

NEWS RELEASE

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METROLINX LAUNCHES INVESTMENT STRATEGY TO SUPPORT SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENTS

TORONTO (January 25, 2008) – At the same time as public and stakeholder consultations are underway on a Regional Transportation Plan (RTP), the Metrolinx Board of Directors has approved development of an Investment Strategy to ensure on-going, sustainable improvements to the transportation system.

“Transportation infrastructure is expensive – to build, maintain and operate,” said Rob MacIsaac, Chair of Metrolinx. “As we determine how to improve transportation across this region, we need to consider how to pay for those improvements.”

MacIsaac said that all options will be considered, including government funding, private sector investment, user fees such as road pricing, or tolling, and public transit fares. He acknowledged user fees are a sensitive subject, but said they inevitably need to be part of the discussion.

“Building, maintaining and operating the transportation system for this region will require long-term, dedicated funding. Federal, provincial and municipal investments will obviously be an important part of the equation, but we need to go beyond relying solely on traditional government funding sources in the long term,” he said.

Metrolinx is also looking for innovative solutions, and will be studying best practices from other jurisdictions as it develops the Regional Transportation Plan.

“At this point, we won’t rule anything in or out in terms of the plan or the investment strategy,” MacIsaac said. “We are already hearing plenty of suggestions – from parking fees, to a greater role for the taxi industry and the private-sector bus industry, development charges, bike-rental systems, gas taxes and other dedicated revenue solely for transportation projects, to name just a few. That’s why we’re conducting such extensive consultations – we want a wide-ranging discussion to determine what makes the most sense for transportation users in this region.”

Metrolinx is keeping an open mind throughout this process, MacIsaac said, emphasizing that no decisions will be made until after broad consultations with the public and stakeholders. He also stressed that improving customer service is the guiding principle throughout the process.

“We believe people will be supportive as long as they feel they are getting good value and the money is being well spent,” added MacIsaac.

User-based funding tools are not just about generating money to build and operate system that will help address gridlock and environmental pollution, MacIsaac said. “Financial incentives and charges can be useful to help people make sustainable transportation choices and to balance our transportation and taxation systems.”

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As it develops the Regional Transportation Plan – a comprehensive strategy for a coordinated transportation system in the area encompassing Hamilton, Toronto, Peel, Durham, Halton and York Regions – Metrolinx has begun issuing a series of Green Papers on various relevant subject areas, including Mobility Hubs, Transportation Demand Management, Moving Goods and Services, Highways and Roads, and Transit. Stakeholders and the public are invited to review and post comments online via the interactive consultation website www.metrolinx.com. Based on feedback from the public and stakeholders, these will evolve into White Papers and a Draft RTP, which will be the focus of another major consultation initiative later this spring. Feedback will be considered, and the final RTP will be released in the fall of 2008.

“Our primary objective throughout this process is to improve choices and improve service,” MacIsaac said. “Whether you are a transit rider, driver, cyclist, pedestrian, shipper, or combination of the above, our aim is to ensure a transportation system that is timely, convenient and affordable.”

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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