



Transportation Regional
Action Committee

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Dear Members of the Metrolinx Project Technical Team for the Georgetown South Service Expansion,

This letter is being sent on behalf of the Transportation Regional Action Committee of the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area (TRAC GTHA), a subcommittee of Transport 2000 Ontario advocating for transportation improvements, particularly public transit, in the Greater Golden Horseshoe. TRAC GTHA along with Transport 2000 Ontario have been following the developments along the CN Weston Subdivision (and the part of the CP MacTier Subdivision that shares space with CN Weston) with great interest and wish to submit the following comments on the plan with the aim to improve what has the potential to be a great project.

FARES AND MODELING

1. COST OF ARL SERVICE AND RELATIONSHIP TO RIDERSHIP MODELING

Demand modeling for transportation projects is cost-sensitive, as cost of service is a significant factor for riders in deciding whether to use the service, find an alternate service, or drive. There has been no indication of the costs of the Air-Rail Link service, as it is stated to be still under negotiation. However, if the modeling used to date presumably does not include a cost of the service, as no decision on fare has yet been made, that would make projections for the service unreliable. It's a significant factor when there will be a TTC-operated LRT (possibly 2) servicing the airport for a single TTC fare (currently \$2.75 cash fare, but certain to rise by 2014), presumably from the same terminal area as the Air-Rail Link. The cost of the Air-Rail Link service must be included in the model for the Transit Environmental Assessment Process, and the operator of the Air-Rail Link should be bound, by contract, to a pricing scheme based on the modeling used in the Transit Environmental Assessment Process.

TECHNOLOGY

2. FLEET TECHNOLOGY VIABILITY AND ENVIRONMENTAL SUITABILITY

A Texas commuter service that started in 1996 called Trinity Rail Express started out with refurbished RDC cars just as the Air-Rail Link proposal does. However, by 2001, Trinity Rail Express switched to locomotive-hauled rolling stock identical to GO Transit's fleet, and a report concluded that refurbished Budd RDC cars are not viable for start-up services, which would include the Air-Rail Link. The Transit Environmental Assessment Process should go into great detail as to how these vehicles are viable, and why EMUs - which have higher performance and far superior environmental benefits - are not being considered apart from cost. Cost is not an acceptable excuse when taxpayer dollars are paying for the infrastructure in question and therefore must be done properly. Taxpayers, concerned about the environmental impacts of the very high volume of diesel rail car operations along this corridor, have been very vocal in their desire to see electric vehicles from the get-go of this project, and that *their tax dollars* be spent on electrification of at least the Air-Rail Link (GO Transit can wait if need be), and that their tax dollars not be spent on a polluting technology previously identified as not viable for new start-up services in other parts of North America. Electrification of this corridor for GO service and/or the Air-Rail Link is not part of this study, and that is unacceptable, especially since Tier 3 diesel engine technology is supposed to be phased out by or just after the time the Air-Rail Link service will enter operation. All options should be evaluated, and that must include electrification of at least the Air-Rail Link service, as **there will be more Air-Rail-Link (ARL) Trains than GO Trains along the Weston Subdivision in 2031** (140 ARL vs. 80-136 for GO), and with a capacity of only 120 people per ARL Train, of which only half that capacity will be used on average in 2025, and only 1/5 of capacity used at start-up, the pollution per passenger is quite high (compared to GO Trains which can carry over 2,000 people per train, and can adjust in length at different times of day to match demand, resulting in substantially less pollution per passenger).

INFRASTRUCTURE DESIGN FUNCTIONS AND BENEFITS

3. THE WESTON TRENCH

The CP MacTier tracks currently are not proposed to be in the trench through Weston. The slopes into the trench proposed for GO along the CN tracks is 2.0%. CP Railway rolling stock is much more sensitive to grades, and for the MacTier Subdivision – that is very busy for CP Railway – has current existing grades from the natural lay of the land up to 0.7% at its steepest point. The maximum slope for CP Railway will very likely be demanded to be less than 1.0%; for example, 0.8%. On average, there seems to be about a 0.4% or 0.5% slope to the land on the north-south axis in the Weston area. This makes it easy for CP to get into the trench from the south, but difficult from the north and will require a very long approach to handle the descent, starting as far north as the south side of Wilson Avenue. Nonetheless, CP should be in the trench, at the Province's expense, since the Province is doing the same favour for CN. The CP MacTier Subdivision is proposed to receive GO service to Bolton in the future, in addition to the CP MacTier Subdivision carrying far more freight than the CN Weston Subdivision, meaning it has higher economic importance, and is therefore worth the Province's investment. Reliability and speed of CP service would go up as all crossings in Toronto excluding Scarborough would be grade-separated for CP. This would require the trench to go beneath Lawrence Avenue West through a removal of the underpass and making Lawrence Avenue West almost flat. The Weston GO Station should also be kept in its current position, with a platform extension for accommodating 12-car trains stretching to the south to be accessible from the south side of Lawrence Avenue West, instead of shifting the station entirely to the south side of Lawrence Avenue West as currently proposed. This simplifies the issues of John St. and Denison Rd. grade-separations and provides a great improvement to the streetscape of Lawrence Avenue West in the Weston Rd. area, improving the community environment and providing great opportunities for land-value capture. Land-value capture, community environment, streetscape improvements, grade-separation simplification, station location, and economic benefit through improved service reliability for both freight and passenger rail traffic should all be part of the Transit Environmental Assessment Process.

4. AIRPORT ACCESS

The switch for the Airport Spur is only accessible to/from the Toronto direction. The Transit Environmental Assessment Process should evaluate a bi-directional spur that points towards both Brampton and Toronto to allow rail service into the airport from both the Weston Subdivision and the Halton Subdivision, and this flexibility of service should be included in the Transit Environmental Assessment Process. This has been requested by the City of Brampton in the past during the consultation process for the Metrolinx RTP.

SERVICE

5. “WOODBINE” STATION

The first issue with this is that the station name cannot stick as there is an existing Woodbine station on the Bloor-Danforth subway line on the opposite side of the City of Toronto from this proposed station, which could cause confusion, particularly if tourists/business travellers unfamiliar with the local network are the target market. More importantly, however, is the second issue of the exact location of the station, indicated on the presentation boards as being at Carlingview Dr., instead of Highway 27 where the proposed Etobicoke-Finch West LRT is supposed to be extended along in future. The distance between Highway 27 and Carlingview Dr. is roughly 1km (1,000m), while a GO Train is around 300m in length at 12 cars long (excluding the locomotive), and an Air-Rail Link train is only 52m long. While the Air-Rail Link would potentially connect to an extended Finch LRT at the airport, GO Trains bound for Bramalea/Brampton and/or points further west, which would presumably use the same station as the Air-Rail Link, would completely miss the Finch LRT connection if the station is at Carlingview Dr. The east end of the proposed Woodbine station platform should stretch to the east side of Highway 27 (i.e. the station platform would span Highway 27 as a bridge), to allow convenient access between either direction of the LRT service and the proposed Woodbine station for both the Air-Rail Link and GO Train services. It would be an extremely unfortunate missed opportunity to not have these two services connect and form a potential mobility hub out of this new development area, where “transit first” planning opportunities are available.

6. “LIBERTY VILLAGE” STATION

The City of Toronto's Official Plan envisions a GO Train station around King St. along the Weston Subdivision to service the Liberty Village community. This station can potentially service a very significant number of lines (Bolton, Georgetown, Milton, Air-Rail Link, and Barrie). The absence of this important station from the Transit Environmental Assessment Process, despite its presence in current official planning documents, is unacceptable. Such a station would be in-line with the principles of the Metrolinx RTP. Such a station should be part of the Strachan Avenue grade separation as it will influence the location of such a station, most likely placing the station on the north side of King Street West, to between King Street West and Queen Street West. With the number of tracks in this part of the corridor to double from 4 to 8, it is vital that room for platforms and the other station elements be made a part of this project.

7. “MOUNT DENNIS” [EGLINTON] STATION AND WESTON STATION

A station along the West Subdivision at Eglinton Avenue West is included as part of the project. However, GO Transit's Greg Ashbee has indicated that the closing of Weston GO station is still an option in the event of a GO Station opening in Mount Dennis (at Eglinton). Such a station is virtually guaranteed with the proposed Eglinton Crosstown LRT going forward, but closing the Weston Station makes no sense when the proposal indicates that Weston station will be rebuilt. The Transit Environmental Assessment Process should make it clear that no existing stations shall be closed as a result of this project. It is assumed that both Bolton and Georgetown services would service the Mount Dennis [Eglinton] station. The Air-Rail Link is not expected to service such a station as both have the same terminus at Pearson Airport. However, the Air-Rail Link is expected to stop in Weston, which makes it even harder to understand why GO Transit would close the station. Closing stations conflicts with goals of the Metrolinx RTP.

8. “ST. CLAIR GARDENS” STATION

A local station in the St. Clair Gardens area, presumably on the north side of St. Clair Avenue West due to the grade-separation with the CP North Toronto Subdivision, should be part of the Transit Environmental Assessment Process. St. Clair Avenue West is a vibrant and historic neighbourhood in the City of Toronto and a key “Avenue” of the City’s Official Plan that will see increased transit demand in the future. The 512 St. Clair streetcar service is a very well-used route (when not under construction), and a connection to GO Train service(s) would see higher boardings/alightings on both services.

9. INTRA-416 GO TRAIN SERVICE

There is a growing demand for intra-416 service by GO Transit. GO Transit and Metrolinx are looking at Express/Local service combinations in this corridor, which opens the door for increased 416-service from a local service originating at Union Station, combined with an express service from Union Station that continues further west than the local service after connecting with a local train at, or prior to, the local service's terminating station. Such a service model should be included in the Transit Environmental Assessment Process. The notion that GO Transit is exclusively for far-flung 905 to 416 traffic is inaccurate and GO Transit and the Province miss out on increased revenue and ridership through neglect of the intra-416 service market. GO Transit has a market for intra-416 travel, and dismissal of such a market is counter-productive to the objectives of the Metrolinx RTP, and also fails to maximize the use of existing infrastructure available within the City of Toronto. This is even more important as a local subway service in this corridor has already been ruled out.

In closing, TRAC GTHA and Transport 2000 Ontario greatly appreciate the opportunity for providing feedback to the Georgetown South Service Expansion Project Technical Team, as there is a shared, common goal to make this project beneficial to both the immediate area and the wider region. Further contact is welcome, please feel free to contact TRAC GTHA through the contact information below.

Thank you very much for your time and for all the hard work of Metrolinx and Project Technical Team,

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