

June 29, 2022

Moss Park Coalition - Letter to Metrolinx Board

Background

The Moss Park Coalition, lead by Building Roots works specifically within the Toronto Downtown East community of Moss Park.

Our aim with this community-led program is to provide residents and stakeholders in the Moss Park Community with important information regarding a spread of social issues which may impact their daily lives.

Currently, we are working to bring light to the many developments in both the public and private sector which are being planned to bring to change to Toronto's historic Downtown East. Some of these developments include the Moss Park Subway Station, condo development, changes to green space, etc.

The goal of our coalition is to ensure that the voices of the community are heard and that these voices can help to guide developments of their own community to better address the needs of their neighbours. The Coalition is constantly working in the community to engage with residents and stakeholders in order to connect them with issues that are impactful to them.

Ontario Line Project and Local Opportunities and Challenges

The proposed Ontario Line project and Moss Park Station provides many opportunities and challenges for our community. To date, many residents have expressed a lack of awareness about the project. Any project that comes into Moss Park needs the views, representation and consent of the residents. We are looking for real partnership and collaboration by the project proponent, with community resources to support the development of a voice for Moss Park in the proposed transit plan, along with a priority for transparency and openness at every stage of the process.

We understand the complexity of building significant transit underneath an existing City form, and the desire to build the project with least impact and time on the City. However it is also true that building a great project can only happen by considering its integrated socio-economic, environmental and cultural context. That requires planning, deep engagement, and consideration for the impacts a new subway line will have on a community beyond the surface.

This submission includes concerns, ideas, and proposals we have gathered thus far, but has limitations because of the limited number of residents so far engaged in the project, due to marginalization, lack of access to technology, pandemic restrictions, and limited outreach by the project proponent.

To mitigate challenges associated with the project, our coalition is working to ensure the project provides community benefits and community improvements, especially for Moss Park who will be most impacted by the construction. The Coalition is currently proposing:

Community Engagement

- Real engagement with the Indigenous communities living in the project corridor.
- Engage and work with resident leaders, Toronto Community Housing and other housing agencies to identify opportunities to improve housing and social conditions in Moss Park.
- Increased funding to Toronto Community Housing to help support community safety initiatives, improving current housing conditions and quality of life for Moss Park residents
- A community office directly located in the Moss Park/Downtown East area to directly engaged with residents in an accessible way

Community Benefits and Community Improvement

- The development of a fully funded Moss Park Social Development Plan in partnership with relevant provincial ministries, the City of Toronto and Moss Park community to plan for socio-economic infrastructure that meets the needs of the community, including safety, sustainability, jobs, services and affordability.
- A strong Community Benefits Agreement with the project proponent and province of Ontario which can improve social and economic standing of residents, ensure good jobs with living wages for diverse groups in the community in apprenticeships and professional careers in addition to resident priorities. The CBA must include at least a 50% minimum diverse hiring goal and prioritize opportunities for local Moss Park community members.
- Support in the development of a strong City of Toronto Moss Park and revitalization of John Innes Community Centre, in an expedited fashion and with extra support for the community including community-led space and funding support to the City of Toronto.
- Mitigation of negative affects, and creation of benefits to Moss Park Market, a central hub of community development for the community, and critical community resources like the Moss Park OPS.
- Explore how Moss Park Station and John Innes Community Centre can be a community hub, supporting affordable food access, social enterprise, gardening, trees and accessible recreation services.

Housing

- Prioritize deeply affordable housing and rent-to-own programs for any surplus Metrolinx/government land and developments in Moss Park
- Work with levels of government and housing agencies to offer permanent housing to those living outdoors along the corridor, something that has universal agreement, and building rent geared to income units in the community.

Business Supports

- Small businesses require financial support to mitigate the impacts on their revenues, while also planning to minimize and ways to support them.

Environmental Considerations and Benefits

- Environmental assessment should take a corridor approach, considering the complex urban systems like housing and gentrification that will be affected by the project. Social and environmental benefits that can be integrated into the project and partnerships with governments and community organizations should be considered.
- Environmental benefits sought from the project so it has an overall improvement on quality of air, water and soil in and around the corridor, a reduction in greenhouse gases and support for community adaptation of the effects of climate change.
- Built, environmental and cultural heritage along the corridor, particularly near Queen and Sherbourne needs protection and enhancement as part of the project.

The Moss Park Coalition looks forward to directly engaging with Metrolinx on these items.

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