THE BIG CONVERSATION

PUBLIC ROUNDTABLE MEETING
SUMMARY REPORT
Executive Summary

The Big Move is Metrolinx’s plan to transform transportation and transit in the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area (GTHA). It’s a 25-year plan that will help to tackle gridlock and improve transportation access, integration and efficiency. It’s a big plan with big implications for the 6.6 million people who call the GTHA home.

On June 1, 2013, Metrolinx will deliver an Investment Strategy to propose revenue-generating tools, as well as other policy initiatives, to help implement The Big Move. To inform participants about the plan, engage people on transportation projects, and get feedback on funding and finances, Metrolinx hosted a series of Public Roundtable Meetings over January and February 2013. Through these meetings, Metrolinx engaged more than 920 people through 12 meetings in six regions.

From the feedback delivered by participants through the meetings, four consistent, top-line themes were brought forward.

Recognition of the problem and impatience for a solution

Participants across the region feel frustrated with the level of congestion they face on highways, roads and public transit. They feel the negative impact of gridlock on family life, work obligations and health. The inadequacy of existing public transit systems is a common concern for participants. GTHA participants agree that across the region – along its busiest routes – our roads, highways, subways, trains and buses are straining to meet demand.

The need for reliable and frequent service was heard consistently across the GTHA. Participants are looking for leadership among transit providers to collaborate and deliver improved levels of service that is better integrated across the region. Participants look forward to system improvements that will allow them to more easily coordinate their schedules, enjoy a wider range of transit options with less uncertainty and stress, and travel more efficiently and cost-effectively from A to B.
People see The Big Move as an ambitious and long-overdue plan to overcome the challenges currently facing transportation systems throughout the region. Across the GTHA, there are low levels of awareness and understanding of The Big Move, as well as current and next wave projects. When introduced to its many elements, The Big Move generally receives consistent support and enthusiasm as a much-needed solution.

**Willingness to pay for it**

Overall, participants understand that The Big Move requires significant investment over the next two decades and that — in many ways — we are making up for lost time. Many participants see value in The Big Move to all residents — whether drivers or transit users. And they support the need for both drivers and transit users to help foot the bill.

While no one likes the idea of paying more, participants generally express support for the need to introduce new, multiple, dedicated funding tools that will bring the GTHA into line with other jurisdictions around the world. They recognize that existing revenue sources will not be adequate. People want the GTHA to be viewed as a leader, rather than trailing behind. They recognize that successful systems come with a price and they're willing to pay for it. But they also want to make sure they see and feel the benefits of their investment and want guarantees from government that any new money will be dedicated to improving transportation.

**Preferences for revenue tools**

Overall, participants indicated support for revenue tools that are easy to implement, administer and track. Many people want to ensure everyone contributes their fair share, including transit users, drivers and business. Most are open to a mix of different tools and indicate a willingness to consider more pervasive tools, like road tolls, but only once substantial improvements and transit alternatives are in place. For the strong majority of participants, seeing is believing — and a condition for paying more.

Three revenue tools were the clear preference of a majority of roundtable participants: People are generally supportive of a modest one per cent increase to the Harmonized Sales Tax to help fund Big Move projects. Equally, they are open to the idea of implementing a fuel tax increase to fund transportation and transit projects. They are also attracted to a regional parking levy as an option that can raise surprisingly substantial revenues, but most need more information to understand how it would work.

Other funding tools received mixed levels of support. In general, while participants are willing to be persuaded to fund The Big Move, they prefer less direct mechanisms that conceal or bury the cost in everyday purchases.

**More information along the way**

Participants want more information and updates about Metrolinx and The Big Move. For many roundtable participants, the session was the first time they had heard about The Big Move or could truly understand its scope. Many recommended an extensive public education campaign to build awareness and support. People want to be engaged and to maintain open lines of communication as the Investment Strategy is developed, delivered and executed. And they want to be kept informed about whether projects are on time and on budget.
Participants expressed hope that The Big Move is a long-term strategy that will be delivered as planned regardless of the government of the day. Many people view politics as an impediment to swift and aggressive action to fix the region's transportation woes. In many instances, participants want measurable targets to be set and independent monitoring or scrutiny in place to ensure goals will be achieved.

This report provides an overview of the Public Roundtable Meetings approach, delivers the big picture findings from all twelve meetings and provides further details on the input received from each region.
Introduction

The Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area is Canada's largest urban region and the fifth largest in North America. It's home to half of all Ontarians. It's also home to Canada's busiest transportation and trade gateways – Highway 401, Union Station and Pearson International Airport. Each day, more than 800,000 people travel through these three gateways alone.

The region is growing quickly and the GTHA's transportation system has not kept pace with population growth. Construction of rapid transit, which averaged approximately 135 km per decade from the 1960s to the 1980s, has come to a near-halt over the past two decades. This underinvestment has left local residents grinding out an 82-minute commute on average every day.

The Big Move is Metrolinx’s plan to tackle these challenges and transform transportation across the GTHA. It's a plan that impacts 6.6 million participants across the region, a number that will grow to 9 million in 25 years.

BIG MOVE, BIG CONVERSATION

Metrolinx is preparing to deliver an Investment Strategy to the Government of Ontario and municipal heads of council by June 1, 2013. This strategy will include proposals for revenue-generating tools, as well as other policy initiatives, to help implement The Big Move.

To get feedback and input from GTHA participants, Metrolinx hosted a series of 12 Public Roundtable Meetings in six regions from January to February:

1. January 15 – Oakville
2. January 19 – Newmarket
3. January 22 – Mississauga
4. January 26 – Georgetown
5. January 29 – Ajax
6. February 2 – Brampton
7. February 5 – North York
8. February 7 – Oshawa
9. February 9 – Toronto
10. February 12 – Hamilton
11. February 16 – Dundas
12. February 19 – Richmond Hill

The purpose of these meetings was to engage participants in discussions about The Big Move, current and future transportation projects, and potential funding tools to support the plan. Metrolinx will consider this feedback as it develops its Investment Strategy.
To reach as many residents as possible, Metrolinx launched an integrated communications, social media and marketing plan to promote the Public Roundtable Meetings and BigMove.ca website across the GTHA through:

- Social media engagement, including Twitter and Facebook
- Municipal and community partner channels, including websites and emails
- Advertising and media outreach, including community and commuter newspapers
- Big Move postcards sent to randomly selected households in each region

PUBLIC ROUNDTABLE FORMAT
Metrolinx incorporated a distinct Public Roundtable format for each two-hour meeting to engage participants in structured and productive discussions. To maximize time and opportunities for feedback, the Public Roundtable Meetings were divided into three segments:

1. **Overview** – Participants learned about The Big Move from Metrolinx executives.
2. **Discussions** – Participants chose their route through as many as four different facilitated discussions.
3. **Wrap-Up** – Participants asked questions and provided comments.

Roundtable Structure & Themes
Roundtables were assigned one of four key themes. Participants had the option to cover all four themes in 20-minute intervals or spend more time on a specific theme.

**Theme 1 – Your Transportation Experience Today**
1. How does the GTHA’s regional transportation system compare to other metropolitan areas you have experienced?
2. What are the best and worst features of the GTHA transportation system today?
3. How does existing transportation infrastructure shape the choices you make in your work and personal life?

**Theme 2 – Understanding The Big Move**
1. Which current and expected Big Move projects do you think will have the biggest impact for yourself, your family and for the region?
2. What do you like best about The Big Move? Do you think everyone throughout the region would share your response? Why or why not?
3. Projecting forward to 2031, describe how your daily commute might look if we implement every project proposed in The Big Move? What would it look like if we stopped all transportation expansion right now?

**Theme 3 – Funding principles and finances**
1. Funding The Big Move will cost $2 billion a year. This money will need to come from a variety of sources. Which of the following principles do you agree are most important to consider when proposing new sources of funding?
2. Which revenue tools best reflect the principles that you think are the most important for choosing how to pay for the next wave of Big Move projects?
3. What kind of guarantees or assurances would you want to receive in order to feel good about supporting The Big Move?

**Theme 4 – Benefits to your community and the region**
1. What Big Move projects will have the biggest impact on how you get around in your work and personal life?
2. Why is it necessary to connect destinations and rebuild transportation systems throughout the GTHA?
3. How important is it to ensure that all residents of the GTHA benefit more or less equally from the transportation expansions outlined in The Big Move?
Conversation Kit
To support roundtable discussions and provide participants with in-depth information, Metrolinx provided conversation kits at each Public Roundtable Meeting.

#CodeRedTO
Amazing and detailed conversation toolkit for existing funded & future unfounded #BigMove projects: pic.twitter.com/gwujYqEo

These kits included clear and detailed information about:
- Big Move maps
- Current and next wave projects
- Revenue tools
- Systems around the world
- Transportation vehicles and terms

The conversations kits enabled participants to take part in productive conversations with essential tools and resources at their fingertips.

REACH & RESPONSE
More than 920 people attended the 12 Public Roundtable Meetings:

- **Durham Region** – 86 participants over two meetings
- **Halton Region** – 159 participants over two meetings
- **Hamilton Region** – 144 participants over two meetings
- **Peel Region** – 112 participants over two meetings
- **Toronto** – 256 participants over two meetings
- **York Region** – 164 participants over two meetings

Each Public Roundtable Meeting featured lively and engaged conversations among diverse participants, stakeholders, public sector officials and transit providers. Discussions captured a wide range of perspectives and topics, enabling participants to learn about Big Move projects and deliver informed feedback and input.
Big Picture Findings

Recognition of the problem and impatience for a solution

GTHA participants recognize there are congestion challenges and transit problems. They feel it in traffic every day on their way to work and school. They see it when they transfer between transit systems. And they feel it as they wait for buses and try to find a seat on the train. Participants have no doubt there is a problem and they are impatient for a solution.

CONGESTION
GTHA participants expressed frustration about the congestion they face on highways, roads and in the public transit system.

“It’s too hard to predict timing of transit. It causes a lot of stress.”
Toronto resident

“People are rearranging their lives to avoid traffic congestion.”
Durham Region resident

People observed that traffic jams and gridlock, which used to be a predictable problem during rush hour, are commonplace throughout the day and even on weekends. Participants feel frustrated by the amount of time it takes to get to work, school and other activities. In many instances, people plan their days and activities around traffic, having to tack on extra hours to get where they need to go. People highlighted the negative impact of gridlock on family life, work obligations and recreation. Participants expressed the strain they feel on their physical and mental health.
Inadequate capacity or frequency on public transit systems is a common concern for participants across the GTHA. Some participants feel there is no motivation to get out of their cars and into transit, because it is overcrowded or underserviced. Many transit users talked about end-to-end congestion in the system, including in transit parking lots, on train platforms and in transit vehicles.

Participants using the TTC subway expressed frustration about having to wait for several trains to pass before there is space for new passengers. People with disabilities and families with small children face additional barriers to accessing transit services.

Across the region, participants agreed that GTHA roads, highways, subways, trains and buses are straining to meet demand.

FREQUENCY
Participants expressed frustration with infrequent transit service and delays.

“We can't assume everyone just works in downtown Toronto and takes transit during rush hour.”
Halton Region resident

“I use GO Transit when I can. It’s priced right, but it doesn’t run all day, so I can only use it sometimes.”
York Region resident

People who need to get into and out of Toronto expressed frustration with having to adjust their schedules to avoid traveling in off-peak hours, when service is often reduced. For some participants using regional transit, service gaps of 30 minutes or more are top-of-mind aggravations. People with small children or caring for an older parent frequently talked about the challenges trying to get home quickly in cases of emergency. These participants are keen for more frequent and reliable service on regional routes. They look forward to a system that enables greater flexibility.

Service delays are a core concern for some participants using GO Transit lines. They are hopeful that transit operators can find more ways to work with freight train operators to avoid delays and track congestion during peak hours. People feel frustrated at the lack of reliability to get to where they need to go on time, often leaving hours early to build in time for potential delays. Participants transferring between regional and municipal transit systems would like to see coordinated schedules and more service guarantees.

The need for reliable and frequent service was heard uniformly across the region.
INTEGRATION
GTHA participants want public transit that is integrated across municipalities and systems.

“The single most important thing that The Big Move needs to get right is the accessible interconnections between local and regional transit.”

Hamilton Region resident

“Timing is important, but inconvenient transfers are the biggest thing that stop people from getting out of their cars.”

Halton Region resident

Many participants who took part in Public Roundtable Meetings travel between regions across the GTHA. They talked about the challenges they face when it comes to conflicting schedules. They look to improvements that make it easier to get to and from their destination in a timely manner.

Some participants who rely on regional transit avoid municipal transit and take their car to and from the GO station. People are looking for leadership among transit providers to collaborate and deliver service that is integrated across the board. Participants are hopeful for an integrated system that allows them to easily coordinate schedules and travel from A to B.

Participants who commute into and out of Toronto have to navigate two – and sometimes three – different transit systems and fare schedules. People generally support the idea that the GTHA needs to start thinking like an integrated region and support people as they travel across municipal boundaries. Some participants are hopeful that The Big Move will enable them to access service promptly, regardless of the location or time of day. People generally support an integrated fare system that recognizes the distance – and frequency – they need to travel.

Across the GTHA, participants want a seamless transit system that enables people to travel easily, regardless of destination.
Willingness to pay for the solution

Participants want a public transit system that works for them. They support investments in public transit and see the benefit to our communities, quality of life, economy and environment. Participants have experienced first hand the impacts of a strained system and lack of investment. They know what needs be done and they're willing to pay for it.

SHARING THE LOAD
Participants generally support the even distribution of Big Move costs across the region. But they also want to share the benefits.

“No matter that mode of transportation you take, we should all be paying because we all have to deal with congestion.”
_Peel Region resident_

“We’re in this together. We’re all going to benefit, so we all need to contribute.”
_Halton Region resident_

GTHA participants expressed broad understanding that The Big Move requires significant investment over a long period. They supported the idea that money needs to come from dedicated revenue sources. Regardless of the revenue tool, participants frequently discussed the need for those costs to be derived evenly across the GTHA. In many instances, participants do not support people outside the GTHA paying for their transit improvements. But many people see value in implementing a province-wide revenue tool that other regions could use for their own infrastructure improvements.

Above all, participants are hopeful for a system that benefits the entire region, beyond the Toronto or commuter corridors. Some people want guarantees on Big Move projects that benefit transit users moving east-to-west and north-to-south across the GTHA.
In many instances, people recognized that as public transit improvements are made, more people will get out of their cars and relieve congestion on roads. Many participants see value in The Big Move to all transportation and transit users. And they support the need for both drivers and public transit users to contribute to the solution.

Overall, GTHA participants are hopeful that everyone will benefit from The Big Move and, as such, believe that costs must be evenly distributed.

**EVERY DOLLAR COUNTS**
While GTHA participants are willing to contribute to Big Move projects, they want to make sure Metrolinx is transparently delivering efficiency and value for money.

“We work hard every day. Every dollar and cent I make means a lot, so Metrolinx needs to use my money as carefully as I do.”
*Durham Region resident*

“Implementation needs to be quick, easy, inexpensive and fair.”
*Toronto resident*

Participants expressed reservations about the challenges and issues that can arise from infrastructure costs and capital projects. They would like guarantees that funds will flow directly to construction and results, and not into general revenues. People also talked about the importance of projects being completed in a timely and efficient manner. The short-term inconvenience of construction, particularly at Union Station in Toronto and Bus Rapid Transit lines across the region, is top of mind for some participants. These people look forward to timely completion of projects with minimal inconvenience.

Some GTHA participants expressed concern that Big Move construction costs might increase in size and scope over time. These people would like to see Metrolinx use revenue in ways that deliver value for money, which includes good quality materials, competitive vendors and low overhead costs. In some instances, participants would like to see Metrolinx clearly define budgets and timelines for Big Move projects and be accountable for those commitments.

Making the best use of time and resources is important for many participants.
DEDICATED & FORWARD-LOOKING
Many participants support the need for dedicated sources of revenue and the opportunity to put the GTHA back on the map.

“Everyone should understand where the funds are coming from. It helps to guarantee that the money is actually going to transportation.”
*Peel Region resident*

“We need to think of transportation as a budget necessity, not a subsidy.”
*Durham Region resident*

“There is an important role for transit to play in revitalizing our communities.”
*Toronto resident*

“Let’s talk about upping our game and doing what it takes to put Toronto back on the map.”
*York Region resident*

GTHA participants – for the most part – understand the need to implement dedicated sources of revenue to make The Big Move a success. Some people see transparency and accountability as an essential component, with a more defined link between money going into and results coming out of projects. Participants expressed hesitation in using general revenue streams, not wanting to see funds disappear and hived off for other priorities. In many instances, participants were keen to ensure long-term funding is in place to build a sustainable and responsive transportation and transit system. Many participants feel that transportation must be a funding priority alongside health care and education.

Participants across the GTHA talked about their experiences in cities around the world with high-quality transportation systems. Communities in Europe and the US are touted for being modern, efficient and responsive. Many participants look forward to a transportation system that elicits a similar response from visitors to the GTHA. Some people expressed concern that the GTHA is trailing behind when it comes to transportation, particularly for tourists, seniors, students and businesses. People expressed optimism at The Big Move’s potential to raise the region’s game when it comes to world-class transportation.
Preferences for revenue tools

While most GTHA participants are willing to pay to implement The Big Move, they would rather not feel the impact directly. People don’t want to pay out of pocket to transform transportation. They want revenue tools that are easy to implement, targeted and allow people to pay for the benefits they get. Participants understand and support the need for a mix of tools to get the job done.

Overall, GTHA participants indicated support for revenue tools that are easy to implement, administer and track. Some people talked about the need to ensure everyone contributes, including transit users, drivers and business. Many participants are open to a mix of different tools and understand that more can be considered as Big Move projects deliver results.

When it comes to funding The Big Move, some participants are unclear about how much it will cost. They would benefit from clarity around construction costs and operating expenses. And they are looking for a bottom line number that makes sense.

“I’m in favour of any funding model that encourages people to use other modes of transportation other than their cars.”
Toronto resident

“I don’t know why we don’t insist on the revenue generating capacity other major cities have.”
Durham Region resident
MOST FREQUENTLY DISCUSSED TOOLS:

SALES TAX
Many participants are open to sales tax as a viable source of dedicated revenue for The Big Move.

People are generally supportive of increasing the sales tax to help fund Big Move projects. Many people saw a missed opportunity when the Harmonized Sales Tax was implemented and the federal government lowered the rate from 15 per cent to 13 per cent. Participants expressed support for the idea of raising the Harmonized Sales Tax one per cent to fund Big Move projects.

FUEL TAX
In many instances, GTHA participants support a modest fuel tax increase to support The Big Move.

People across the region are open to the idea of implementing a fuel tax increase to fund transportation and transit projects. Participants understand that drivers will directly benefit from The Big Move. The fuel tax is viewed as a tool that supports fairness and enables drivers to pay their fair share. Participants understand that the fuel tax is easy to implement and can help to influence behaviour by encouraging people to use public transit.

PARKING LEVY
Many GTHA participants see the parking levy as an option, but most need more information to understand how it works.

When the concept of a parking levy is explained, GTHA participants were supportive of implementing this revenue tool. They see it as an untapped resource that would not directly impact participants. In particular, large parking lots around shopping malls are seen as tremendous sources of revenue that would enable retailers to pay their fair share for the benefits of The Big Move. Clarity is needed to ensure participants understand how this tool would be implemented and leveraged.
PROPERTY TAX
Across the board, GTHA participants agree that property taxes are already maxed out.

There is a feeling that property taxes and transportation projects – while connected – aren't directly correlated enough to warrant consideration. Because regions across the GTHA face differing property tax rates, participants don't feel this tool supports fairness.

ROAD TOLLS
Participants generally do not support road tolls, at least until Big Move projects are delivering more transit alternatives.

The Highway 407 road tolls have left some GTHA participants with negative connotations about road tolls. People would be more open to road tolls that are less expensive, publically operated and administratively efficient. Many participants who travel south of the border, however, support the systems in place on US highways.

PAYROLL TAX
There is mixed support for the payroll tax.

On one hand, participants support the idea of implementing revenue tools directed at employers, who will benefit from improved rapid transit for their employees. On the other hand, there is a perception that employees will indirectly pay for this tool through lower wages.

CORDON CHARGE
Participants do not broadly support the cordon charge tool.

People have seen the challenges faced in communities that implemented a cordon charge. They see it as expensive to implement and detrimental to businesses. Participants see a cordon charge as having an adverse affect on the economy in downtown Toronto.

INCOME TAX
There was general support for an income tax.

Participants want to make sure that lower-income households are not paying more than they can afford. In many instances, people see the income tax as a tool that can enable Metrolinx to harness revenues from participants who can afford to pay more, while protecting those who cannot.
More information along the way

Participants are looking for more information about The Big Move as it’s brought to life. People want to be kept in the loop as decisions are made, projects are implemented and funding is spent. They want to be kept engaged as the Investment Strategy is developed, delivered and executed. And they want to know whether projects are on time and on budget.

OPEN LINES OF COMMUNICATION
Participants talked about the value of information and ideas exchanged at Public Roundtable Meetings and expressed a need to maintain open lines of communication going forward.

“I need to see transparency and understand how project decisions were made.”
Hamilton Region resident

“We need to give people the choice of funding this and make the options clear.”
Toronto resident

Many participants expressed surprise about the details of The Big Move plan and appreciated the opportunity to learn more. As the Investment Strategy is developed, people look forward to being kept informed on how – and what – decisions are made. Some people support the idea of a GTHA-wide referendum on the proposed revenue tools.

Participants across the region expressed the need for Metrolinx to put forward funding scenarios for public comment and feedback. People generally understand that The Big Move is a 25-year plan and they would like to be engaged with updates and information along the way.
LONG-TERM GUARANTEES
Participants across the GTHA expressed reservations about the various levels of government and political dynamics that might impact The Big Move.

“Someone has to have a master plan that we can stand up for the next 20 years.”
York Region resident

“We need to remember that this is a long-term plan. The next generation will be using this system and we need to think of them.”
Peel Region resident

People are weary of the friction points among municipal, provincial and federal governments. Some participants would like guarantees that municipal governments across the GTHA are on side with The Big Move and working together to deliver it. There is a perception that today’s plans might not see the light of day down the road. Some participants see Metrolinx as an agency that can rise above the political fray and bring all partners together. People across the GTHA recognize the opportunity for Metrolinx to provide a leadership role among municipal transit providers.

Participants expressed reservations that political dynamics might impact long-term plans like The Big Move. They would like assurance that The Big Move is sustainable and has the staying power to surpass changing governments and funding priorities.

Across the GTHA, participants expressed a need for guarantees about the long-term viability of The Big Move.

RESULTS AND EFFICIENCY
Participants want to see tangible results and improved efficiency as The Big Move is implemented.

“Show us you’re using our money well by providing us with really good service.”
Halton Region resident

“I think efficiency should be a principle. Infrastructure exists that isn’t being used or priced properly.”
Toronto resident

GTHA participants are generally supportive of current and next wave projects. Their support is dependent on ongoing information and reporting. For some participants, there is a sense of hesitation about how Big Move projects will roll out. They want to see that the benefits and ridership targets identified by Metrolinx are being achieved over time. As projects are constructed and completed, people would like information on how budgets are maintained and funding is spent.

Participants expressed the need for greater efficiencies to be achieved as Big Move projects are implemented. Some people across the GTHA recognize the overlap that occurs from having multiple transit authorities delivering services and managing systems. Participants are seeking leadership for a coordinated transit system that eliminates this duplication. Some want more information about Metrolinx’s role and efforts underway to streamline transit in the GTHA. They would like The Big Move to help save resources and money across the GTHA.

Across the board, people expressed a need for measurable targets for efficiency, clearly defined outcomes and transparent information about achievements.
Regional Perspectives

Regions across the GTHA expressed unique perspectives and insights on The Big Move and transportation that are specific to their communities and experiences.

Durham Region
Participants in Durham Region expressed a need for more support and projects dedicated to their community. Some people talked about the importance of better distributing Big Move benefits based on the growth of the region.

“Connections don’t work and it’s a pain to get from A to B.”
Durham Region resident

“We have universities and health care centres in Durham. We need better transit here, because our residents travel within our community.”
Durham Region resident

INTEGRATION
Integration is top of mind for many Durham Region participants, who rely on multiple transit systems, including GO Transit and Durham Region Transit. Transit users expressed frustration about the barriers that prevent them from efficiently accessing transit. Conflicting schedules and infrequent service leave many people feeling isolated from places of employment and entertainment.

Participants in Durham Region also see the opportunity for transit to connect them with other communities. They want more transit projects to help people – including post-secondary students – to get in and around Durham Region and the GTHA broadly, not just downtown Toronto.
ACCESSIBILITY
Access to downtown Toronto is a priority for many Durham Region participants, who commute to work. These people are supportive of GO Train enhancements, including express service. Many people see this as a necessary requirement to building the community and its economy.

Participants also support the need to ensure new communities have access to transit. There are many developments underway across Durham Region, with new homes and businesses expanding the community. In many instances, people would like transit expansion to reflect community development plans and meet the growing needs of participants in the area.

Halton Region
Halton Region participants expressed an eagerness for service improvements that enabled them to get into Toronto and around their community. Many participants, particularly those in Milton, are looking for two-way, all-day GO service to better reflect growth in their community.

“Integrating community planning and transit hubs would make it easier for me to run errands, get to work and pick up my kids.”
Halton Region resident

“It’s time to look beyond municipalities – let’s look at the entire system and all the people who use it.”
Halton Region resident

CONNECTIVITY
Halton Region participants are generally supportive of Big Move projects that provide more options for commuting into Toronto, including all-day and weekend service. People frequently site the opportunities for employment and entertainment that those service improvements deliver.

On the other hand, many participants see the need for increased north-south and east-west connections within Halton and recognize that not everyone needs or wants to get into Toronto. People in the region look forward to Dundas Bus Rapid Transit and the benefits this project will provide.
MORE THAN JUST TRANSIT
People in Halton frequently observed that public transit improvements have cascading benefits that go beyond travel and transit times. These benefits include protecting natural resources, reducing smog, improving health and limiting stress. Participants also look forward to more opportunities for personal recreation and family time.

Participants were also supportive of the prospect of having access to new walking and cycling trails. Some people also talked about transit as an important mechanism to keep seniors active in the community.

Hamilton Region
Hamilton Region residents demonstrated distinct transportation needs, with many people living and working within their community. People were hungry for information and clarity on projects that impact their community.

“We need to attract professionals and innovative people to Hamilton.”
Hamilton Region resident

“Transportation efficiency is so critical for our economy and the livability of our cities.”
Hamilton Region resident

TWO-WAY, ALL DAY
Hamilton participants stressed the importance of two-way, all-day GO service. Many people highlighted the need for more progress and greater clarity about timing and scope of these services enhancements. In most instances, participants were supportive of two-way, all-day GO service, but were also eager for increased timelines and faster results.

Frequency and reliability were core themes brought forward by Hamilton participants. People expressed frustration about the lack of service and access during off-peak hours. They look forward to greater flexibility in work and personal schedules as a result of more frequent service.
IN AND AROUND HAMILTON

Hamilton participants discussed the need for transit improvements in and around Hamilton. In many instances, people talked about the importance of local transit to participants who live and work within Hamilton. The need for Hamilton Street Railway improvements as part of The Big Move plan was emphasized.

Light rail was a common theme among Hamilton Region participants and received mixed reviews. Some people wondered if light rail was worth the investment, while others saw it as a positive addition to enhance the community's image as a modern city.

Peel Region

Peel Region residents expressed a sense of isolation from the GTHA and a greater reliance on cars. While people were keen to hear about Big Move projects, there was hesitation about the reach and benefits to their region.

“We need certainty that The Big Move is going to happen.”

Peel Region resident

“Limited transit options impact my ability to keep fit. I spend upwards of four hours a day in my car.”

Peel Region resident

SUSTAINABILITY

Peel Region participants highlighted the need for a long-term, sustained plan to make The Big Move successful. People wanted to see a firm commitment – across governments and political influences – to all of the projects. They expressed the need to know that the plan on the table had staying power.

Participants were also keen to ensure The Big Move reflected growth and demand in communities across Peel Region. Some people expressed the need to better connect transportation projects with new community developments to ensure future generations were well served by transit.
CAR COMMUNITY
In many instances, participants describe Peel Region as a community that relies heavily on cars. People expressed excitement at the prospect of being able to leave their car at home and make use of efficient and seamless transit. Participants raised reliability and frequency as key motivators to transition from their car to public transit.

Participants expressed frustration about getting into and out of Toronto – both by transit and car. Gridlock and infrequent service were cited as core challenges.

People also talked about safety issues that dissuade them from taking transit, particularly at night.

City of Toronto
Toronto participants demonstrated an overall appreciation for the reliability and reach of TTC services. Alternative forms of transportation, such as walking and biking, were discussed across the region as options to address congestion.

“I will never take a job where I can't walk to work. There are too many times when you just can't rely on transit.”
Toronto resident

“Transportation is like the arteries of our body. If it's clogged up, our city just doesn't work.”
Toronto resident

CONGESTION
Toronto Region participants highlighted their concern at overcrowding in transit – on both GO and TTC routes. In many instances, overcrowding delays participants' commutes to work and school. It also makes traveling on transit uncomfortable for people, especially those traveling with children.

People were hopeful of the improvements, efficiency and access that Big Move projects can provide. Some people had reservations about the construction delays and inconveniences that would arise from Big Move implementation in the short-term.
DOWNTOWN ACCESS
Many Toronto participants expressed excitement about the Downtown Relief Line and saw that as a necessary first step before the Yonge Subway Line extension. The need to relieve congestion within – and leading to – the downtown core was top of mind for many people.

Restricting parking on city streets was raised a number of times as a mechanism to get streetcars and buses moving again. Citing the benefits of frequent TTC service, some participants supported the idea of cordon charges. Better supporting cyclists was also top of mind for some participants.

York Region
York Region residents were supportive of Big Move projects, but also talked about the unique needs of communities within their region. They expressed a strong desire to have more results delivered on faster deadlines.

“Until something is done about congestion on the Yonge-University Line, nothing else matters.”
York Region resident

“I’d love to step outside my house and have access to rapid transit.”
York Region resident

COMFORT
York Region participants expressed the need for quality of service, not just quantity. Some people were keen to see that new stations and stops were comfortable in order to get out of their cars. Having a comfortable ride was also highlighted as a priority for some participants, who need to travel on the GO Train for long periods.

Congestion and complicated transfers between transit systems are also factors that pose barriers for some York Region participants. Some people look forward to a system that guarantees them a comfortable wait, a seat on the train and seamless transfers.
CONNECTIVITY
York Region participants discussed the importance of system integration and connectivity, particularly among GO, York Region Transit and TTC systems. Schedules that are not synched make it difficult for transit users to get to their destination and often result in people taking their car instead.

Fare integration was also raised as an important component of transit transformation for York Region participants. Many support PRESTO, but wanted to see broader implementation across systems. As transit enhancements are brought forward, participants highlighted the need to strengthen integration and connections across the GTHA, not just into Toronto.
Uptake & response

ROUNDTABLE FEEDBACK

GTHA participants provided the following comments on the Public Roundtable Meetings directly through feedback forms:

‘It was interesting to get others’ perspectives.’

‘It will be key to link land use planning with transit infrastructure.’

‘This session showed how much work Metrolinx has to do.’

‘I thought I was the only one who wants to pay more for dedicated transit. It was refreshing to know people from all parts of the city and all walks of life agree.’

‘I'm excited and enthusiastic about the potential to change the way that we urbanize our regions.’

‘The consultation process is essential to seeing this plan implemented. I hope that this plan takes the feedback seriously and that Metrolinx incorporates the public more readily in the future.’

‘Keep providing information. It is never wasted.’
MEDIA OVERVIEW
Media relations leading up to – and during – the roundtables helped to promote the sessions and enabled a broad range of GTHA residents to join the conversation. Stories in the media were accurately reported, positive in tone and helped to increase awareness of Metrolinx and congestion in the GTHA.

Media attended each of the 12 roundtables across the region, even during extreme winter weather conditions. The meetings attracted local media, student reporters from the various post-secondary journalism programs, ethnic media outlets and bloggers.

A range of publications covered the roundtables in their articles and feature stories, including commuter papers, daily newspapers, weekly community papers and online news sites.

The roundtables generated over 100 media stories, which often encouraged people to join the conversation through comments or reposting.

SOCIAL MEDIA SUMMARY
Conversations around the Big Move, Metrolinx, transit and the roundtables discussions increased substantially from January 15 to February 19. Twitter conversations peaked on the days of specific events.

The roundtables in Oakville, Mississauga, North York and Toronto saw the highest amount of tweets and engagement with those tweets.

POPULARITY OF BIG move CONVERSATIONS
What’s next?

The feedback and input received through the Public Roundtable Meetings will help Metrolinx to develop and deliver its Investment Strategy by June 1, 2013.

Metrolinx is also tapping into the insights of participants through the Residents Reference Panel on regional transportation investment. The Reference Panel is made up of participants who broadly represent the GTHA.

In early January, Metrolinx reached out to 10,000 randomly selected households across the GTHA to participate in the panel. From the responses received, 36 people were randomly selected to become panel members. The random draw balanced age, gender and geography.

The Residents Reference Panel is meeting over four Saturdays in February and March. During these sessions, panel members are:

• Learning about The Big Move
• Hearing from transit and transportation experts
• Considering examples from other jurisdictions

The panel will deliver a report with their recommendations for funding scenarios and tools. This will also support the development of the Investment Strategy.