



# TRANSPORT ACTION ONTARIO

Advocating for Rail-Based Public Transportation  
Box 6418, Station "A" Toronto, ON M5W 1X3  
<http://ontario.transportaction.ca>

Premier Doug Ford, Queens Park, email: [premier@ontario.ca](mailto:premier@ontario.ca)  
Hon. John Yakabuski, Minister of Transport, email: [minister.mto@ontario.ca](mailto:minister.mto@ontario.ca)

July 3, 2018

Dear Premier Ford and Minister Yakabuski:

## **Comments on your Public Transportation Platform for Ontario**

Transport Action Ontario (TAO) would like to congratulate you and your team on your recent election victory. It is clear that the people of Ontario wanted change. We are a long-standing Ontario-wide non-government organization that advocates for public transportation, particularly rail-based. We were pleased to see the strong emphasis on public transportation in the "Plan for the People" platform.

We would like to offer our comments and analysis of each major promise relating to passenger rail, in the hopes that they offer guidance as you proceed to implement.

### **1. Deliver 2-way all-day GO service, GO expansions and regional transit projects in Ottawa, Hamilton, Mississauga/Brampton, Kitchener-Waterloo and London.**

We are pleased that this promise indicates that currently-funded projects will be delivered. These projects will fill major gaps in transit networks in cities across Ontario, and must be delivered on time. We are aware that one project, Finch W LRT, is facing some local opposition by a minority of citizens, who want a subway instead, although this is at least 4 times more costly per kilometer with fewer stops. But we believe that the technical evidence, the cost advantage, as well as public sentiment, are strongly supportive of LRT, and that the project should proceed as per plan.

### **2. Upload responsibility for existing and new subway lines from the City of Toronto (\$160M/yr for existing), while guaranteeing the City keeps all revenue.**

This promise puts more money into the transit pocket of the City of Toronto, so is good news. As you know, the City has a very large unfunded transit capital project plan, so any mechanism enabling the City to raise money for these is welcomed. It should be pointed out that the yearly major capital maintenance costs of the existing subway network greatly exceed \$160M/yr.

### **3. Add \$5B in new subway funding to the \$9B already available to build Sheppard Loop, Scarborough Extension, Relief Line and Yonge Extension, while building future Crosstown extensions underground.**

While the extra \$5B is welcome, this appears to assume that the \$9B recently committed by the federal government under PTIF-2, and matched by the province, is entirely directed at subways. The Relief Line has solid supportive evidence behind it and should proceed before the Yonge Subway Extension, to avoid seriously overloading the current lines. The other three subway ideas (Scarborough, Sheppard, Crosstown) do not have the projected ridership and benefits that justify the high cost of subway technology. Furthermore the quantum of money is insufficient to

build these as subways. There are many important rapid transit projects in Toronto that are best suited for LRT technology, including Waterfront and Eglinton East and West. Using LRT where appropriate conserves our precious tax dollars.

4. Actively explore high speed rail (HSR)

This appears to continue the Liberal plan to conduct an Environmental Assessment (EA) on HSR. Our biggest concern is that the planned EA had narrow scope and would not look at alternatives, such as High Performance Rail, involving incremental improvements to train speed and frequency on all existing corridors in Southwestern Ontario, at a much lower cost and shorter project delivery time. A clarification was received from Ernie Hardeman, MPP Oxford on the day before the election that the EA will explore all alternatives. While welcome, we ask you to ensure this really happens.

Intercity rail in Southwestern Ontario (provided by VIA Rail) and connecting feeder bus service is in bad shape. What is needed is technical and financial cooperation between the federal and Ontario governments to revive intercity public transportation in this important region of our province.

5. Bring back passenger rail service to the North (\$45M per year)

This is excellent news as it likely relates to restoring the Northlander service between Toronto and Cochrane. We need to ensure this really happens and is only Step 1 of a northern rail passenger service. Our colleagues in Northern Ontario have proposed a passenger loop service also connecting Sudbury, Sault Ste. Marie, Hearst and Timmins into the Northlander line, using existing freight rail trackage. We note that a key component of this loop, the Huron Central Railway, is under threat of closure and may need urgent provincial intervention.

There are other important issues that your platform was silent on, including provincial contribution to transit fare integration in Greater Toronto, assistance to municipal transit agencies to implement low-income fares/passes, and whether Metrolinx should receive broader authority and scope. We look forward to your thoughts on these matters.

While very welcome, your significant commitment to public transportation raises the question of where the money will come from. Of the various tax cuts proposed by your party, the gas tax cut and eliminating the cap and trade program have a double whammy – some of the funds are currently earmarked for transit, and secondly, higher gas and carbon taxes nudge human behaviour towards sustainable transportation modes, such as rail, which is good for the planet. We urge that this funding be replaced from other sources to ensure these public transportation promises can be delivered.

In conclusion, we hope you find these comments helpful. We would be pleased to discuss them further with you or your staffs.

Yours truly,  
Peter Miasek  
President, Transport Action Ontario