

May 5, 2005

Peter Smith
Chair
Go Transit
200 Bay St.,
Toronto

Dear Mr. Smith and members of the Board,

This letter is to formally request, according to Section 5.1 of the GO Transit Class Environmental Assessment Document, a reclassification of the GO Georgetown Corridor and Air-Rail Link project. This request is made on behalf of the undersigned, and on behalf of the Weston Community Coalition.

The rationale for the request follows.

1. Section 5.1 of the GO Class EA document suggests that public controversy being significantly greater than expected is one of the reasons for a reclassification. I doubt that GO Transit expected 3000 residents of a relatively small community to attend a public information centre. I doubt that GO Transit expected this project to be the lead item on major television newscasts, or to receive the number of column-inches it received in major newspapers.
2. The GO Transit EA Document, page 10, defines the projects which are, by definition, outside the scope of the Class definitions, and therefore require an individual environmental assessment. These are projects which 'GO Transit does not routinely undertake'. It is the view of the Coalition that GO Transit does not 'routinely undertake' a high-speed light-rail system on a 15 minute all day schedule 7 days per week 19 hours per day. Although it can be argued that GO Transit will not ultimately be the operator, it is clear to all that without the GO Transit construction and installation of the infrastructure, the operation could not proceed. Hence the need to apply the EA to the needs and goals of the project, not just the raw construction.
3. The GO Transit EA Document states that the project manager should 'avoid piecemealing' the project. It also states that any route extension greater than 50 kilometers, or any new route, is by definition an individual EA. The Air-Rail Link is a new route. And, but for piecemealing of the project, it is clearly more than 50 kilometres, when all elements of the project are taken together.
4. The definitions of Class B include a number of statements of what does constitute a Class B. Included in that definition is any expansion of an existing service, which includes the construction of 'one additional mainline track'. This project includes two additional mainline tracks along a significant portion of the project. By the limitation of 'one' in the definition of Class B, it is clear to the casual

reader that by extension, 'two' new mainline tracks brings this EA outside of Class B.

5. Another issue is the unprecedented economic environmental affect this project will have on communities up and down the rail corridor being used for the ARL. Preliminary Real Estate estimates are a 35 % drop in property values for residential properties abutting the tracks, and smaller, but still significant drops for properties nearby. GO Transit has not conducted a real estate survey to determine the actual impact, but agents have already warned residents that, just like with basement leaks, asbestos, or UFFI, the knowledge that the ARL is coming must be disclosed to potential purchasers. Agents have already reported drops in market value. When taken as a whole, estimating only 3000 properties affected could result in \$300 Million dollars in lost property values. In addition, the city of Toronto would lose \$1 Million per year in tax revenue on the lost property value. Projects with negative economic environmental effects of this magnitude are unprecedented and this one should be reclassified.
6. Finally, the public has lost confidence in GO Transit's ability to fairly and objectively carry out a Class B EA on this project. Despite repeated requests for 'concept' alternatives to be presented to the public at the PIC, as is required by law, none were forthcoming. GO officials reluctantly at the PIC admitted they were necessary and offered to bring them to the second (and possibly final) PIC. The other locations where GO Transit held PIC's have not and will not have a similar opportunity to review and comment on concept alternatives. And a number of residents of an affected part of the corridor for whom there has been no information whatsoever, are apparently to get their own PIC. Will other communities along the line be given PIC's?

There is serious public controversy over the selection of the ARL proponent to be the lead consultant on the GO Transit EA. That controversy has not, and apparently cannot be resolved.

The difficulty in getting clear answers from the various disparate stakeholders has not gone unnoticed by the public. A request for copies of contracts has gone unanswered by SNC Lavalin. GO Transit requires members of the public to wait the long and tedious process of a request under Freedom of Information. GO Transit has made erroneous and conflicting comments to the mass media, and to the public in Weston, and in turn has suggested that 'disinformation' had been given to Weston residents.

SNC has made conflicting statements about its intentions regarding stopping the ARL at Woodbine racetrack and casino, or at other more residential neighbourhoods along the way, leading to confusion about the true motives behind this plan. On one occasion SNC indicated it would be completely opposed to a stop in Weston, giving the reason that it would extend the trip by too much for its business case of 22 minutes. In the same meeting, SNC indicated that it

would, if a demand existed, stop at a Woodbine racetrack and casino. Then, at the PIC, SNC denied that it would stop at a Woodbine racetrack and casino, and absolutely refused to consider stopping at any other residential areas along the route, except perhaps Weston, if the BIA can produce for it a business case. It has not gone unnoticed that in the Federal Government's backgrounder to this project, Woodbine Entertainment Group is listed as an important stakeholder.

As was stated at the PIC, the community of Weston does not oppose public transit, and in particular, does not oppose the expansion of the GO Transit service along the Georgetown corridor. We do not feel that public transit projects, as a rule, should be subject to anything more than a quick environmental review, as is normally the case with GO Transit projects.

However, as was also stated by the proponent/consultant at the PIC, the CN Weston Subdivision corridor will be subjected to more than twice the frequency of rail traffic of any corridor in the GTA. Almost all of the traffic will be in the form of the Air-Rail Link, which is not a GO Transit initiative, nor is it public transit in the usual form.

To sum up, the undersigned, and the Weston Community Coalition, believe the combined projects of the GO Transit Georgetown Corridor improvements and the Air Rail Link are improperly classified as Class B by GO Transit, because of the size and scope of the project, its potential for adverse environmental effects, the number and length of new mainline track, and because the size and frequency of train service is not routinely undertaken by GO Transit. In the alternative, we believe that the serious public controversy is irreconcilable, and therefore requires this to be reclassified.

Yours Truly,

Mike Sullivan
On behalf of
The Weston Community Coalition

cc Hon. Leona Dombrowski, Minister of the Environment
Hon. Harinder S. Takhar, Minister of Transportation
Hon. Joseph Cordiano, Minister of Economic Development and Trade
Alan Tonks, MP
Frances Nunziata, Councillor