



# TRANSPORT ACTION ONTARIO

*Advocating for Integrated Public Transportation across Ontario*

Box 858, Station "B" Ottawa, ON K1P 5P9

<http://ontario.transportaction.ca>

Hon. Caroline Mulroney  
Minister of Transportation  
Via email: [caroline.mulroney@pc.ola.org](mailto:caroline.mulroney@pc.ola.org)

Mr. Don Wright  
Chairman of the Board, Metrolinx  
Via email: [chair@metrolinx.com](mailto:chair@metrolinx.com)

Mr. Phil Verster,  
President and CEO, Metrolinx  
Via email: [CEO@metrolinx.com](mailto:CEO@metrolinx.com)

Ms. Karla Avis-Birch  
Chief Planning Officer, Metrolinx  
Via email : [Karla.Avis-Birch@metrolinx.com](mailto:Karla.Avis-Birch@metrolinx.com)

January 4, 2021

## **Protecting the Orangeville-Brampton and Barrie-Collingwood rail corridors**

Transport Action Ontario (TAO) is encouraged by the Province of Ontario's expansion plans for rail and bus services in and around the GTHA. In general, we believe them to be excellent investments for all parties concerned and critical for economic, environmental and societal progress. We are excited about system expansion plans and the fact they recognize emerging realities including population growth, increasing highway subsidies and climate-change mitigation.

Mr. Verster will recall from his time in the U.K. that there was growing interest in reinstating passenger rail services on routes previously abandoned when transportation policy increasingly favored roads. We believe that, with time, Ontario will experience similar sentiments on rail corridors that are currently considered redundant and potentially lost. TAO is concerned that, without adequate foresight, the loss of several of these routes could preclude passenger rail as part of a better balanced and accessible public transportation system in high-growth areas in the Metrolinx GGH planning area, immediately adjacent to the GTHA.

Recently, we wrote to interested parties regarding the imminent lifting and repurposing of the Barrie-Collingwood Railway and append a copy of this letter for your review. It has received a favorable response from several listed recipients. The Orangeville-Brampton railway is similarly at risk with the owners intending to abandon and repurpose it at the end of 2021. We believe it is not within their current sphere of concern or financial capability to preserve it for future passenger use. Accordingly, a higher-level, holistic view by Metrolinx

and MTO is required to evaluate its strategic potential as a non-highway, higher-capacity transportation corridor.

The Orangeville, Caledon and Brampton areas to the northwest of the GTHA are experiencing relentless population growth. Even in a post pandemic environment this will put additional stress on area roads including highways 10 and 410 used for commutes into the GTHA and the burgeoning commercial centre surrounding Pearson airport. The Orangeville-Brampton rail route will be critical to road congestion and vehicle emissions mitigation. It is potentially an existing low-cost solution to an otherwise expensive future mobility problem when existing GO bus services can no longer meet the need.

TAO refrains from being too prescriptive on the business case for this route, its connections to other Metrolinx services or the optimum rail vehicle type. These will require detailed studies. Encouraging is the fact that Metrolinx planning looks forward in decades and such foresight is required to protect rail rights of way for future reinstatement. Our primary goal is to request that you study these two rail corridors as strategic assets and take any action you deem appropriate.

Respectfully submitted,

Peter Miasek,

██████████

President,

Transport Action Ontario

Kenneth Westcar,

██████████

Secretary,

Transport Action Ontario

Attachment: Letter of November 5, 2020 regarding Barrie-Collingwood Railway Retention

## Attachment

*Letter sent to Mayor Jeff Lehman (Barrie), Stephanie Schlichter (Director of Economic Development, Barrie), MPP Andrea Khanjin, MPP Doug Downey, MPP Jim Wilson, Warden George Cornell (Simcoe), Mayor Brian Saunderson (Collingwood), Deputy Mayor Keith Hull (Collingwood), Deputy Mayor Daniel Davidson (Innisfil), Mayor Lynn Dollin (Innisfil), Nancy Heuther (Manager Economic Development, Simcoe)*



## TRANSPORT ACTION ONTARIO

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Box 858, Station "B" Ottawa, ON K1P 5P9

<http://ontario.transportaction.ca>

November 5th 2020

Dear Mayors, Councillors, Officers and Members of the Provincial Legislature:

### **Importance of preserving the Barrie-Collingwood rail infrastructure.**

Transport Action Ontario ([TAO](#)) is a long-standing, non-profit public transportation advocacy group with particular focus on local and regional transit and inter-city rail improvements in the Province. We engage with all three levels of government.

Many municipalities, either individually or in groups, are giving greater consideration to the role of infrastructure in their national and global competitiveness, sustainability and quality of life issues. It is refreshing that they are developing a better understanding of the value of local railways, both active and out of use. The objective is to achieve better balance in local transportation infrastructure and retain the maximum number of options in a time of accelerating economic, social and environmental change.

TAO has been offering technical and research counsel to South Central Ontario Region Economic Development Corporation ([SCOR-EDC](#)) to supplement their in-house work on transportation matters. We have applauded their implementation of a rural bus services for many participating communities and this has extended to discussions on longer-term passenger rail connectivity and integration. The matter of short-line railway preservation both for freight and possibly future passenger use is in the forefront of these.

Both TAO and SCOR-EDC understand that focusing only on new highway and bridge development and removing little-used or abandoned rail infrastructure does not solve issues related to urban growth and optimum land use. Past thinking on transportation does not address the growth of traffic congestion, nor is it attractive to business investment increasingly focused on carbon reduction

in inputs and outputs. The Town of Ingersoll, for example, has noted that its rail-connected, industrial development lands receive increased interest from potential buyers having progressive climate change mitigation in their corporate plan.

This rationale extends to the **Barrie-Collingwood Railway**, currently underutilized and in danger of abandonment and removal. We believe your communities, in concert with the

Minister of Transport, need to fully [understand its potential](#) to manage traffic congestion, improve all-weather connectivity with the GTHA in cooperation with Metrolinx and attract future-thinking investment to the Southern Georgian Bay region. Its contribution to sustainable tourism and high-paying job creation and retention should not be underestimated.

C.D. Howe Institute, a think tank, published [an informative report in 2016](#) showing the extent of taxpayer subsidies for Canadian highways. Net of all user taxes and fees the public purse pays over 30% of the cost of construction and maintenance. A transition to electric vehicles will increase the required highway subsidy as gasoline tax revenues decline. Municipalities are heavily cost-burdened for roads that do not come under provincial jurisdiction. The 10% subsidy of the BCRY is therefore minimal in comparative terms and offers a low-cost platform for increased utilization, economic, environmental and community benefit.

Ontario's economic relationship with the U.S. Midwest reveals a stark contrast in how [branch or short-line railways are viewed as economic assets](#). Rather than minor rail corridors receiving varying degrees of municipal, state and federal assistance, many are evolving as distribution and transshipment facilities for local manufacturers and e-commerce clients interested in reinforcing their "green" credentials. TAO perceives a missed opportunity for Ontario where our support of short line railways is very poor compared to our U.S. trading partners.

In these pandemic times with stretched budgets it is perhaps difficult to consider the value of Barrie-Collingwood Railway over the ensuing two decades but TAO urges you to preserve rather than abandon it. The worst possible outcome would be abandonment "regret" that has been a common characteristic of infrastructure loss for short-term expediency. The cost of reinstating a railway lost to abandonment and land repurposing is many times the cost of preservation and improvement.

Should you wish engagement with TAO on this important issue, please let us know.

Respectfully submitted,

*Lucille Frith* (Primary contact : [REDACTED])

*Ken Westcar* (Secondary contact : [REDACTED])

**Directors, Transport Action Ontario**



*Office of the Chief Planning Officer*

Karla Avis-Birch

Karla.Avis-Birch@metrolinx.com

January 12, 2021

Peter Miasek, President  
Kenneth Westcar, Secretary  
Transport Action Ontario  
Box 585, Station "B"  
Ottawa, ON  
K1P 5P9

Via email: [REDACTED]

Dear Peter Miasek and Kenneth Westcar,

**RE: Orangeville-Brampton and Barrie-Collingwood rail corridors**

Thank you for sharing Transport Action Ontario's position on protecting for passenger transport opportunities within the Barrie-Collingwood Railway and the Orangeville-Brampton Railway corridors. As the Chief Planning Officer, I appreciate the opportunity to respond on behalf of Metrolinx.

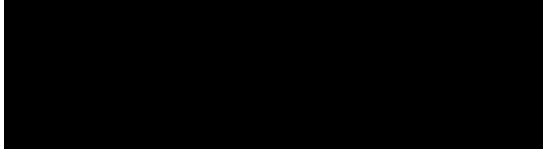
We agree that a coordinated approach is needed. We are actively working with municipalities and the Ministry of the Transportation on long-term transit needs and opportunities in the region.

Through our regional roundtables, we are also connected with the Town of Orangeville, the City of Barrie, the City of Brampton, Dufferin County and Simcoe County. We are informed of each municipality's plans for the respective rail corridors and will review and engage as required, including consideration of long-term right-of-way protection possibilities for rail and options that allow for future flexibility. We are aware that the Town of Orangeville is planning to divest itself of the Orangeville-Brampton Railway corridor, and that a potential conversion to an active transportation facility is one of the options being considered.

We regularly monitor travel behaviour and analyze rising and high-potential markets for future GO services. Our current long-range network plans do not contemplate purchasing these corridors for Metrolinx use before 2041. We will continue to examine such opportunities as we update our plans to deliver an integrated transit network that supports a high quality of life, a sustainable environment and a strong, prosperous and competitive economy for the region.

I hope this information is helpful. If you have additional questions, concerns or comments about our long-range network plans in these corridors, do not hesitate to reach out to Rajesh Khetarpal, Director of Stakeholder Relations at [Rajesh.Khetarpal@metrolinx.com](mailto:Rajesh.Khetarpal@metrolinx.com). Thank you again for sharing your feedback, and for your ongoing advocacy.

Regards,



**Karla Avis-Birch**  
Chief Planning Officer, Metrolinx

Cc: Hon. Caroline Mulroney, Minister of Transportation  
Phil Verster, President & CEO, Metrolinx  
Donald Wright, Chair, Board of Directors, Metrolinx

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January 29, 2021

107-2021-198

Mr. Peter Miasek  
President  
Mr. Kenneth Westcar  
Secretary  
Transport Action Ontario  
[REDACTED]

Dear Mr. Miasek and Mr. Westcar:

Thank you for your letter regarding the Barrie-Collingwood and Orangeville-Brampton rail corridors. I appreciate the opportunity to respond.

The province recognizes the unique nature of linear corridors such as the Barrie-Collingwood and Orangeville-Brampton rail lines. The Provincial Policy Statement Section 1.6.8 includes a number of policies regarding planning for and protecting transportation and infrastructure corridors for the long term, including specific direction on maintaining the integrity and continuous linear characteristics of such corridors wherever feasible.

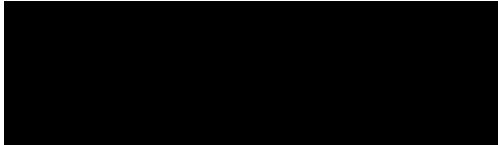
In addition, the Ministry of Transportation is developing a comprehensive and integrated transportation plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe (GGH). This plan will set a vision for transportation in the region, including an integrated future multimodal transportation network for people and goods movement that is coordinated with land use, to provide the best possible mobility options for people and businesses in the Greater Golden Horseshoe as it grows over the next 30 years. The plan will guide provincial and Metrolinx transportation investments, provide municipalities with strategic direction on transportation planning, and act as a platform for partnership with the federal and private sector partners on transportation priorities in the region.

We are working closely with Metrolinx and municipalities across the region to develop the plan, including the Town of Orangeville, the City of Barrie, the City of Brampton, Dufferin County and Simcoe County. The work to develop the plan builds on municipal plans for their local transportation networks as well as a detailed analysis by mode of transportation system gaps and opportunities, including underutilized rail corridors. Please be assured that these corridors have been included in our long-term planning as strategic assets. We will continue to work with Metrolinx and the local municipalities on any further opportunities to support sustainable mobility across the region.

I hope this information is helpful. If you have additional questions, concerns or comments about the development of the Greater Golden Horseshoe plan, do not hesitate to reach out to Tija Dirks, Director of System Planning Branch at [Tija.Dirks@ontario.ca](mailto:Tija.Dirks@ontario.ca).

Thank you again for your interest in the province's long-term transportation planning.

Sincerely,



Caroline Mulroney  
Minister of Transportation

c. Phil Verster, President & CEO, Metrolinx