



TRANSPORT ACTION ONTARIO

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Transport Action urges Brampton councillors to push for major changes to high-speed rail proposal

BRAMPTON, ON – As a result of a deputation to Brampton City Council by Transport Action Ontario (TAO) president Robert Wightman, local politicians have said they want Queen's Park to make changes to its recent high-speed rail proposal, which fails to include the City of Brampton in the service.

"To be blunt, Brampton would be shafted under this proposal," said Wightman in his council deputation this morning. "It would make us a 'have-not' community, especially compared to those cities that would eventually get the direct high-speed service. Therefore, I urge council to bring this issue to the attention of our elected representatives at Queen's Park. Our voice needs to be heard now, before this proposal gets any further down the track."

At an estimated cost of \$21 billion, the provincial proposal would implement rail service at speeds of up to 250 km/hour, but it would not operate from Toronto to London until at least 2025. Service to Windsor would be even further off, with an estimated delivery date of 2031.

Said Wightman, "I am not opposed to high-speed rail service. I have ridden it on several corridors in Europe and it is impressive. But those services are fundamentally different from the one being proposed for Southwestern Ontario because they have benefited from decades of continuous investment. They didn't suddenly sprout out of nowhere. They resulted from step-by-step incremental improvements that built passenger demand to a point that justified the leap to high-speed."

TAO's long-held position is that high-speed service such as the one proposed by the Wynne government is premature, it costs too much to implement, it takes too long to build and it fails to address the urgent need for service improvements now.

"It is clear that what we need is something very different from what Queen's Park is proposing," said Wightman. "We need a plan that grows our rail service the same way it has been grown on corridors around the world. It must deliver real improvements as quickly as possible to all the communities on the existing route, including Brampton. "

TAO's position – which is shared by other rail industry experts and citizens' groups – is that this type of incremental rail investment and service improvement is what will provide the car-free mobility that is critical to the economic, social and environmental success of Southwestern Ontario. Several state-supported rail corridors provide the working model for such an approach, Wightman pointed out to the councillors.

Said Wightman, "High-speed rail service can be a wonderful objective for the future. Faster, more frequent and more affordable rail service that includes cities such as Brampton is what will get us there. That's the route we need to take if we are going to compete with those regions around the world that have already done it. Time is growing short."

A resolution directing city staff to bring these serious concerns to the attention of the provincial government will be before Brampton City Council at its next meeting on May 31.

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