

Brent Cehan

Toronto Ontario

December 6, 2016

Dear Mr. Pritchard and Members of the Board,
RE: Davenport Diamond Grade Separation

For consideration at the upcoming Board of Directors meeting Thursday December 8th, 2016:

On Tuesday December 5th Premier Wynne tweeted “People have told me the drive between Barrie & Toronto is crushing them. They want options. Increasing GO Train service to Barrie.” The tweet was accompanied by a short video of the Minister of Transportation proclaiming, “We are literally at the edge of transforming this entire region.”

Part of this radical transformation the Minister promised is the construction of the Davenport Diamond overpass, a project rejected last year by local area representatives, community groups and Toronto City Council.

Despite this opposition, and continuing opposition throughout the year, the project continued unabated. New concerns have emerged over a revamped plan for a bridge cutting through the neighborhood. A petition signed by 2,000 area residents and supported by numerous community groups demanded the following basic requirements for the new project:

- developing a comprehensive vision that includes a design competition;
- addressing noise, vibration, and safety issues and concerns;
- creating a multi-modal station at Bloor;
- establishing cycling and walking connections throughout including connections to the West Toronto Railpath, the Green Line, and an elevated connection to EarlsCourt Park;
- devising a long-term maintenance plan and endowment fund for community programming;
- resolving concerns relating to Dupont St;
- providing the community with a date commitment to electrify the corridor; and
- guaranteeing that no more than the proposed 36 trains per day will be in use until electric trains are operational on the corridor.

Sadly my conversations with members of the Community Advisory Committee, have reached the same conclusion: Metrolinx has a predetermined plan and the consultations and community meetings are not influencing final results. At best, most of the participants I talked to felt that they had been asked to select one or two benefits from a pre-ordained list of potential community benefits.

Particularly upsetting are Metrolinx attempts to offset responsibility for creating a connected bike path to the city, to stick to an unworkable plan for graffiti removal that ceases when the (too small) budget runs out, and to fold the budgets for the public realm and maintenance into the general project budget. Like other members of the community, I am concerned that electrification may be unreasonably postponed and the significant noise produced by the trains will not be mitigated successfully.

The Minister of Transportation's Letter of Direction to Metrolinx makes scant mention of maintaining livability in the communities their trains pass through. Recent news that train service on the Barrie line will to 36 trains a day in the summer of 2017, (despite community members being assured that this would not be happening until the overpass was complete) only increases these concerns.

The recent Auditor General's report highlights a lack of accountability within the agency. A recent local project, the Bloor UPX Station, is still incomplete without a functioning elevator, an accessible ramp from the Railpath or an underground connection to the TTC. A date for electrification promised for 2017 has been delayed. Graffiti along noise walls is not cleaned regularly. Instead of the province taking the initiative to control noise impacts in the planning process, the Minister has attempted to shift responsibility for loud and disturbing signal noise to the Federal government. Perhaps most distressing, the cost overrun on the project--some 13 million dollars--is more than double the cost of the proposed tunnel solution for the Davenport Diamond. Much of this could have been avoided with closer co-operation with community leaders who highlighted many of these pitfalls before construction commenced.

The potential for another failed project is strong. Metrolinx needs to make an active commitment to maintain quality of life for residents along the Barrie Rail corridor

Sincerely,
Brent Cehan

Cc: Kathleen Wynne, Premier of Ontario
Steven Del Duca, Minister of Transportation
Cristina Martins, Member of Provincial Parliament for Davenport
Julie Dzerowicz, Member of Parliament for Davenport
John Tory, Mayor of Toronto
Ana Bailao, Councillor, Ward 18 (Davenport)
Cesar Palacio, Councillor, Ward 17 (Davenport)
Options for Davenport