

**To:** Metrolinx Board of Directors  
**From:** Mark Childs  
*Chief Marketing & Communications Officer*  
**Date:** November 26, 2020  
**Re:** **Marketing & Communications Quarterly Update**

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## **Executive Summary**

The Marketing & Communications team's main focus has been to reassure customers with news of the 40+ implemented health & safety measures through timely communications encouraging a safe return to transit. Almost nine out of 10 GO customers now report feeling reassured about safety and 78% say they are informed about what to expect on GO.

## **Ridership Recovery**

Our recovery work is built on an understanding of our customers. The Research and Analytics team have been monitoring ridership trends and changing customer needs. This work informed our 40+ health and safety actions, including mandatory face coverings and the installation of rail and bus seat dividers.

The next step was to share the news of these initiatives, plus the reintroduction of 149 trips in September and strong on-time performance. Customer experience enhancements announced in this quarter included the GO Wi-Fi Plus launch, new vending, food and beverage options and improved customer web performance.

Integrated Safety Never Stops communication on GO continued to be refreshed with specific messaging for multicultural audiences and UP Express. See-through GO bus wraps were added to the mix. PPE vending machines were piloted. The campaign exceeded benchmarked expectations and generated 1 million web visits.

Ridership is holding at 11% of the prior year's level, even as COVID-19 cases rise. New ridership patterns show a greater proportion of essential and shift-work customers using GO, while fewer customers heading to downtown Toronto offices and flexible work schedules for have impacted pre-pandemic figures. As a result, a greater proportion of customers are now travelling outside of peak times (61% now, compared to 39% before) taking the bus (35%, up from 20%) and taking between five and 20 trips on average per month increased (40% versus 29%).

Reaching an important milestone for future recovery, overall customer satisfaction returned to its pre-COVID-19 level in October, reaching 78%. Customer Experience Advisory Committee ambassador check-ins in late October validated the success of these recovery efforts. Over the coming months, customer research will continue as we look for more ways to enhance future ridership recovery.

## **Enhancing Customer Experience**

We delivered on the number one customer-requested amenity, with the September launch of GO Wi-Fi Plus on GO buses and trains. Early feedback has been resoundingly positive for both the on-board connections and the entertainment content portal that offers music, video dramas and comedies, plus audio fiction and documentaries. The service also provides customers an opportunity to opt in for updates, offers and other communications from Metrolinx.

The reintroduction of Niagara weekend service, in collaboration with WEGO, gave our customers the opportunity visit this region through the summer and fall months. Bike coaches were especially popular. With proven ridership and positive feedback from customers, service will continue through the winter.

Other milestone customer experience enhancements included the launch of the Audible Quiet Zone sponsorship that provides customers with audiobook access and the Purolator Mobile Quick Stop and Fleets Coffee mobile truck partnerships at select GO station locations.

## **Building Confidence**

Keeping customers and residents well informed is at the core of our work to build trust and confidence, as Metrolinx moves forward with major capital projects.

In September and October, Metrolinx News delivered unprecedented views, telling our story and building positive sentiment. In 2020, story views on Metrolinx News are up 62% over all of 2019 already. This channel provided readers with daily messages informing them about our COVID-19 response, rail safety efforts, PRESTO enhancements, capital project accomplishments and Ontario Line plans. Metrolinx News created a ripple effect, helping Metrolinx appear in more than 5,700 broadcast and online news stories over the past quarter.

Community public engagement shifted to virtual meetings during the pandemic. Online page views increased by 143%, users by 139% and registration by 295% over March. The team hosted 237 stakeholder briefings and nine public meetings, attended by more than 1,000 participants. It supported capital projects with over 140,000 messages delivered to homes by direct mail and 9,800 by e-blast. Looking ahead, these proven digital tactics will continue to be used, long after our eventual return to safe, in-person community outreach.

Respectfully submitted,

Mark Childs  
*Chief Marketing & Communications Officer*