sets out concepts and questions around roads and highways, which are the life blood of our economy, but are currently under stress. Roads need to accommodate more transit, enable better goods movement, provide drivers better choices and protect the safety of pedestrians and cyclists so that, overall, there can be a better quality of life for the region, including a reduction in green house gas emissions.

Metrolinx is looking at ideas to improve traffic flow – a challenge that takes on even greater importance given the population growth expected for the region.

The Roads and Highways Green Paper examines issues around road design and expansion, and how technology can improve traffic flow. It includes ideas such as “ramp metering” – controlling the number of vehicles that can access a highway, to prevent clogging – and providing real-time information so drivers can make informed decisions.

The paper also looks at incentives and disincentives to influence driving habits, such as road pricing, more high occupancy vehicle (HOV) lanes, and vehicle restrictions at certain times.

“People are fed up with being stuck in traffic. It adversely affects the economy, our environment and our quality of life. Part of the solution is getting more people out of their cars – by giving them better alternatives to driving – but for those who still need to drive, our roads and highways have to move,” MacIsaac said.

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Green Paper #7, focusing on transit, sets out key issues around increasing use of public transit, as the lynchpin to other transportation improvements.

“This isn’t just a matter of building more subway lines.” MacIsaac said. “We need to address the core concerns of transit users – things like safety, convenience, reliability and affordability. When we get that right, more people will *want* to use public transit – a key attitude shift as we try to expand beyond a car dominated culture.”

Among the concepts outlined in the transit paper are the need for more efficient inter-regional transit – seamlessly crossing municipal boundaries – and improvements in customer service. Again, technology is a key focus, in areas such as universal transit passes and real-time information displays. New ways of financing transit infrastructure – including a role for the private sector – are also put forward for discussion.

“Transportation is a complex issue, involving billions of dollars and having long-term impact. Ultimately, individual users will determine what works for them. That’s why we want to hear from as many people as possible, so we can provide better transportation choices,” MacIsaac said.

The release of these Green Papers is an important milestone in Metrolinx’s development of a Regional Transportation Plan. Based on feedback from the public and stakeholders, these papers will form the foundation for a related series of policy recommendations dubbed “White Papers”

A Draft RTP will integrate the transportation policies formulated in the White Papers. Following approval by the Metrolinx Board, the document will be published in late spring and will be available for comment by the public until early fall of 2008. The final RTP – a comprehensive strategy for a coordinated transportation system in the urban area encompassing the Cities of Hamilton and Toronto, and the Regional Municipalities of Peel, Durham, Halton and York – 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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