

February 19, 2020

Dear Mr. Wright, Mr. Verster, and Metrolinx Directors,

The South Etobicoke Transit Action Committee (SETAC) requests further effort to secure a provincial subsidy that maintains the Discounted Double Fare program, or a deal with the TTC that does the same.

Since the implementation of the Discounted Double Fare program (DDF), we have seen dramatic ridership increases at Etobicoke GO stations with direct TTC connections. Notably, there has been a 17% increase at Mimico in less than one year—outpacing growth across the system and on the Lakeshore West line by nearly 350%. This is partly due to the TTC's 176 shuttle bus, which is now connecting tens of thousands of Humber Bay Shores residents to once out-of-reach GO service. The loss of the discounted fare presents significant threats to this new transit access and ridership growth due to increased costs, putting the viability of the 176 itself at risk, and it will negatively impact the attractiveness of the service itself.

This is important as we focus on new transit oriented developments in the area. Well connected transit at a price that entices strong, local ridership is key to the success of these projects and the long term livability of our communities. As our neighbourhoods intensify and grow more congested, and as parking availability at and around GO stations continues to dwindle, the DDF cost savings represent a key incentive in shifting residents from their cars to local transit options. The future Park Lawn GO station and transit hub, as an example, presents extensive opportunities to serve a wide area and significant prospective ridership base thanks to TTC connectivity. However, with one of the highest costs per kilometre travelled on the GO network, the discount program is key to keeping fares affordable and ensuring future residents prefer a combined TTC/GO trip over their car.

It is also important to recognize that not everyone lives and works in close proximity to stations on the GO line. Many transit users have no choice but to combine their GO fare with TTC, yet the cost of doing so is prohibitive. Travelling from Mimico GO to Union GO costs \$3.70 with PRESTO, and adding a TTC ride costs an additional \$3.10. This means riders can pay \$6.20 for a return TTC trip, or \$13.60 to combine GO and TTC—more than double the TTC fare. When purchasing a cash fare, that cost differential is even greater. Without the fare discount, local riders face an additional annual cost of roughly \$1,500 when combining GO and TTC service—representing nearly 2% of the median household total income in Toronto. For many, this is too much to bear.

The Discounted Double Fare program offers strong ROI, provides important financial relief to many active transit riders, is key to enticing new and future ridership, and helps reduce the number of cars on our roads. Furthermore, Metrolinx has managed to beat their own fare revenue expectations even after absorbing DDF cost overruns. We hope the provincial government, Metrolinx, and the TTC can come together and ensure this valuable program continues before it expires next month.

Thank you for your consideration,
Randy Barba
Co-Chair
South Etobicoke Transit Action Committee
www.setac.ca

CC: Caroline Mulroney, Transportation Minister
Kinga Surma, Associate Minister of Transportation
Christine Hogarth, MPP, Etobicoke Lakeshore
Rick Leary, CEO, Toronto Transit Commission
John Tory, Mayor, City of Toronto
Mark Grimes, Toronto City Councillor, Etobicoke Lakeshore
Jaye Robinson, Toronto City Councillor, TTC Board Chair
Brad Bradford, Toronto City Councillor, TTC Board Director
Shelley Carroll, Toronto City Councillor, TTC Board Director
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