



METROLINX 2008-2009 ANNUAL REPORT
ON THE MOVE



METROLINX

An agency of the Government of Ontario



THE BIG MOVE

The year 2008-2009 was one of significant accomplishment for Metrolinx. As a young organization with a complex and critical mandate, we needed to achieve early success and we had to build on it quickly. We did this in a manner of which we are all very proud. This past year saw us pass a number of important milestones on our journey, the most important of which was the release in November 2008, of *The Big Move*, our Regional Transportation Plan for the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area (GTHA).

The Big Move is a bold plan to give residents of the GTHA more choice for getting around. It is a \$50 billion plan to get the fastest-growing and most densely populated part of our province moving, to set out strategic infrastructure priorities to meet the needs of people who understand at a fundamental level that there is a better way of getting from A to B.

The Big Move is more about travellers than it is about vehicles. It reverses a decades-old focus on the needs of the system and shifts that focus instead to the needs of the people using the system. More than anything else, it is about helping to build the kinds of communities in which we want to live, where people can get where they want or need to be quickly, where children can walk or ride safely to school, and where fewer emissions have left the air cleaner for us all to enjoy.

The Big Move is thousands of kilometres of new lanes, trails and pathways for pedestrians and cyclists that will encourage healthier lifestyles and a cleaner environment.

The Big Move is more than two billion dollars per year for each of the next 25 years. It will not only help create thousands of new green and well-paid jobs, but will also save billions of dollars in time, energy and other efficiencies.

COMMUNITY AND STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

The Big Move was born and refined in consultation with the people for whom it was created – the people of the GTHA. We engaged stakeholders and members of the public in a way that has seldom been done in this province.

In December 2007, we introduced our on-line consultation site with 24/7 access to the public to begin the dialogue about transportation challenges.

Community

Our consultation portal had more than 130,000 page views during its first eight months following the launch of our first Green Paper. We also reached out to people online and accepted more than 1,000 comments on our draft plan and related working papers.

Between October 14 and October 30, 2008, we hosted 13 public and stakeholder meetings that were attended by more than 1,000 people.

We worked with and supported a group of dedicated transportation activists who developed their own website about related issues. We posted blogs on the Metronauts website – an online community of people – to discuss the future of our cities and the role transportation can and should have. The Metronauts hosted large-scale “unconferences” in partnership with Metrolinx.

Stakeholders

We consulted with Chambers of Commerce and Boards of Trade, the Canadian Urban Institute, the Canadian Council for Public-Private Partnerships, cultural, ethnic and social service organizations as well as key transportation industry organizations - transit operators, transit oversight organizations, cycling groups, the Canadian Automobile Association, to name a few. Environmental organizations, the development industry, infrastructure investment and building communities also weighed in.

Sharing Knowledge

In June 2008, Metrolinx hosted a design charrette at the Royal Ontario Museum in Toronto, where innovators and professionals from a range of fields including urban planning, transportation and real estate gathered to discuss everything from mobility hubs to complete streets to better transit vehicles. The charrette was followed by an open international symposium called “Mobility Without Borders”. A panel of international transportation experts addressed an audience of about 300 citizens about ways to apply the experiences of other countries in the GTHA.

These experts and delegations from other Canadian provinces and other countries - New Zealand, Nigeria, the Netherlands, South Africa, Spain and Sweden - shed much light on problems and best practices.

Advisors

Metrolinx also received generous assistance from an Advisory Committee of representatives from a variety of backgrounds across the region, Technical Advisory Groups of municipal and provincial stakeholders and a Multi-disciplinary Expert Review Panel of independent, objective experts with experience in the fields of transportation and planning, on the challenges and proposed actions of *The Big Move*.

Orders of Government

It should go without saying that there would be no Big Move without the incredible support and commitment of the provincial government. We also received significant advice and support from the federal government and the various municipal governments throughout the GTHA.

At every stage of the consultation process, we were both impressed and grateful for the extent, enthusiasm and thoughtfulness of the feedback we received. It informed the development of *The Big Move* and we know we have a significantly better plan as a result.

INVESTMENT STRATEGY

In tandem with *The Big Move*, Metrolinx also developed an Investment Strategy to provide immediate, stable and predictable funding for the expansion, operation and renewal of public transit services. The Strategy reflects the "results first" imperative that was repeatedly emphasized by the public and stakeholders during consultations. People want to see early action and results, and the Metrolinx Investment Strategy is designed to deliver. Shovels in the ground will give Metrolinx the credibility to seek new revenues and implementation tools going forward.

For *The Big Move* to be successful, both financially and in the minds of the public, it is imperative that best practices are used, investment dollars are spent wisely and every stage of every project adheres to rigorous performance agreements.

To determine how to approach each of the projects in *The Big Move*, Metrolinx is employing a comprehensive Benefits Case Analysis (BCA) technique. While the rapid transit network described is conceptual only, the specific processes and technologies required to bring it to life are being determined through BCA exercises carried out in partnership with municipalities and transit agencies. Each BCA will provide decision-makers with a robust and consistent "triple bottom line" evaluation of the environmental, economic and social impacts of each Big Move project. Each BCA will evaluate the relative merits and costs of alternative project options.

Transit projects will also undergo evaluation for their potential for Alternative Financing and Procurement (AFP) to ensure the most appropriate and cost-effective allocation of private and public sector resources. Following the Benefits Case Analysis and AFP evaluation, projects will be prioritized and included in the Metrolinx Annual Capital Program and Multi-Year Capital Plan.

ADDITIONAL INITIATIVES

In addition to delivering *The Big Move*, Metrolinx has put in place a number of other initiatives to improve transportation systems across the region.

Smart Commute

Smart Commute is a joint venture between Metrolinx, area municipalities and employers that aims to reduce traffic congestion and take action on climate change through transportation efficiency. Employees are provided with services and assistance to explore different commuting options such as carpooling, cycling, walking, telework and flexible work hours.

The program is delivered through a network of local transportation management associations (TMAs) in the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area. In 2008-09, Smart Commute welcomed its tenth TMA with the November 7th launch of Smart Commute Toronto-Central.

The Smart Commute network now has more than 100 employers and 275,000 commuters – a 50 per cent increase over last year. New organizations that have signed-on include AMD, City of Brampton, Co-operators, Exhibition Place, Hubbell Canada, McCarthy Tetrault, Manulife Financial, State Farm, University Health Network, Upper Canada Mall, Vaughan Mills, Wal-Mart, and Winners. In November 2008, Smart Commute Northeast Toronto's partner Direct Energy was selected as the "2008 Regional Employer of the Year."

In the last year, Smart Commute has helped commuters save more than \$3.9 million and prevent more than 5,450 tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions. Roughly 450,000 single-occupant vehicle trips were eliminated, as workers chose to walk, cycle, take transit, carpool or work from home.

CarpoolZone.ca, an online ride-matching service, is a direct service operated by Metrolinx, and forms a cornerstone of the Smart Commute program. There have been over 18,000 users who have signed up, forming more than 2,000 carpools – almost half of which were created in 2008-09.

The Smart Commute network and its municipal partners were recognized with three awards in 2008-2009: The Federation of Canadian Municipalities-CH2M Hill Sustainable Community Award for Transportation, the Ontario Professional Planners Institute Excellence in Planning Award for Communications/Public Education and a Healthy Communities Award presented jointly by the Ontario Professional Planners Institute and the Heart & Stroke Foundation of Ontario.

Georgetown South Service Expansion (GSSE)

On December 15, 2008, Metrolinx announced it was the new proponent of the Union-Pearson Rail Link project. Using Ontario's Transit Project Assessment Process (TPAP), Metrolinx is evaluating the environmental impact of the proposed expansion of GO service between Bathurst Street in Toronto and Highway 427 in Peel Region. The project will involve new tracks and station platforms, as well as bridges and underpasses to enhance service and provide a safe separation between trains, motor vehicles, bicycles, and pedestrians. In addition to meeting rising demand along a busy corridor, the project will also enable a new rail service between Union Station and Pearson International Airport.

Metrolinx organized a series of stakeholder meetings along the rail corridor in January 2009, and in February 2009, hosted a series of open houses to present revised project proposals. In all, we communicated with 700 open house attendees, as well as countless more through our 24/7 Virtual Open House. We also received 267 comment forms, an additional 116 online submissions and 60 enquiries about the project.

BikeLinX Program

The \$5 million BikeLinX Program is a signature Metrolinx green initiative. It is designed to accommodate and encourage commuters to combine cycling and public transit throughout the GTHA. The combination helps cyclists cross barriers that they might not otherwise be able to cross, such as highway interchanges and bridges and is an efficient alternative to single occupant vehicles, easing congestion and reducing emissions.

Under the BikeLinX program, Metrolinx has funded municipalities in the GTHA to equip their buses with bicycle carrying racks and to purchase and install permanent bicycle storage facilities in strategic locations throughout the region. Municipalities are already planning and installing over 2,300 new racks and numerous bike parking facilities across the region.

Transit Procurement

The Transit Procurement Initiative (TPI) was created to improve the buying power of municipal transit systems. Through purchasing under one umbrella, TPI seeks to improve supply chain management and to reduce the unit cost of buses and other transit vehicles. TPI also reduces uncertainty for manufacturers by guaranteeing longer and more predictable production runs.

In June 2008, Metrolinx took on the oversight for TPI from the Ministry of Transportation. In December 2008, we announced the winning contracts for the 2009 joint transit bus procurement. Contracts for up to 160 buses – valued at up to \$70 million – were awarded to New Flyer Industries Canada, ULC and City View Bus Sales. These fully accessible, low-floor buses will be used to provide expanded transit services and to replace aging buses.

Twelve GTHA municipalities are participating in this, the largest collective bus purchase in Ontario's history. This is the first municipal bus purchase to comply with the province's 25 per cent Canadian content policy and has resulted in approximately \$10 million in universal taxpayer savings over two years.

Findtheway.ca

The best transit system is only as good as the information that is available about it. Findtheway.ca is our online information source about the ways to get around in the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area.

The website offers links to information about transit in every region of the GTHA. It includes GO Transit maps, local transit maps, municipal cycling maps, links to regional airport websites and to other websites that might be of interest. There is also information about specialized transit, like TTC Wheeltrans and York Region Transit Mobility Plus, as well as ferry, train and highway information.

CONCLUSION

As we look back on 2008-2009, we at Metrolinx take real pride in the steps we have taken towards building a better transportation system for the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area, matching land use, infrastructure and transit to create stronger, more compact communities. We have begun shaping the growth that is heading our way. We have moved to meet the needs of area residents and travelers – reflecting their priorities and anticipating future problems. We are getting people moving, which is at the heart of what we exist to do as an organization.