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Board of Directors, Metrolinx

Metrolinx staff continue to propose poorly planned facilities in the Don Valley.

- Reliance on layover facilities in the flood prone Don Valley puts GO network reliability at risk.
- The layover facility placement exposes parked trains to salt spray from the Don Valley Parkway, will barrier be required?
- Security of trains is incomplete as described in plans.
- Staff's communication with City of Toronto and residents does not explain the full scope of the proposed use of the Don Valley.



Metrolinx's Don Valley Complex is considerably larger than described in plans. The Don Valley Layover is not just the area for parking trains and a service facility building, it includes re-activation of unused rails as far south as Corktown Common, the low railway bridge over the

Don River. Also concurrent to the Don Valley layover is the electrification of the Richmond Hill line up to Potter Road. These plans should be presented together to the public as Metrolinx's proposed Don Valley Complex which includes explaining the operational needs for each component.

The Don Valley Complex has significant issues that make it a poor choice to provide support for the GO network. First, the Don Valley has flooded 40 times in the last 200 years with the last two major floods leaving Metrolinx's trains stranded in the valley. Emergency services are challenged to reach these facilities during an emergency because the access roads become flooded. Access to the Don Valley Layover is reliant on rails and a bridge that are entirely within the TRCA flood plain. There will be times when the layover and facility are not available due to flooding and if trains are parked there prior to the flooding, they may be stranded there until water subsides. Operations that are to be conducted on the west side of the river, where the RH lines is electrified (these have not been explained to the public) are the areas where GO trains have been stranded during floods. Although these events have been extremely embarrassing to Metrolinx they have been limited to affecting Richmond Hill commuters only. Metrolinx's plan makes the GO network more reliant on Don Valley accessibility which evidence shows will require alternative arrangements during flood forecasts and actual floods.

We asked Waterfront Toronto if the work they are doing at the mouth of the Don for the Portlands project will they reduce the risk of flooding north the Lakeshore East corridor, they wrote:

"The Port Lands Flood Protection (PLFP) project will only protect the area from flooding shown in the image we sent in our previous email. This area includes some small sections of the rail lines (that fall in the area shaded blue), but not their entire length. The most flood-vulnerable locations of the Richmond Hill Line are located approximately 2km upstream of the Port Lands Flood Protection project, and outside of the area that this project addresses."

Metrolinx staff propose train parking area is alongside the DVP within 10m of the salt spray coming off the road. The DVP is at a higher elevation and Metrolinx's plans to date show no barrier between the DVP and the train parking area. No one has raised the prospect of erecting a barrier along the DVP to protect trains. We believe City of Toronto staff would be very surprised to hear Metrolinx requires a tall barrier alongside the DVP that would change the views of Toronto as drivers approach the City. This may seem minor however these views are protected in the City of Toronto's Official Plan as are views of the historic Prince Edward Viaduct.

The Don Valley Layover plans seem to provide easy unauthorized access to facility from the east side (DVP). Again, this may seem like a minor detail however anyone who has visited the location would be aware of amount and quality of the graffiti along the retaining wall. Metrolinx's plans do not show any barrier on its east side from the DVP.

Staff communication with the public would be best characterized as bizarre. At a site meeting, in summer of 2021, staff refused to walk 20 metres to see the problematic features of the low rail bridge which the public wanted to point out. At the same site visit, the public pointed out that the proposed car parking facility for staff is located in the flood plain. Staff were asked what would Metrolinx instruct their staff to do when a repeat of 2013 flood occurs; abandon the facility and save their cars or protect the trains while watching their cars float off away. Staff shrugged. We also asked will Metrolinx be covering the car insurance of employees that park there? No idea. Metrolinx staff also held an “open house” at the Frankland Community centre. It was never promoted but expected to perform community out-reach, during a Covid lockdown, in a location with no walk by traffic. It seemed staff expected a quiet night of texting and doing nothing however City staff alerted to the community to drop by and see if there was any new news. The event was extremely unprofessional, no maps, no presentation, just a handful of Metrolinx staffing watching the clock.

In summary, that characterizes Metrolinx’s plan for the Don Valley complex and its communications; lack of attention to detail, piecemeal incomplete scope, inability to respond to logical criticism, but worst a complete forgetting of history that Metrolinx has put commuters at personal risk by continuing to use the flood prone Don Valley.

And we continue to ask for what benefit?

Ridership projects of GO Expansion that were faulty in 2018 are now obsolete and need to be re-done. Metrolinx’s Board of Directors defends an unknown BCR as somewhere above 1.0 (not the 2.6 touted in the business case) in response to my previous letter. Meanwhile the public questions who is making decisions at Metrolinx? Paid private consultants holding Metrolinx titles or actual staff? Is the Board of Directors providing any governance functions of the staff, did they know this was happening or did they turn a blind eye?

We look forward to hearing the Chair that they have pressed Metrolinx staff to provide logical responses to our criticisms of the Don Valley Complex.