September 15, 2015

Dear Mr. Prichard,

Please find enclosed materials which we hope to have reviewed and discussed at the upcoming Metrolinx Board of Directors meeting next week. We have included extra copies for sharing with others who may be interested to review these materials, as well.

Please do not hesitate to contact us for additional questions or for further information (via email: optionsftdd@gmail.com).

Respectfully,

Laura Zeglen and Sam Barbieri
on behalf of Options for Davenport

with support from Bloor Improvement Group (BIG), Bloordale Village Business Improvement Area, Bloordale Community Improvement Association, and Digin
Laura Zeglen and Sam Barbieri

September 15, 2015

J. Robert S. Prichard, Chair
Metrolinx Board of Directors
97 Front Street West
Toronto, ON
MS1 1E6

RE: Planning for the Davenport Diamond

Dear Mr. Prichard,

We are writing on behalf of the West Toronto communities of Davenport, Bloordale and the Junction Triangle. We are writing to you with great concern over Metrolinx’s current plan for the Davenport Diamond, which, if approved, will directly impact our communities.

Background

The Davenport Diamond is a CP and GO railway intersection near Dupont St and Lansdowne Ave. Metrolinx plans to build a concrete “overpass” (widely referred to by the community as the Superbridge), spanning three stories high at its peak and three train-laneways wide, and stretching 1.6km in length from Bloor Street to Davenport Road, along the existing Barrie GO corridor. The Superbridge would replace the existing ground-level track, to accommodate significantly more frequent trains on the GO Barrie corridor. Currently, 14 GO trains run per day; the plan is for this service to be expanded to 180 trains daily.

Community Concerns

In particular, we have several key concerns:

- These communities, although historically industrial, are now almost exclusively residential, in addition to being home to a variety of established and fledgling small businesses. Residents and business owners have expressed concerns over their ability to tolerate the incessant noise which will result from the substantial increases in train service. Similar concerns have already been expressed by residents living in close proximity to Metrolinx’s recently-completed UPX train service. It should also be noted that the UPX line is in the same neighbourhood; hence, area residents are being asked to endure significant increases in train traffic on not only one, but two of Metrolinx’s lines.

- The Superbridge will be taller than or at bedroom level of many of the houses in the neighbourhood, including several whose lots back directly onto the rail corridor. Understandably, residents are upset that their homes, once subject only to a handful of morning and evening trains, will now be expected to endure near-constant train traffic beginning early in the morning and continuing late into the night, at the level of their bedroom windows.

1 At a community meeting in June 2015, Metrolinx engineers discussed the bridge being wide enough for 3 trains.
• The towering concrete Superbridge and its surrounding noise wall will be built adjacent to three well-used parks in our communities. Old-growth trees in these parks will also need to be cut down. The resulting shadow, noise and imposing structure will make the places where we picnic, relax and play with our children significantly less welcoming community spaces. Furthermore, for residents whose lots back onto the tracks, the resulting shadow will reduce the amount of sunlight they will experience year round.

• There is disagreement between Metrolinx and the City of Toronto as to which body will maintain the space beneath the Superbridge. At public meetings, staff from Metrolinx and the City of Toronto have openly disavowed responsibility for upkeep of the space that will be created beneath the concrete structure. As residents, we are left to wonder- and worry- what will become of the dark and unwelcoming space beneath the bridge structure after it is built.

• To be clear, the Metrolinx Residents’ Reference Panel report is NOT a community endorsement of the Superbridge project. The plans do not reflect the true interests of the community. The Residents’ Reference Panel, selected by Metrolinx, participated in a series of “consultations” SOLELY to provide input regarding the space under and around the proposed bridge. The only option allowed for discussion was this 1.6km bridge, and residents were not allowed to discuss other options. Frustrated members from the Reference Panel have since joined our group (Options for Davenport), while others complained publicly at community meetings that they were forced to plan for the bridge even though they do not support it.

• Local politicians, including City Councillors Ana Bailao (Ward 18) and Davenport MP Andrew Cash, have also expressed concern over the process with which Metrolinx has moved forward with its plans for the Superbridge, including concerns over a lack of transparency and proper community consultation.

In short, we feel Metrolinx’s Superbridge is an ill-advised concept and a hugely discordant fit for the vibrant and growing residential communities of Davenport, Bloordale and the Junction Triangle. We ask you, Mr. Prichard, to carefully consider our concerns as you examine the Davenport Diamond proposal.

In the pages following, you will find informational materials that we shared at the recent BiG on Bloor festival, a rendering of what the Superbridge may look like based on specifications from Metrolinx, letters from local politicians, and a petition regarding the Superbridge written by our local MP that is currently in circulation.

Thank you for your attention to our submission.

Respectfully,

Laura Zeglen and Sam Barbieri

on behalf of

Options for Davenport

with support from

Bloor Improvement Group (BiG), Bloordale Village Business Improvement Area, Bloordale Community Improvement Association, and Digin

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4 Refer to Toronto Resident’s Reference Panel on the Davenport Community Rail Overpass Report, June 2015: “Before reading these recommendations, it is important to note three things. First, as stated in our mandate from Metrolinx, our task was not to consider whether alternatives to an overpass were appropriate or desirable for this community.” (p.21)
Who we are

Options for Davenport is a nonpartisan group of volunteers, which arose in response to widespread and vocal community opposition to the Superbridge, and the recognized need for a united voice to represent these concerns. We currently have over three hundred households on our mailing list, and as of September 10, 2015, over one hundred and twenty more have signed a paper petition written by our local MP (see Appendix) strongly urging Metrolinx to reconsider its plans and to do a better job of involving the community and other government stakeholders. At our BIG on Bloor Festival table, staffed by 10 volunteers, hundreds of our neighbours visited to express concern about the Metrolinx proposal.

Web: optionsfordavenport.ca

Bloor Improvement Group (BIG) is a dynamic volunteer coalition in Toronto, advancing the economic, physical, cultural and social life of the targeted local Bloor Street by creating opportunities and events that improve and celebrate the area.

Web: www.bigonbloor.com

Bloordale Village Business Improvement Area Bloordale BIA and its community partners work to make Bloordale a lively and welcoming community to live, work, visit and shop. In-progress campaign – Share Bloordale – encourages everyone to walk, ride and drive safe and civil streets. Bloordale BIA supports and contributes ideas, events and develops projects that claim Bloor Street, one of Canada’s most important, diverse main streets, as a public space that is a safe, accessible (with 2 subways stations) and vibrate for everyone to enjoy.

Web: bloordale-bia.com/the-bia/

Bloordale Community Improvement Association The Bloordale Community Improvement Association (BCIA) strives to promote our neighborhood and its businesses. We welcome any and all Input, Ideas, suggestions from residents and businesses alike.

Web: bloordalecia.wordpress.com

DIGIN is a local community group committed to the cultural, social, environmental and economic vitalization of the Bloor Street West neighbourhood surrounding Bloordale. DIGIN Initiates inclusive community and cultural plans and actions that will contribute to sustaining a neighbourhood that is GREEN * CLEAN * SAFE * CIVIL.

Web: digin.ca
List of Appendices

1. Fact sheets about the Superbridge prepared by Options for Davenport
2. Local artist's rendering of the Superbridge
3. Letter to the community from City Councillor Ana Ballao
4. Letter to the community from MP Andrew Cash
5. Petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario (written by MP Andrew Cash)
METROLINX SUPERBRIDGE

DID YOU KNOW?

- The number of stops planned for our community (Bloordale, Davenport Village & Junction Triangle)
- The number of dollars dedicated by Metrolinx for the building of amenities under/around the superbridge
- The number of dollars dedicated by Metrolinx for the maintenance and upkeep of promised amenities under the superbridge
- The number of shadow studies provided by Metrolinx to give an accurate idea of how the space beneath the bridge will look and feel
- The number of options presented to the community for the removal of the Davenport Diamond
- The number of kilometres the superbridge will span through the neighbourhood, between Davenport and Bloor
- The current number of daily train trips on the Barrie corridor
- The number of daily train trips proposed on the Barrie corridor before electrification (with diesel trains)
- The number of daily train trips proposed on the Barrie corridor after electrification

Current daily ridership of the Barrie GO line

Daily ridership on the 47 Lansdowne Bus (from 2012)

Daily ridership on the 29 Dufferin Bus (from 2012)

Options for Davenport is a community group of local residents, working to stop the superbridge and collectively demand better options for our community
METROLINX SUPERBRIDGE
A GOOD FIT FOR OUR COMMUNITY?

THE PROPOSED BRIDGE WILL BE WIDE ENOUGH TO CARRY 3 TRAINS

THE PROPOSED BRIDGE WILL BE TALLER THAN MANY 2-STOREY HOMES

THE PROPOSED BRIDGE WILL CARRY UP TO 180 TRAINS DAILY. THAT'S ONE TRAIN EVERY 7.5 MINUTES.

THE PROPOSED BRIDGE BY METROLINX WILL BE 1.8 KM LONG AND EXTEND FROM BLOOR TO DAVENPORT WITH NO STOPS IN OUR COMMUNITY.
Local artist’s rendering of the Metrolinx Superbridge

To date, Metrolinx has not given any realistic renderings of the bridge to allow residents to visualize what the completed structure will look like. This image shows a local artist’s interpretation of the Superbridge crossing at Wallace Avenue (toward the southernmost point of the bridge, as it returns to level), looking west. The height shown is consistent with the plans given by Metrolinx for this point of the bridge\textsuperscript{5}, although the actual bridge will also have noise walls (not shown) and larger trains (compared to the monorail in the image). Not visible here are the townhomes in the far left of the image (on Rankin Crescent), which are completely obstructed by the bridge.

This image shows the current view on Wallace Avenue (from April 2015), looking east toward the rail tracks. The rail tracks are located directly behind the grey townhomes on the far right of this image, which were hidden from view by the bridge in the artist’s rendering.

Dear Neighbour,

In March 2015, Metrolinx announced plans to construct an elevated rail bridge as part of the Barrie GO Line through our neighbourhood to bypass the Davenport Diamond, one of Canada’s busiest rail crossings. Since this project was announced, I have shared the concerns of my neighbours regarding these plans and have worked with local residents’ groups, elected representatives, City staff and Metrolinx so that our community receives the best possible outcome from this project. Our community deserves no less.

▶ In April, I moved a motion that was passed at City Council that directed the City’s Chief Planner to ensure that land-use planning (including grade separation underground or above ground) and urban design considerations are a part of the EA process being carried out by Metrolinx.

▶ In June, I raised some key issues with Metrolinx President & CEO Bruce McCuaig to consider including:
  • The rationale behind the initial decision to build a rail bridge;
  • That a new GO Station at Bloor and Lansdowne is a necessity for this project; and
  • How much Metrolinx is going to contribute towards public realm improvements?

▶ In July, Metrolinx was planning to move into the next stage of this project in September, but in my view, there remained too many unknowns about how our community will benefit and on the initial decision to build a rail bridge. For those reasons I successfully moved a motion at City Council to endorse a list of key issues from City staff, for Metrolinx to properly fund them, and to ask Metrolinx for a two to three months extension of their own timeline in order to provide for expert and community feedback. Some of our concerns include:
  • Vertical Alignment of the Barrie Corridor – Overpass vs. Trench
  • Bloor Street GO Rail Station at Lansdowne
  • Bloor and Dupont Grade Restoration – with Under and Over Options
  • Potential to connect Sterling Road to Lansdowne Avenue
  • Potential to grade separate Wallace Avenue
  • Ability to achieve enhanced park connections
  • Opportunities for a cycling connection with the Railpath and Extension
  • Potential need to update current Planning Studies
  • Impacts to existing and new development

I am encouraged that Metrolinx has agreed to my reasonable request to delay the EA process until late-November. This is a good first step and hopefully a sign of cooperation from Metrolinx. It is important for our community and the City to be able to have an opportunity to provide feedback, ideas, and requirements to Metrolinx. I also believe it is important for the public and the City to understand the reasons for proposing an above ground option as opposed to a below ground option.

I remain committed to working with community members to ensure that our community receives the best possible outcome from this proposed project.

Sincerely,

Ana Bailão

For more information, please visit http://anabailao.com/tags/davenport_diamond_project or contact my office at 416-392-7012 or councillor_bailao@toronto.ca.
There is no question that we must build much more public transit in our city; transit that is affordable, clean and accessible. For too long however, our community has had to bear the brunt of transit expansion that runs right through our neighbourhoods that is neither clean, nor affordable or accessible to most of our residents. I know I’m not the only one living in this community who has become increasingly frustrated with the way in which Metrolinx and the provincial Liberal government continues to foist projects on our community that have few direct benefits for us.

Which brings me to the Davenport Diamond Community Rail Overpass proposal; the Liberals’ plan to elevate 2 kilometers of the GO Train line that runs parallel with Lansdowne, between Bloor and St. Clair. I have sat in on several community meetings on this proposal and what I hear continually is that community members are concerned. They are not happy with the fact that the decision to build the bridge in the first place was presented to them as a done deal. Consultations that happen after decisions are made are not true consultations. There is widespread concern over the lack of concrete commitments for community benefits such as new parks and greenspace, multi-modal transportation connections or new community linkages, and the fact that no dollars have been guaranteed for creating any community benefits. Indeed, there are many questions being asked as to how such an imposing piece of infrastructure will impact on the community’s quality of life.

I’d like to take the opportunity here to commend and thank all of the residents and organizations who have dedicated countless volunteer hours to this and so many other issues important to our community, including the Davenport Village Community Association, DIGIN, the Bloordale Community Improvement Association, the Options for Davenport Diamond Committee, and the Junction Triangle Rail Committee and many others. I’d also like to thank everyone who volunteered to sit on the Residents’ Reference Panel.

I have said from the outset that my role in this issue is to advocate on behalf of our community, to ensure that its concerns are heard and that residents get the information they need about this project.

It’s time to haul these decisions into the light of day.

Since we are being told we are going to live through years of construction, and then a lifetime of increased rail traffic, doesn’t our community deserves access to this train? I think so. We deserve to have stops from which we can access this train to go downtown, to the Bloor subway line, north to the Eglinton Crosstown and beyond. Increased access to public transit would be an incredibly important social and economic benefit for our community. Furthermore, in order to have any real discussion of what may be built under this bridge we have to know how much money the government will provide. So far we have no idea. We are happy to hear Metrolinx officials say that expanded service on the Barrie line will not proceed until electrification is complete. Let’s see that in writing. Finally, and this should go without saying, nobody wants an ugly bridge. If the province is insistent on this project then we want to see the best looking bridge ever built.

Our community is dominated by train tracks, many of which also host commercial freight operations in addition to public transit service. Private railways that provide commercial shipping are regulated by the
federal government. The bridge is being constructed to elevate GO Trains over the Canadian Pacific freight line. While decisions regarding this project rest largely with the provincial government, I have written to the federal Minister for Transportation, Lisa Raitt, as to the extent of the federal government’s involvement in this process. I will publish her response once it’s received.

I have fought hard and continue to fight alongside my community for electrification of the UP Express and the GO Transit Barrie line. We have all worked tirelessly on these issues and it is only because of that collective work that electrification of the UP Express and a stop that connects directly to the Bloor/Danforth subway line is even being discussed, let alone promised. What we have already accomplished and future victories will only come through hard work and active, public pressure.

We need to change the way government works with our community. Instead of sending officials to our community to give us the government line, it is time the government hears us! Ours is a wonderful place to live and work and we are excited to see our community thrive and grow. We want and need more public transit, but we want a transparent process. This isn’t just a political issue for me. I live here too. My family and I use public transit daily. My children breathe this air. I’m proud of my leader Tom Mulcair’s commitment to be the reliable federal partner this city needs to build better transit. That’s why the NDP has proposed close to $4 billion a year in stable, predictable long term funding for public transit and infrastructure. By continuing to work together we can build transit our community deserves and our city needs.

As always, if you have any comments, questions, or concerns, please don’t hesitate to get in touch with me at 416-654-8048 or andrew.cash@parl.gc.ca.

Sincerely,

Andrew Cash
To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

WHEREAS the neighbourhoods surrounding the proposed Davenport Diamond Community Rail Overpass project are some of the city's fastest growing and dynamic residential communities;

WHEREAS the initial decision to build the Davenport Diamond Community Rail Overpass project did not involve meaningful consultation with the community;

WHEREAS local residents have not been sufficiently informed about the alternative options and plans for the project, nor have they been presented with a rationale for why the bridge option was chosen;

WHEREAS Metrolinx has not committed to providing significant community benefits to the community as part of construction or committed to the electrification of the line;

WHEREAS other stakeholders such as the City of Toronto, the federal Government of Canada or private rail companies, have not been engaged in the decision making process surrounding this project;

AND WHEREAS potential opportunities for public transportation expansion that benefit the local community and the city more broadly are not being properly considered in the current proposal.

We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

To urge Metrolinx and the Government of Ontario to reconsider the Davenport Diamond Community Rail Overpass project and conduct meaningful, transparent consultations with the local community and other relevant stakeholders and levels of government so that any infrastructure construction has the support of and meets the needs of the surrounding residents and integrates fully into a broader transit strategy for Toronto.

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