



Office of the President & Chief Executive Officer

Phil Verster

Phil.Verster@metrolinx.com

(416) 202-5908

August 13, 2021

An open letter to the residents and communities of Thorncliffe Park:

The Ontario Line and the Maintenance and Storage Facility (MSF) in Thorncliffe Park

The Ontario Line is the first fully new subway line to be built in Toronto since the Line 4 Sheppard subway almost twenty years ago. It will transform the city by connecting multiple modes of transit and giving many communities more opportunities to travel, seamlessly, across the city and across the region. With many new transfer options, Ontarians will be able to get to where they want to go faster and more efficiently than ever before.

A stronger, more resilient transit system is necessary to support the economy of Toronto and of a growing region. Infrastructure investments such as the Ontario Line delivers such resiliency. It will enable nearly 400,000 journeys a day through the core of the city and it will significantly relieve congestion on existing subway lines and stations. It will connect people with employment and leisure opportunities, it will reduce journey times significantly and it will change how the city works and travels. The transit benefits from the Ontario Line make it the signature project of the Province of Ontario's \$28.5 billion subway program and, as a key part of the largest transit investment in Canadian history, it has received funding support from the federal government as well.

Transit investments such as the Ontario Line will also positively add to the communities along the new subway alignment (or "route"), over and above the benefits from ridership. For the Thorncliffe Park community, the Ontario Line will bring upwards of 300 new jobs to the new maintenance facility and many other jobs to support the subways programme. Working with communities, we contribute to new local facilities such as youth and community centres, identify new public spaces to be enjoyed, and evaluate specific proposals from the community that would enhance the local experience. In some communities we will create larger public parks, in other communities we have donated property for community purposes, in others again we have created multi-use cycling and walking paths along our railway lines.

But we appreciate that building a new subway line through the heart of the largest city in Canada and through established neighbourhoods and communities was never going to be easy. The construction period will affect daily life and new infrastructure such as elevated guideways and maintenance facilities have to be added to some local communities. We recognize that.

We engage and consult with communities about these changes and we work, collaboratively, to find ways to best implement our transit projects and to mitigate such impacts as much as is reasonably possible.

I would like to share with you our progress on important aspects of our Ontario Line plans.

The site selection criteria for selecting the Maintenance and Storage Facility site

When a new transit line is built, one of the most difficult tasks is to find a location for a Maintenance and Storage Facility (which is referred to as a MSF throughout this letter). This was particularly difficult with the Ontario Line because the alignment runs through the heart of Toronto which is already extensively developed with very little land available.

Metrolinx undertook an exhaustive assessment and options analysis, evaluating locations from Exhibition Station in the west through to the east of downtown and north to the Ontario Science Centre. We tested a long list of possible MSF sites against the site selection criteria as endorsed by the Province of Ontario. These included employment and community impacts, transit requirements and logistical impacts, as well as environmental planning, and engineering considerations:

- **Size:** Needs to be able to hold 44 trains from the start of operations, with the potential to hold an additional 10 trains as ridership increases in the future.
- **Proximity to transit line:** Needs to be close to the Ontario Line for efficient operations and to avoid long track runs between the mainline and the MSF.
- **Land use:** Needs to be consistent with planned uses for employment and must avoid residential displacement.
- **Growth considerations:** Needs to avoid areas that have significant proposed growth, such as new residential density.
- **Community impacts:** To the extent it is reasonable and practicable, minimize impacts to local community and mitigate those impacts that remain.
- **Environmental considerations:** To the extent it is reasonable and practicable, avoid sensitive ecological areas and mitigate any impacts that cannot be avoided.
- **Property costs:** To the extent it is reasonable and practicable, minimize acquisition costs.

While these individual site selection criteria were all important, these were not weighted equally in our evaluation as each potential site offered a unique mix of opportunities and

constraints. Such transit choices in an urban and diversified area are not simple, side-by-side comparisons and so MSF site selection choices had to be considered with regard to all the criteria combined, looking at each site in and of itself.

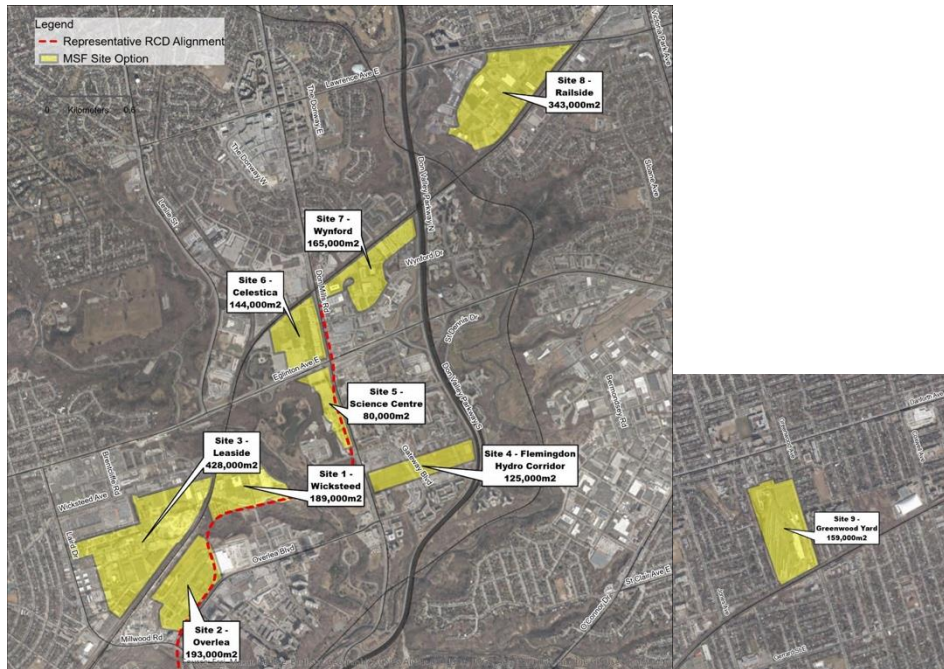
Exhibition Place, as one of the largest economic drivers in Toronto, was ruled out. It hosts over 150 events and contributes more than \$425M in direct economic benefits per year and, as such, was not a viable choice. The Toronto downtown, from the west through to the east, had no available land large enough for the MSF given the existing, built density. The existing Don rail yard was considered but is at capacity with no available space.

The sites that were considered

The north-east segment of the Ontario Line alignment was the only geography that presented viable options for an MSF location. Many sites were identified, of which nine were “long listed” and evaluated in detail. Of that list, three were “short listed”:

- Wicksteed (short list)
- Overlea (short list)
- Leaside (short list)
- Flemington Hydro Corridor
- Ontario Science Centre
- Celestica
- Wynford
- Railside
- Greenwood

Here is a map of the nine sites:



The Flemington Hydro Corridor site could not be configured to hold 44 trains and was ruled out on technical grounds. Had it been technically feasible, it would have required a road realignment, hydro tower relocations, and the elimination of the entire Flemington Park and surrounding green space. The Ontario Science Centre has a challenging land topography and not sufficient space to configure the site for 44 trains. Had it been technically feasible, it would have eliminated green space and required site re-configuration that could have potentially disrupted future development at a major transit corridor and node.

The Celestica site was technically feasible, but similar to the Ontario Science Centre site, it is located at a major transit node and is a planned development for residential and commercial mixed-use that will significantly increase housing near transit. The Wynford site had a difficult configuration that was technically feasible, but operationally inefficient with operational risks. Not being adjacent to the Ontario Line would have made it costly with impacts to service reliability. This site also presented significant community and employment impacts that could not be mitigated effectively.

The Ralside site was sufficiently sized but had similar challenges to the Wynford site. Being even further away from the Ontario Line, it needed even more significant infrastructure (e.g. tunnels or bridges) to get to the other side of the CP rail line, which would have had substantive schedule and cost impacts to the project. The Greenwood site is used by the TTC today and has no capacity for the Ontario Line to use. We examined the viability of relocating the TTC to a new MSF and using Greenwood for the Ontario Line, but it was very costly and would delay the Ontario Line completion by up to four years.

The three best site options and a hybrid proposal

The Wicksteed, Overlea, and Leaside sites were the three locations that best met the site selection criteria. All three sites meet the technical criteria, are operationally efficient to varying degrees, and can meet the future growth of Ontario Line. The Wicksteed site offered the best technical option, followed by Overlea, and then Leaside. Each site presented its own challenges, which had to be navigated to reach a “best option” selection.

The Wicksteed site was sizeable and could accommodate operations and technical requirements but required the relocation of major industrial manufacturing companies and large employers. The limited availability of industrially zoned lands, relocation considerations, and market conditions resulted in this site having a high risk of many local job losses from the surrounding communities and from Toronto. It also required the permanent closure of Beth Neilson Drive.

The Overlea site required the acquisition of religious facilities and commercial property that would require the relocation of many local businesses. It also required negotiations with Hydro One on property replacement. Potential impacts to the residential community were considered and we anticipated that significant mitigation measures could be put into place to reduce those outcomes.

The Leaside site was technically much more challenging and presented operational challenges, particularly due to the need to cross the CP rail corridor and navigate Hydro One lands. Essentially, we would need to create, at significant cost, a grade separation while also ensuring no conflicts with hydro wires.

When Metrolinx proposed a short list of options for MSF sites to the Province of Ontario and to the City of Toronto, the most significant emerging concern was the impact to jobs at the three sites. After engaging with some of the companies, it was evident that if expected to relocate, these companies would relocate outside of Toronto or even outside of Canada. As these manufacturing-type businesses extensively support further employment in their supply chains, such business relocations would have even wider job loss consequences in the surrounding communities. Appreciating that job losses could be high at the other two short listed sites as well, we adjusted our options and considered whether a hybrid proposal that combined two of the shortlisted site locations was achievable.

The hybrid proposal, a combination of the Wicksteed and Overlea sites, is technically feasible and best meets the site selection criteria. Very importantly, it enables business impacts and job losses to be minimized or even avoided. The hybrid option affects between 400 and 500 jobs, of which all can be retained through local business relocations. As a reference, had we chosen only the Wicksteed site, between 800 and 1,050 jobs could have been lost with a very low probability of those businesses relocating locally. This does not count or include the further job losses from the supply chains of these businesses.

Metrolinx proposed the hybrid solution to the Province of Ontario and it was accepted as the way forward in early 2021, after which we consulted with City of Toronto staff before sharing it with elected officials and the Thorncliffe Park community in April of this year.

Engaging and consulting about the hybrid proposal

Since April, we have engaged and consulted with the community through a variety of channels. This includes bi-weekly meetings with business tenants affected by the location of the MSF as well as a separate bi-weekly table with local residents. These are facilitated by local MPP Kathleen Wynne and myself, with elected leaders such as City Councillor Jaye Robinson, federal MP Rob Oliphant and representatives from the City of Toronto's Transit Expansion Office also in attendance. We also are holding broader "town hall"-type public engagements throughout the community, focused on gathering feedback, answering questions, and looking at ways in which impacts can be further mitigated through locally driven solutions.

It is informative to share our answers to the most common questions we are getting:

Question: Why was the community not consulted on what site is the best site for the MSF?

Metrolinx is responsible for identifying the site that best meets the site selection criteria. We then consult with the community on how to implement the MSF at that site. This consultation can include challenges about the site selection and also community advice and proposals on how to implement the project. Our consultations have included both of these.

Adopting this approach, for the last four months, Metrolinx consulted with the community on how the site selection was done and how to implement the best MSF site choice (the hybrid proposal) - but Metrolinx did not consult the community on each of the nine individual sites in advance of selecting the best MSF site. It would have been confusing and ineffective to consult with the community on sites that could not be selected for the MSF, either because they were not technically feasible or did not meet the policy objectives.

Metrolinx did consult with the Province of Ontario and the City of Toronto's Transit Expansion Office during the site selection evaluation so as to understand the policy requirements and the plans for these sites. We based our decision of the best MSF site on the policy-driven, site selection criteria.

Question: Why is Metrolinx not prepared to select a different site? We do not want the MSF in Thorncliffe Park!

Metrolinx is confident that the hybrid site is the best location for the MSF site, but if substantive facts were presented that, when used with the site selection criteria, gave a more optimal site, Metrolinx would have pursued that new site. While we have received strongly expressed views and opinions that both supports and rejects the hybrid proposal site, we

have not yet received factual information that supports a site selection that is different from the hybrid proposal.

We are respectful towards the views of some that “we do not want the MSF in Thorncliffe Park”. However, we have gone to great lengths to explain that there is no evidence yet of a better alternative site, that the MSF will bring upwards of 300 additional jobs to Thorncliffe Park, that the affected businesses will all be relocated within the neighbourhood and that additional investments and benefits in the community are also still possible.

Question: Why was the Thorncliffe Park community not informed of the site choice?

As soon as we had confirmation that the hybrid proposal was the best site for the MSF, we engaged with the Thorncliffe Park community. We recognize that this may still feel “too late”, but our objective remains to collaborate with the community to understand specific concerns, to do everything possible to address those concerns, and to explore how to best implement the MSF hybrid proposal. This implementation can include new investments in the community such as contributions to new youth and community centres, new public spaces with new uses, as well as specific proposals from the community.

Question: Why is the MSF planned to be in a less affluent community populated by people of colour? Is this decision biased by institutional racism?

None of the site selection criteria nor the site selection process included race related connotations or judgements. Metrolinx simply follows the policy-driven site selection criteria and then develops plans to implement the best MSF site choice as best as possible, irrespective of which communities may be affected.

The Ontario Line will use advanced technology and revised alignments so as to extend the line as far as possible to both the north and west, creating critical new connections throughout the city, relieving pressure on the current system, and bringing high-quality transit to as many communities as possible. Even though the length of the Ontario Line is almost double compared to other subway line proposals, quite simply, there is not much available land along the alignment that can host a MSF close to the Ontario Line. The built density through the western and downtown sections of the line did not allow for a MSF. The eastern section also did not and is very residential. Existing rail yards did not have the capacity to hold the Ontario Line vehicles. The northern section of the Ontario Line presented the only viable locations for the MSF.

Tenant Relocation

The hybrid proposal MSF site has a significant impact on some local businesses and organizations and these need to be relocated within the community or nearby local area. We are actively working with business owners and tenants to relocate them to different premises

in the same or adjacent neighbourhood. We are making positive progress in this regard and we have a dedicated team that is working closely with tenants on their requirements.

It is our objective to successfully relocate any tenant who wants to remain within the Thorncliffe Park community. We appreciate that different tenants may have very specific requirements and different needs, depending on their circumstances or the nature of their business. We are very flexible in how we support these tenants and will continue to work closely with each tenant to find the best possible solution for them and their business or organization.

We were asked, at our table dedicated to tenants, to put our relocation mechanisms and financial compensation commitments into writing. We have done so in an open and widely distributed letter, similar to this one. We have also expressed a willingness to be flexible and to consider requests for additional supports.

Again, here are some of the most common questions on tenant relocation we received:

Question: How will you ensure that key businesses and organizations stay in the community?

We have carefully listened to many voices in the community and we appreciate the significance and contribution of the businesses and organizations in Thorncliffe Park to the local community. Our objective and our commitment to relocate all the businesses and organizations within the neighbourhood will significantly minimize the impact of the site choice on the community. Our objective is to retain businesses, organizations and jobs in the community while also adding more jobs at the MSF. With this in mind, much planning and coordination is dedicated to the relocation plans.

We have surveyed all the available commercial space in the neighbourhood and we believe there is sufficient space for all the planned relocations to be within the Thorncliffe Park community. Of course, any owner or tenant may choose other options with respect to location or how to continue their business, but those who want to relocate within the community will be able to do so. In addition, the new MSF will be a large employer of 300 jobs which will benefit both local community members as well as the businesses in the community.

Question: Why does Metrolinx speak to the mosque leadership so much? The mosque does not necessarily speak for the entire community?

Our Metrolinx team have engaged with and speaks to everyone, equally, in the Thorncliffe Park community. We listen to all the views in the community and we work with every group or individual, whether those views are aligned with or different from the proposals we are advancing.

We are very respectful of the views of the mosque leadership and also of the role of the mosque to provide important religious and community services, fellowship and support for the community and especially the youth in the community. We are ensuring that the Islamic Society of Toronto is kept whole as a result of our MSF decision. We appreciate the mosque leadership's willingness to work with us despite these difficult circumstances.

Route Alignment

The purpose of the Ontario Line is to create more connections between regional GO rail services, existing subway lines as well as streetcar and bus routes. The Ontario Line will significantly reduce congestion on Line 1, Line 2, and at Union Station. When Metrolinx took over the project, we also saw an opportunity to innovate and extend the Ontario Line beyond previous plans so as to reach neighbourhoods that do not have access to higher order transit, like Thorncliffe Park.

The Ontario Line will reduce the travel time of Thorncliffe Park residents by 15 minutes for a one-way trip to downtown Toronto and will also connect to key bus routes such as 25 Don Mills, 100 Flemington Park, 925 Don Mills Express, 88 South Leaside, 81 Thorncliffe Park, and Blue Night Network: 325 Don Mills. In addition, it will connect the Thorncliffe Park community to the new Eglinton Crosstown LRT line at the Ontario Science Centre. The benefits to the Thorncliffe Park community of such increased transit connectivity include better access to all transit, more access to job opportunities in Toronto and more connectivity to the region as a whole.

We are also aware that some residents prefer that the alignment runs along Banigan Drive rather than Overlea Boulevard. When the Initial Business Case was released, Metrolinx envisioned the elevated guideway running through the median of Overlea Boulevard. We have listened to the preferences of the community and we have already relocated the alignment to the north side of Overlea.

We are now further examining whether we can technically move the alignment further to the north, right up to Banigan Drive, but there are still many challenges with such a proposal, the biggest of which is that such an alignment may conflict with Hydro One properties that could be required for the future. Metrolinx is working closely with Hydro One to find a technical solution that can protect for this future interest, while also allowing for the elevated guideway to move to Banigan. Such a proposal would also require additional property requirements and business disruptions more than is currently anticipated, which requires careful consideration.

The current, adjusted alignment that relocates the elevated guideway to the north side of Overlea Boulevard, together with the MSF located on the far northern edge of Thorncliffe Park, is a good subway design for the residents of Thorncliffe Park. Residents on the south side of Overlea are already now further removed from the alignment than in the original plan,

and this alignment can create more opportunities to utilize the properties and frontage on Overlea Boulevard to the greater benefit of the community.

Here are the most common questions we received on route alignment:

Question: How will Metrolinx limit the noise and vibration from trains?

The Ontario Line trains will be fully automated and not require train operators, thus eliminating the possible noise from excessive operator initiated braking and acceleration. Being fully automated, trains will be controlled by the signalling system to accelerate, brake and run at optimal speeds with minimal noise and vibration. Further, the Ontario Line trains will feature the most recent designs and technology on the market and will be built to meet our robust noise and vibration criteria.

Our preliminary analysis is showing that the Ontario Line will only add between one to four decibels above the current average noise levels. Although this is near imperceptible, we are considering the addition of attractive side walls to the guideway that can further reduce noise, along with the noise and vibration mitigating measures already planned for the track.

Question: How can Metrolinx ensure the privacy of residents from riders on the subway?

We have already adjusted the alignment in accordance with the advice from residents and the elevated guideway will now be on the opposite side of a four-lane road with a median boulevard from existing residential units. This will already make it extremely difficult for a rider to “see into” a townhome or condominium. Having said that, we are considering adding attractive side walls to the guideway that can provide even more privacy.

Question: Why does Metrolinx not put the subway under ground through Thorncliffe Park?

Putting the subway underground through Thorncliffe Park is impractical and a “less optimal” transit solution for several reasons. Firstly, because Thorncliffe Park is on a promontory (overlooking a lowland) with deep valleys on either side, the Thorncliffe Park station would have to be as much as 70 meters underground. This is deeper than a twenty-storey building, making access for passengers technically challenging and reducing transit benefits because it could take more than eight minutes just to get from the surface down to the station. Secondly, the Ontario Line needs to interface with the MSF which will be above ground.

Next steps from here

We appreciate that there are some voices in the community that refuse to accept the presence of the MSF site, regardless of the facts and the site selection analysis. We can only respond to such objections by demonstrating that there are no better MSF site choices than the hybrid proposal site. We have done that.

We have also welcomed challenges to the MSF site selection and we have evaluated a proposal from members of the community. This proposal shared many opinions, but did not present substantive facts that could meet the site selection criteria and identify a better MSF site location than the hybrid proposal site. Metrolinx will continue to review ideas from the community, but we are shifting our focus, over the coming weeks, to improvement and implementation.

There are also many other voices that want to work with Metrolinx to mitigate the potential impacts from implementing the MSF site choice and implementing the elevated guideway. Our next steps from here onwards includes working with such ideas.

We are excited to start conversations on how the Ontario Line project can bring other community benefits to Thorncliffe Park. Such benefits are partly about how to maximize the gains from a new transit station in this community, but can also be about how we contribute to new community facilities such as youth and community centres, new public spaces with new uses, as well as specific proposals from the community.

We have purposefully refrained, to date, from discussing such wider community benefit proposals while we were addressing the types of questions that the community wanted to focus on, as we detailed in this letter. Now that those questions have been considered and thoroughly discussed, we are inviting the community to help us understand how we can support community benefits in Thorncliffe Park.

Just as a start, and only to share a few ideas, here are some thoughts that have already been suggested:

- We can design the MSF structures in many different ways and explore how to ensure the MSF blends into the built environment. We will also ensure that there are appropriate noise walls to mitigate sounds from the MSF site. We are eager to work with the community on the design options and preferences for the external cladding of the noise walls.
- The design of the elevated guideway itself as well as the integration of the guideway with the streetscape and the surrounding businesses presents many opportunities. These include choices about the public realm under the elevated guideway. This newly created space could be designed for any number of uses - from green park spaces, an outdoor public market, basketball courts, walkways and such.
- There will be opportunities to collaborate with the community and the City of Toronto on how lands required to deliver the transit project can incorporate new community uses.

- We have heard and seen that neighbourhood gathering spaces are very important to the local experience of Thorncliffe Park but also that these are limited. We welcome the community's input on how to effectively integrate the new subway station and a new bus loop into the neighbourhood in a way that adds to quality of life for residents.
- We are also aware that park improvements, more recreational areas for sports like basketball, and community gathering spaces may be beneficial for the community. We are open to such ideas and finding ways to support and contribute to these.
- We would like to assist the residents of Thorncliffe Park, especially young adults, with training and education support to enable them to secure employment at the MSF in the coming years. We offer our support to local organizations that want to collaborate on such an initiative.
- Metrolinx is considering suggestions from landowners who want to develop their properties to maximize the opportunities from having an Ontario Line station close by. Such developments can include new spaces and facilities on Metrolinx's property that are designed so as to benefit the community's ideas and objectives.

Our commitment is to continue to work closely with the Thorncliffe Park community, residents, businesses and organizations on our Ontario Line plans and on how to implement those plans. These topics are contentious, and any community would question why they are being impacted and what these impacts will mean for them. We will continue to answer your questions and we are optimistic about working together to successfully implement both the Ontario Line and the MSF. This is your community and we are here to respect and enhance your local experience while delivering a transit project that will bring a wide range of benefits to this city, and also to Thorncliffe Park.

Kind Regards,



Phil Verster
President and CEO,
Metrolinx