



# TRANSPORT ACTION ONTARIO

*Advocating for Sustainable Public and Freight Transportation*

Box 6418, Station "A" Toronto, ON M5W 1X3

<http://ontario.transportaction.ca>

Hon. Jeff Yurek MPP  
Minister of Transportation  
77 Wellesley Street West  
Ferguson Block, 3rd Floor  
Toronto, ON M7A 1Z8  
Email: [minister.mto@ontario.ca](mailto:minister.mto@ontario.ca)

February 4, 2019

Dear Minister Yurek:

## **Building upon the Community Transportation Grant Funding**

Transport Action Ontario warmly welcomes the release of the Ontario Community Transportation Grant funding on Friday, January 25<sup>th</sup>, which included supporting the provision of critical long distance inter-community bus services. These restored and new services will make a significant difference to the lives of citizens in many smaller communities and help to fulfill your government's commitment to revitalizing transportation across Ontario.

Your investment represents the first tangible step toward restoring inter-community bus services in Southwestern Ontario since the collapse of AboutTown Transportation decimated the route network in 2013, as illustrated by the attached map. We look forward to seeing the results of the funded projects, particularly long-distance connections like Owen Sound to Guelph and Sarnia to London that can also serve as connections to the rest of the Canadian rail and bus service network.

We hope this will be the first of many initiatives on inter-community bus services to follow on from MTO's Intercity Bus Modernization consultations (EBR Registry #012-7896). There are several issues we believe are unresolved, which we hope you will act upon decisively.

**1. Clarity of the regulatory environment.** The future of the Ontario Highway Transport Board and the regulatory environment for intercity buses was called into question during the consultation, but no final decision was taken that would provide private sector operators with the clarity needed make a financial commitment to start or restore a service. Can routes be developed under the current rules with reasonable confidence in future exclusivity? Will the current rules be relaxed to allow a reverse-onus test for entry into service, or abolished to allow direct competition? Will operators be permitted to use software-based dynamic routing to optimize services to smaller communities on low-density routes? Clarity in these matters will allow private investment to flow.

**2. Scope for shared service models or public transport to improve cost efficiency.** One of the issues raised by many participants in the consultations was the plethora of stop-gap special purpose services currently in existence, some funded by the LHINs, some by colleges using MTCU monies, others by municipalities and non-profits targeting specific ridership groups, and some by private businesses. In some cases the combination of stop-gaps, spread over multiple funding silos, appears to exceed the cost of providing a public bus service that also accepts fare-paying passengers. We therefore encourage you to work with other ministries and the municipalities to inventory the services currently in existence, in order to identify scope for shared-service models, accessible public bus services, and on-demand transit to provide better outcomes.

3. Regional coordination, planning, and oversight. Finally, the critical issue that remains unresolved is coordination, planning, and ongoing regional oversight of transportation needs outside the GTHA. Without this, sub-par ticketing and schedule coordination between services is inevitable, as is duplication of effort in service design and procurement, and thus sub-optimal use of public funds. Ontario Northland and Metrolinx fulfill this role in their respective regions, and we strongly urge the government to establish smaller regional transportation authorities in Southwestern and Eastern Ontario. Our vision is that jurisdictions would follow the boundaries of the Western and Eastern Ontario Wardens' Caucuses, and the authorities would be tasked with facilitating connectivity between existing and new bus and rail services, pooling administrative effort to reduce the burden on smaller municipalities, and providing regionally accountable oversight of future grant funding to close service gaps.

We would be pleased to discuss these items further with you or your staff.

Yours sincerely,

*Peter Miasek*

Peter Miasek  
President, Transport Action Ontario

*Terry Johnson*

Terry Johnson  
Secretary, Transport Action Ontario

