



METROLINX

An agency of the Government of Ontario
Une agence du gouvernement de l'Ontario

Office of the President and Chief Executive Officer

Bruce McCuaig

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September 6, 2016

Mr. Derek Wood

Dear Mr. Wood,

RE: Response to your July 27, 2016 Letter

Thank you for taking the time to share your thoughts regarding your commute from Oakville to Hamilton to our Chair, J. Robert S. Prichard. Please allow me to respond on his behalf.

We appreciate receiving feedback so that we have a better sense of what we are doing well and our opportunities to improve. I regret to learn that GO Transit is not currently meeting your needs, but I am happy to report that Metrolinx is currently undertaking an expansion of GO rail services, which will improve the options available to many commuters.

The expansion of GO rail is a 10-year program that was announced by the Government of Ontario in 2014. Its main commitments are:

- The electrification of most of the Metrolinx-owned rail corridors,
- Two-way, all-day service every 15 minutes in core areas of the GO rail network, and
- Other service improvements for all GO train users.

I appreciate your comments about the waiting time involved with current GO rail services. GO riders who do not time their station arrival along with the train's departure schedule must wait for the next scheduled train. While the current half-hourly service at Oakville station is a large improvement over the hourly service it replaced, we recognize the opportunity to improve upon this. By providing an even higher frequency of service, we can make GO Transit a more appealing option for more people. Therefore, as part of the GO Regional Express Rail program, we plan to double the current off-peak service frequency at Oakville from every 30 minutes to every 15 minutes. This will get people to where they are going faster, with less waiting.

As part of the expansion of GO rail, we are also planning to introduce all-day, bidirectional service to and from Hamilton GO Centre. Unfortunately, since the track running to Hamilton GO Centre is owned by a freight railway, we are unable to commit to electrification or the same level of service we can commit to at Oakville station. Therefore, the two-way trains running between Hamilton GO Centre and Union Station are planned to operate at hourly frequencies. I understand that this may only partially address your needs, but we believe this will be a significant improvement over the current service, and we are committed to continuous improvement of our services in Hamilton.

Finally, thank you for your comments regarding the effective planning and building of transit systems. Metrolinx takes a long-term view to transit planning, and we are currently in the process of updating our Regional Transportation Plan to account for changing conditions in the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area. I invite you to learn more about the Plan and provide comments by visiting www.metrolinxengage.com and reading the Discussion Paper for the Next Regional Transportation Plan.

Sincerely,



Bruce McCuaig
President and Chief Executive Officer

c. Kevin Flynn, Member of Provincial Parliament, Oakville

July 27, 2016

RECEIVED AUG 02 2016
LCM 9199

To: Chair of the Board, Metrolinx
97 Front Street West, Toronto, M5J 1E6

From: Mr. D. Wood CFA, CPA, CA
[REDACTED]

Dear Sir,

GO Service – westbound from Oakville to Hamilton

I write to provide feedback on my experience as a commuter on the service noted above and to recommend change. Your Board is aware that service is currently provided by GO train/bus link.

My situation is that I took up a consulting contract in downtown Hamilton last year and use my own car to drive the QEW, and I take GO Transit, depending on weather and traffic factors. My home is one kilometer from Oakville GO. The office is near the Hamilton GO bus station. This is an ideal situation for public transit commuting – safer, cheaper, environmentally friendly.

Unfortunately, my GO experience greatly favours using the car. Since it is public policy to move commuting onto public transit for many good reasons that I support, I think it appropriate to provide feedback on my experience in support of your Board's forward planning.

GO Transit Advantages

SAFETY: GO transit is undoubtedly safer. I witness traffic accidents on the QEW each week.

ENVIRONMENT: Using GO would eliminate my annual 14,000 km of car exhaust alone.

COST: Using the CRA's auto costs, running the car costs x2.3 times the price of the Presto card.

GO Transit Disadvantages

TIME: I usually make the car journey from home to the office in 35 to 40 minutes. By using the car parking at Oakville GO, the combined train/bus journey takes 70 to 80 minutes.

SCHEDULE: Since this service only runs (at odd intervals) about twice an hour, it can leave passengers in "wait" mode for long periods. This is not an acceptable or productive use of time.

INCONVENIENCE: One major issue on this route is the switch-over from train to bus at Aldershot. The problems include interrupted working on the train journey, long stair climbs and inadequate elevator capacity, the Presto tap between bus and train, plus the extra journey time.

I reluctantly conclude that I shall stay with my car commute until the GO service changes to include frequent straight-through trains to and from Hamilton GO at Hunter Street.

(Continued.....)

I do appreciate that GO transit westward from Oakville in the morning and eastward to Oakville in the afternoon runs nearly empty. However, I also observe that the QEW westward from Oakville carries three lanes of fast moving automobile traffic. The traffic jams on the eastward QEW reflect disgracefully on foregone transportation improvements that should have been funded and implemented over several prior generations throughout the southern Ontario region.

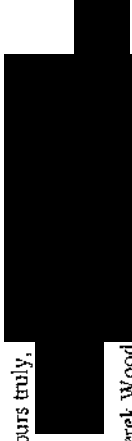
On a more general note, I will add that I had an opportunity in the distant "Sixties" to study the economics of public transportation as an undergraduate. In those days, the concept of highway road tolls and city congestion charges was just entering the academic journals of the day.

My key takeaways, which I believe remain valid today, are the concepts that to run an effective public transit system, one must (a) plan many decades ahead; (b) work with best estimates now and use systematic change control procedures to modify the planning as necessary; (c) work with a philosophy of "build it and they will come", based on the demographic growth in this region; and (d) subsidize transit pricing out of a progressive income taxation insofar as necessary to satisfy the public policy purposes of the transit system (e.g. economic growth, air quality, etc.).

I ask that you and the Board give near-term consideration to my specific recommendations to improve the Aldershot to Hamilton GO transit. Further, I trust that the policy guidelines governing the work of the Board do reflect in some measure the principles that I outlined in the preceding paragraph.

Thank you for your consideration of this letter.

Yours truly,



Derek Wood

cc. Mr. Kevin Flynn, MPP Oakville – for information, since the policy issues relating to transit funding and forward planning relate to decisions made by Provincial Government.