

WCC Update – May 18, 2007

Anne Brown

York South-Weston MPP Paul Ferreira gets motion passed in Legislature to disentangle GO from Blue 22!

On May 17, MPP Paul Ferreira introduced the following motion in the Provincial legislature.

Mr. Paul Ferreira (York South–Weston): I move that, in the opinion of this House, the government of Ontario should, on a priority basis:

Increase access to public GO Transit service to all communities served by the Georgetown south rail corridor;

Revive the previous GO Transit expansion environmental assessment requiring only one additional track to expand GO service on the Georgetown south rail corridor; and

Separate all GO Transit aspects of the current Georgetown south rail corridor environmental assessment from all aspects of the private, high-speed, air-rail link Blue22 environmental assessment.

The Motion PASSED!

Now that the legislature itself has endorsed the effective cancellation of provincial support for Blue 22, what remains is for the Minister of Transportation to tell GO Transit to re-submit the original 1994 Environmental Assessment (EA) for review, and formally withdraw the Blue 22 plans. That Environmental Assessment was to provide all-day service along this corridor, and did not require the extra set of tracks for Blue 22, nor the closing of roads in Weston and elsewhere, nor the twinning of the Humber River bridge, and other structures. It was a sensible, less costly solution which would give the residents of Brampton and Bramalea all day access to Toronto, with stops along the way. It also included ADDING a stop at Eglinton, without the threatened closure of the Weston station. So our train could connect with the proposed Eglinton Light Rail Transit and we wouldn't lose here in Weston, as current GO executives have threatened. If the government actually acts on this motion of the legislature, it will mean that your voices and votes have counted for something.

Meanwhile, we have yet to receive a reply from the Minister of Transportation about our discovery that those running the Environmental Assessment were apparently less than forthright with us about their EA process. We had been told, in no uncertain terms, including in a written submission to the Ministry of the Environment, that GO Transit did NOT prepare a draft Terms of Reference prior to their third meeting with us in June of 2006. This left us with the impression that the consultation was meaningful, and would have some impact on the design of the Terms of Reference.

However, we discovered, when we got access to the file in the Ministry offices, that a draft very similar to the final had been prepared in February of 2006, and was being discussed with the Ministry long before the consultative process actually started. There has been no explanation. We requested of the Minister of the Environment that a mediator be appointed to deal with this conflict, but there is no indication in their reply that they have even considered our request. We again requested participant funding from the Minister of Transportation but again we have no reply and have still no reply to our similar request from December of 2006.

Depending on how seriously the Minister of the Environment takes our submissions on the content of the Terms of Reference, nothing of substance in the final drafting of the Terms of Reference may turn on the discovery that they hid a draft from us. However, it calls into serious doubt the integrity of the public consultation. In other words can we trust what they tell us? When they say 'trust us, all options will be studied' can we believe them? When they say 'trust us, we aren't deliberately aiming the study at Weston' can we count on their word? We hope at least that the Minister of Transportation is taking the matter very seriously.

We on the Weston Community Coalition have and will continue to pursue the governments until we are certain that the threats to our community and to public transit systems are over.

A copy of the full transcript of the debate on Mr. Ferreira's motion in the Legislature, as well as our letter to the Ministers of Transportation and Environment, and the MOE reply are on the website. In addition we have updated the address list should you wish to write or phone the various politicians to encourage them to act on the motion. That list is also on the website: www.westoncommunitycoalition.ca .

Mike Sullivan
Chair
Weston Community Coalition