



A VOICE FOR TRANSIT

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350 Victoria Street
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June 24, 2020

RE: PRESTO Report, Item 11 – Customer Safety, Service Planning & Recovery, Capital Projects Group Quarterly Report, 2020-21 Metrolinx Business Plan

Dear Metrolinx Board of Directors Members,

In May 2020, we published our *Transit Inequity in Toronto* report, which calls for improved transit governance and transit service. A key recommendation was improving citizen participation at Metrolinx board meetings by allowing public deputations like the TTC, YRT, and MiWay to increase transparency. Without such stakeholder engagement, there is a loss of capital and operational accountability. Our report also suggests that Metrolinx implement online PRESTO reloading where the funds are available for all digital platforms (ie. desktop, Android) immediately. We are encouraged that this is available for Apple users through NFC, but concerned that this may prioritize affluent users.

When developing business cases, we call for equity assessments of whom will benefit the most from subway expansion projects to be conducted. Such an assessment addresses two types of equity: vertical and horizontal. The latter states that equal groups deserve to be treated equally. In transit, that means asking if people have equal access to said network. Transit is a public service that is distributed this way.

Furthermore, vertical equity states that some groups have needs greater than others, and thus should be greater served. This has been abundantly clear in present political climates highlighting the Black Lives Matter movement. Similarly, Metrolinx should strive for vertical equity, such that communities disadvantaged by race, socioeconomic status, culture, or disabilities be greater served according to their needs. We ask that this be made public with an inclusive approach to public questions.

Similarly, with capital projects in early stages (business case development, design work, procurement) the public must have a larger and more accessible role. As such, one recommendation is that many iterations of plans and designs be open to the public so that voices concerning transit can be heard. For example, some form of the Ontario Line has been in the works for the last century. Taking these historic plans and conducting public surveys would provide a better understanding of the public's needs than an expedited consultation process.

According to the Ontario government's fiscal update in March 2020, revenue is expected to decrease by \$3.5 billion next year due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, funds are scarcer than ever. Prioritizing capital-intensive projects like subway extensions may be unwise given such a scenario. Public opinions have shown that some extensions are more necessary than others. For example, the planned Yonge North subway extensions' value for investment could have a greater economic benefit if the new line terminates at Steeles rather than *Langstaff Gateway Urban Growth centre*. This is evidenced by the high passenger loads on the TTC's Steeles West and Steeles East routes during off-peak and on-peak hours.

We would also like to highlight, prior to procurement of a tunneling contract, to reassess the need for Eglinton Crosstown West extension's underground versus an at-grade LRT solution. According to the initial business case for this project released in February 2020, an at-grade option (Option 1) will have significantly lower capital costs than an underground alignment (Option 4). (Eglinton Crosstown West Extension Initial Business Case, 2020) The same report states that an LRT solution would be approximately half the cost of an underground option. (Draft, p.5) This should be enough to reconsider this project. Regarding the *Scarborough Subway Extension Preliminary Design Business Case*, we are opposed to a subway given the high capital cost estimates (\$5.5 billion) that will probably rise, in part, due to tunneling through bedrock. (CBC, 2017) An LRT option would be more cost effective and faster to build-creating less construction-related residential nuisance while providing an improved, equitable transit experience in Scarborough communities sooner.

We have two other matters that we would like to raise. One has been brought to our organization's attention by tenant occupants that reside within the planned Ontario Line construction. We have been notified by an individual renter that his lease will be terminated with no compensation as the property he lives at will be expropriated for a portion of the overground Ontario Line. Can Metrolinx consider providing attributable damages for tenants and occupants affected by the project to be compensated for displacement? Lastly, On page 8 of Item 11 on the June 2020 agenda, we are intrigued by the temperature screening image. Is Metrolinx planning to do this for passengers? The slide is unclear to us.

Thank you for your consideration of our suggestions. We would love to hear the outcomes of our suggestions and the answers to our questions.

Sincerely,

Faizan Ahmed, Ozora Amin, Sherwin Lau, Devan Moura, and Jean-François Obregón

A Voice for Transit Team