September 1, 2017

Mr. Robert Prichard
Chair
Metrolinx Board
97 Front Street West
Toronto, ON
M5J 1E6

Dear Mr. Prichard:

Re. Comments on Metrolinx 2017-2018 Business Plan

We appreciate that the Metrolinx Board delayed approving the 2017-2018 business plan until its September meeting so that partner municipalities and the public would have an opportunity to provide input. We offer our comments grouped by key themes below.

Project Advancement and Priority Setting
The first sections of the 73 page business plan provide a helpful overview of Metrolinx’s recent activities and the strategies that Metrolinx has adopted to guide its work. It offers context for the 2017-2018 operations but outlines a remarkable array of related (but not necessarily aligned) principles, priorities and directions. However, despite the guiding strategies, it appears that the mandated directions from the Minister and recommendations from the Provincial Auditor carry more weight in priority setting.

Geographic Distribution of Investment
Laudably. Metrolinx identifies that their main focus is always on the end user. However, based on this document, the end users Metrolinx seems to be most interested in serving are TTC customers. The bulk of current rapid transit capital investments are within Toronto. Six new stations are to be built in Toronto and PRESTO implementation is focused in Toronto (p.18).

A thorough read of the document confirms that, compared to our GTHA neighbours, Metrolinx has invested very little to improve and expand transit services to meet the needs of the growing population in Durham Region. None of the service expansions or transit investments listed on page 14 is in Durham. Given that an entire new community of 70,000 residents and 35,000 jobs is now under construction in Durham Region in the Seaton community, it is surprising that no work is identified by Metrolinx in 2017-2018 to develop service to this location. It is even more perplexing considering that Seaton started as a provincial initiative and was to be a “transit-first” community. In addition to Seaton, significant new development is also underway in areas like West Whitby and Kedron (Oshawa).

If this information is required in an accessible format, please contact 1-800-372-1102, ext. 2009.
The only major Metrolinx project now underway specifically focused on improving service within Durham is the GO rail extension to Bowmanville, scheduled to be delivered in 2024.

The Metrolinx Detailed Capital Investment Chart (p.24) highlights the uneven geographic distribution of projects and funding. Of the $5.075 billion in capital spending planned for 2017-2018, we estimate less than $200 million will accrue to projects in Durham Region. Of that, $172 million is for the East Rail Maintenance Facility which benefits the GO system as a whole. We understand that this facility is a vital support to the growth of the GO Rail system and later RER services, and appreciate the job creation associated with it. Some small investments to begin early work on expanding the GO system and RER in Durham Region are welcomed. However, “state of good repair” work such as parking lot and station improvements will be the only 2017-2018 investments on this chart visible to Durham transit users. All of these expenditures address GO Transit system needs. None is focused on improving local transit.

While short extensions of BRT projects in York and Mississauga are identified on page 26, recent progress on the Durham BRT is not mentioned. Later in Section 10.2, there is a one-line reference to the planning and design of the Durham-Scarborough Highway 2 BRT project. This stands in sharp contrast to the many paragraphs and billions of dollars devoted to projects planned or underway in Toronto, Hamilton, Mississauga and York Region.

**Evidence and Accountability**

The charts found in the business plan provide many statistics about the length of rail and bus routes, numbers of passengers carried, and numbers of parking spots. We suggest that some additional metrics would give a fuller picture of how the system is being used and what it costs, such as:

- passengers per kilometre of service for various lines or segments, to indicate the intensity of use across the network,
- average annual cost of providing and maintaining vehicle parking spots, and
- passengers per car pool.

Where trends are observed, deeper analysis would be a helpful addition. For example, the graph on page 27 shows the cost recovery ratio for Metrolinx services has declined from 78.0% (total Metrolinx) in 2012-2013 to 68.4% in 2016-2017 and is projected to decline by another 10% by 2019-2020. That significant decline is barely addressed in the text that accompanies the graph other than to say it is related to PRESTO. The projection is a concern to Durham Region since we are going to be paying significantly more to participate in PRESTO in the coming years. As Ontario taxpayers, Durham residents will also be paying more for the provincial subsidy that keeps the growing GO system operating. As stewards of
significant public expenditures, I hope the Metrolinx Board will seek more analysis and explanation from staff.

**Communications and Community Engagement**

The business plan also describes the new Metrolinx community charter. The charter promises that communities will be consulted when new infrastructure is coming their way, which is welcomed. The communications plan outlined for 2017-2018 is a visible step to implementing that objective.

In Durham, we look forward to being engaged by Metrolinx on a more regular basis. In November 2016 when Metrolinx consulted on the directions for the Regional Transportation Plan and the Lakeshore East TPAP, no session was held in Durham. In contrast, four sessions were held in York and five in Toronto. We were glad to see that Metrolinx staff recently engaged with local and regional staff on the design of the proposed GO Stations for the Lakeshore East rail extension to Bowmanville. We welcome increased dialogue and engagement.

Successful community engagement involves listening to the affected community **before** the project design is finalized so that local input can shape the outcome. When consulting on “infrastructure projects” like station design, we suggest that Metrolinx also be open to service-based solutions, as well as structural options. For example, increasing local transit service to a station may be a better long-term investment than equivalent expenditures to create a large parking lot, particularly in intensifying urban environments. Finally, we suggest that community partners will view engagement processes as more effective if Metrolinx follows up by reporting how public input was integrated into the end product.

**PRESTO**

Section 9.3 PRESTO Business Model and Service Provider Engagement provides significant details of the agreement in principle with the 905 partners. However, there is no parallel outline of the agreement with the TTC. Surely with so much PRESTO activity dedicated to the TTC over the past year and upcoming year, these details would be of interest and offer context to the Board, the Province and the public.

**Planned Projects**

Sections 8, 9 and 10 of the business plan provide a handy overview of Metrolinx project commitments. As a municipal partner, we appreciated seeing confirmation of the Metrolinx financial commitment of $550 million to the Bowmanville extension. In Section 10.2, we would have welcomed a written commitment to advance the Durham-Scarborough BRT project including aspirations to partner with the federal government (i.e. infrastructure funding programs such as PTIF 2). A commitment to this project beyond the planning and design phase would provide more support and certainty. We appreciate the regular Metrolinx interaction with Regional staff on these projects.
Section 11.2 on Mobility Management indicates that in 2017-2018 the Metrolinx team will support mode shift targets which are important to achieving RER ridership targets. Since no RER ridership will actually occur for several years, perhaps a shorter-term focus on supporting mode shift would be in order. For example, a pilot project to charge for parking and use the revenue to boost local transit to 905 GO Stations could be explored in the interim. This would also help address, in a sustainable way, the first and last mile barriers to off-peak ridership and incremental ridership growth identified in Section 12.1 on Enhancing the Customer Experience.

Exhibit 26: Metrolinx Detailed Deliverables provides a helpful outline of your ongoing priorities. We suggest that under Strategic Deliverable 19, Metrolinx should invest in creating local transit service solutions to offset demand at existing parking infrastructure rather than expanding parking at 905 GO Stations.

We hope the Board will review and seriously consider these comments and suggestions.

In closing, please accept our congratulations on GO’s 50th Anniversary. The Durham community is proud of its role in the history and development of GO Transit since 1967. Concepts like the dial-a-ride service, pioneered in Pickering as a way to connect to GO in those early days, still resonate today albeit with a different technology platform.

We urge Metrolinx to once again focus on the opportunities to make innovative transit investments in Durham Region.

Yours truly,

Roger Anderson
Regional Chair and CEO

cc: Janet Ecker, Metrolinx Board Member
    Garry Cubitt, Chief Administrative Officer, Region of Durham
    Ralph Walton, Regional Clerk, Region of Durham
    Chrystine Langille, CEO, Ajax-Pickering Board of Trade
    Natalie Prychitko, CEO, Whitby Chamber of Commerce
    Nancy Shaw, CEO, Greater Oshawa Chamber of Commerce
    Sheila Hall, CEO, Clarington Board of Trade
-----Original Message-----

From: Prichard, Rob [mailto:rprichard@torys.com]
Sent: September-01-17 3:22 PM
To: Tina Lee; Chair of Metrolinx; Roger Anderson
Cc: Christine Drimmie; Garry Cubitt; Janet Ecker; 'clangille@apboardoftrade.com'; 'ceo@oshawachamber.com'; 'sheila@cbot.ca'; Natalie Prychitko (natalie@whitbychamber.org); Robert Siddall; Mary Martin
Subject: Re: Comments on Metrolinx 2017 - 2018 Business Plan

Ms Lee,

Thank you for forwarding Chairman Anderson’s comments on our Business Plan. We appreciate the careful reading and constructive comments. The Chairman’s letter will be distributed to all board members prior to our September board meeting. In the meantime, management will be considering each of the comments.

Best, Rob

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From: Tina.Lee@Durham.ca
Sent: September 1, 2017 3:02 PM
To: chair@metrolinx.com
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Subject: Comments on Metrolinx 2017 - 2018 Business Plan

Please find attached the comment from the Region of Durham for the Metrolinx 2017 - 2018 Business Plan