

To: Metrolinx Board of Directors
From: Greg Percy, *Chief Operating Officer*
Date: February 7, 2019
Re: **Service Change Update**

Executive Summary

On January 7th, Metrolinx commenced a new rail service schedule that included adjustments and extensions on the Kitchener corridor and new weekday service to Niagara Falls via Lakeshore West train service. Existing trips on the Kitchener line were extended to deliver more trip options to customers in Mount Pleasant, Georgetown, Acton, Guelph and Kitchener. To accommodate this new service and as part of a negotiation with CN, other changes were made that required modification of train lengths, changes to some existing departure times and the conversion of the 16:50 express train between Union and Bramalea to an all-stop service.

The service changes resulted in unintended negative impacts for Kitchener corridor customers. These included train crowding, platform crowding, and increased travel times. This memo outlines the key contributing issues and the immediate and near-term solutions identified to address these issues for our customers. The solutions identified in this memo have undergone both a technical review as well as a customer impact assessment, with risks fully assessed and mitigation and monitoring plans in place.

Background

The January service changes had two primary focuses: provide Lakeshore West extensions to Niagara and extensions from Georgetown to Kitchener. To achieve this—while also adhering to CN spacing requirements for train services that operate over the territory they own near Bramalea GO Station—the afternoon Kitchener line schedule was adjusted to provide service approximately every 30 minutes from Union Station between 3:30 p.m. and 6 p.m. This meant trips were spaced further apart to provide more consistent departure options for customers and to enable us to run our services in parallel with CN, which owns the rail corridor from Bramalea to Georgetown.

An “Operational Readiness Review” was conducted in advance of the January change. This comprehensive process includes business unit level environmental scans, risk assessments, executive briefings, table top exercises and final sign off at the Director, VP and Chief Operating Officer level.

During the technical review, we were not aggressive enough in challenging restrictions that had been previously imposed around the length of our trains and we were optimistic in our mitigation plans for identified risks related to the increased spacing between trains and the removal of the popular 4:50 p.m. express trip. These gaps were further exacerbated by the

timing of customer communications launch for the service changes, with the public announcement occurring only days before the seasonal holiday period. The timing of the change occurred on what was, for many of our customers, the first day back to work.

All of these factors resulted in negative consequences for our customers. As we work through solutions to remedy the situation, we have also evaluated our readiness process to identify where these breaks occurred and how we can improve our service change readiness and implementation going forward.

Key Issues Identified by Customers:

1. ***Timing of the announcement, schedule change and communication to customers:*** The initial public announcement coincided with the start of the Christmas Holidays, with the change taking effect January 7th.
2. ***Express train conversion to all stop:*** The conversion of the 4:50 p.m. train from an express to all stop and the change in trip time to 4:35 p.m. was perceived as a removal of service by customers. With the trip no longer stopping at Kitchener, those customers moved to the 17:02 train.
3. ***Crowding on Trains:*** The time changes and trip extensions to Kitchener resulted in customers migrating to different trains. Previous restrictions at Georgetown prevented the conversion of this trip to 12 coaches to add seating capacity.
4. ***General dissatisfaction with schedule:*** Customers in general did not like the new schedule. Kitchener-bound customers did not like the 90-minute service gap in the evening. With the removal of the express train, the timing of the 3:35 p.m. Kitchener-bound trip was not seen as a viable option for many customers. Kitchener customers on the 5:02 p.m. train were now arriving at 7:11 p.m. versus the previous express train scheduled arrival before 7 p.m.
5. ***Bus connections:*** Reduced timeframe from announcement to implementation did not allow for sufficient coordination with GO Bus Planning and municipal service providers, resulting in poor connection times.
6. ***Platform crowding at Union Station:*** Track changes created additional confusion that extended to customers on other corridors, namely Barrie. These adjustments created excessive crowding at platform level. The impacts at Union were underestimated.

Corrective Action (Immediate)

In response to our customers voicing their concerns, immediate steps were taken to alleviate the primary causes for concern: crowding and safety.

1. Effective January 8th and continuing through the end of January, Metrolinx has increased the number of staff at platform and concourse level in Union Station. Staff- including senior leadership - were on hand to direct customers safely to the right platforms and to engage directly to hear their concerns
2. Effective January 14th, two coaches each were added to the 7:56 a.m. and 9:13 a.m. trips departing Kitchener and the 5:02 p.m. and 5:27 p.m. trips. The addition of 600 seats during peak periods alleviated crowding both on trains and at platform level

Corrective Action (Near-term)

We are moving forward with a mid-board change to our afternoon service that will reinstate the 4:50 p.m. express to Bramalea (with all stops to Kitchener). Other schedule modifications will take place to accommodate the 4:50 p.m. trip.

Corrective Action (Long-term)

The following principles have been embedded into our readiness process going forward:

- Customer impact assessments will be conducted in addition to operational readiness. These assessments will incorporate customer analytics to understand and predict ridership patterns and shifting demand
- Changes will take effect mid-week, allowing for targeted reminder messaging to be in place immediately up to the new schedule date. Changes will not take place immediately following a holiday period
- Union Station will undergo an independent readiness assessment to identify collateral impacts. Platform assignments will undergo detailed risk assessments, incorporating pedestrian flow modelling into the review process
- Proposals will be brought to the Customer Experience Advisory Committee for review and debrief
- We will critically analyze and challenge restrictions that could have detrimental impacts on the customer experience (where we can safely do so)
- In preparation for this upcoming change, we have begun weekly Executive Review panel sessions to add the unbiased perspective of 3 non-Operations Executives to the readiness process

Respectfully submitted,

Greg Percy
Chief Operating Officer