

Michael Theodores

Tuesday, June 27, 2017

Attention: Metrolinx Board of Directors

In response to articles I read in today's Toronto newspapers about a proposed 3% fare hike impacting GO riders such as myself in September, I would like to submit this letter for consideration and discussion at the Board meeting scheduled for June 28, 2017.

Before I outline why I have several concerns about this proposal, I would like to begin by expressing my disappointment once again in the lack of notice of this proposal.

It seems that whenever the Board of Directors are considering a fare increase, notification is provided the day before by the local media. That isn't acceptable.

Similar to other organizations such as the [Ontario Energy Board](#), I would like to see Metrolinx provide advance notice of any such meetings – including promotional items on GO's website and in direct emails to subscribers – welcoming feedback at least one month in advance to gather feedback on such proposals.

Despite the tight timeline, I feel the following points are compelling reasons why the Metrolinx BoD shouldn't simply rubberstamp another fare increase but instead consider – from the perspective of a daily rider – why alternate options should be considered to cover future expansion costs while also ensuring its financial sustainability.

Striving for a 'fair' increase

I noticed with interest that once again this year, the Board is being asked to approve a fare increase only *above* a certain level (in this case, \$5.65).

I have several issues with this. In past explanations that have been provided, it's been mentioned that labour and fuel are key drivers for fare increases. Expansion is another factor.

As a result, I feel it's only fair that riders on *all* stops of a corridor face the same increase just as GO had announced in the past. After all, riders at all stops benefit from the same staffing levels, or through increased frequency of service.

In the case of my line (Richmond Hill), I noticed riders from the Oriole and Old Cummer Stations will not face an increase because fares to or from Union Station are both \$5.65. Yet, these riders have benefitted from an additional morning run while receiving the same level of service (labour) that riders get who travel further North.

This also applies to other lines such as Stouffville. I noticed a current promo on GO's website that riders on the line are benefitting from **17** additional train trips each weekday as of June 26. Yet, riders from the Danforth, Eglinton, Kennedy and Scarborough stops will be immune from *any* increase because their fare is \$5.65.

I also have an issue with the fare paid by UPX riders without a Presto card. Many are tourists and are extremely lucky to be able to travel to or from Pearson for just \$12 compared to the higher price alternatives (taxi or rental car). Not to mention benefit from service every 15 minutes and free Wi-Fi.

A higher fare (say \$15) would not only contribute to the ongoing sustainability of the overall system but also help the Ontario government recoup its major investment in this service which is now administered by Metrolinx.

Continued concerns with Presto loyalty scheme

As in past, I remain concerned with the fairness of the Presto loyalty scheme. Unlike other corridors, Richmond Hill riders still do not benefit from weekend or holiday service, putting them at a disadvantage compared to other lines in achieving more discounted or complimentary rides.

I encourage the Board to review the current scheme and seriously consider adjusting the current threshold of 37 rides that Richmond Hill riders are required to gain the first discounted ride like other lines until weekend or holiday service is extended to this line.

Additionally, I'd like to see a review of the [Airport Employee Program](#) on the UPX line occur. It seems very generous from both a cost perspective, and in considering the superior service that is provided compared to other lines such as Richmond Hill.

This too would contribute to the financial sustainability of Metrolinx while ensuring fairness compared to other lines within the Metrolinx operations.

Closing comments

I look forward to the Board's review of the concerns that I have outlined in this letter. While I wish I had additional time to prepare further comments and suggestions, I believe they are an excellent starting point to make major changes to the way fare increases are considered.

At the very least, I hope that feedback from riders – the very people who are the key to Metrolinx's current and future success – are taken into greater consideration when such decisions are made going forward.

Sincerely,

**Michael Theodores –
Richmond Hill GO train rider for 22 years**