



Transport 2000 Ontario

Advocating Environmentally, Socially, & Economically Sustainable Transportation
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SHIFT Ontario

Stop Highways Invest in Feet and Transit
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Mr. Jack Thompson
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Via email: project_team@gta-west.com

April 13, 2009

Dear Sir:

GTA-West Transportation Corridor

It was a pleasure to speak with you at the recent GTA-West Public Information Centre (PIC) #2 in Vaughn on March 11, 2009. These comments are being submitted on behalf of Transport 2000 Ontario and SHIFT Ontario. As with other MTO freeway expansions in the GGH, these two organizations intend to follow the progress of this project very closely, and to comment and advocate as appropriate.

1. About Transport 2000 Ontario and SHIFT Ontario

Transport 2000 Ontario is a non-profit public advocacy organization supported entirely by our membership. We promote environmental, economic and socially sustainable transportation. Incorporated in 1992, we have functioned as an advocate for sustainable transportation since the 1970's. Transport 2000 Ontario is one of five regional organizations across Canada with a national office in Ottawa.

SHIFT Ontario, formerly known as the Sustainable Transportation Coalition, is an alliance of organizations working to redirect funds from unsustainable transportation infrastructure, specifically roads and highways, towards the sustainable modes of public transit, walking and cycling. Members of SHIFT Ontario are:

Ontario Smart Growth Network	Preservation of Agricultural Lands Society
Transport 2000 Ontario	Preserve 16th (Markham)
Earthroots	Citizens Opposed to Paving the Escarpment
Friends of the Farewell	Protect our Water and Environmental Resources
Citizens Environmental Alliance	Rouge Duffins Greenspace Coalition
GreenTrans	Coalition of the Niagara Escarpment
York Region Environmental Alliance	York Simcoe Naturalists
High Speed Rail Canada	

2. Project Background

We understand that this study project is subject to an Individual EA under the Ontario Environmental Assessment Act, and may be subject to the requirements of the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act. PIC#2 discussed existing conditions and the transportation problems for commuters, goods movement and tourism/recreation. We understand that the next steps are to summarize problems and opportunities, using modeling and forecasting.

3. Comments

- Due to the rapid-paced land development in certain parts of the study area, we are supportive of protecting land for future potential corridors
- The Niagara Escarpment and the Greenbelt both bisect the study area, and the Oak Ridges Moraine covers one corner. The Niagara Escarpment Plan (NEP) (2005) guides land use within the escarpment. We note that the NEP permits "essential" transportation facilities, where "essential" is defined as "that which is deemed necessary to the public interest after all alternatives have been considered". New and expanded facilities must have the least possible impact on the natural environment. Section 4.2 of the Greenbelt Plan directs proponents to "minimize, wherever possible, the amount of Greenbelt traversed and/or occupied by infrastructure". We expect this philosophy to be followed in comparing opportunities and alternatives.
- The study is also subject to the Growth Plan for the GGH. The Growth Plan indicates that, for moving people, transit will be the first priority for transportation infrastructure planning and major transportation investments. And, the first priority of highway investment is to facilitate efficient goods movement. We expect this philosophy to be followed in comparing opportunities and alternatives
- There is widespread cynicism that the alternatives study will inevitably lead to a call for a new "business-as-usual" freeway, despite the policies cited above. The evaluation of opportunities must consider a **broad array** of non-general purpose freeway alternatives , including
 - Optimizing existing road infrastructure
 - Improvements in local and regional public transit, including better integration between local and inter-regional systems
 - High Speed Rail for passengers

- Enhancing existing short haul rail lines
- Adding extra track in existing rail corridors
- Enhancing inter modal goods movement
- Rail-only new corridor. For example, we have spoken to CP Rail about this corridor and they are interested in "blue skying" opportunities using a P3 approach
- Truck-only toll lanes on existing freeways
- Truck-only toll freeway (new)
- The modeling that is conducted should explicitly model future goods movement, rather than just commuters. We recognize that such models are not as sophisticated as commuter models, but best efforts need to be made in this area
- The evaluation of future commuter needs and alternatives must consider important "mega trends" such as
 - Higher propensity to teleworking
 - Increased tendency to use public transit due to increased environmental and health awareness, as well as an evolving positive impression fostered by seeing hi tech, clean reliable transit vehicles elsewhere
 - Construction of new live-work-play communities
 - Spiraling costs of petroleum-based motor fuels (including effects of peak oil, GHG emission caps, carbon taxes). Various sensitivity cases on pricing should be modeled.
 - Manufacturing industry downsizing in Ontario
 - Tolls on freeways
- The comparison of alternatives (cost-benefit analysis) must consider a broad range of parameters. Some recent MTO studies on other corridors (eg 407 East) have inexplicably left out parameters such as
 - Contribution to sprawl
 - Loss of vitality of existing town/city centres
 - Economic multiplier (jobs created)
 - Health costs due to air pollution related illness
 - Cost of vehicle crashes
 - Loss of agricultural lands and production
 - Cost of construction
 - Cost of land claims

4. Wrap Up

We look forward to discussing this further with you and your team. I can be reached by email at the address below, or by phone at 905-477-8636.

Yours truly,

Peter Miasek
Transport 2000 Ontario