

To: Metrolinx Board of Directors
From: Judy Pfeifer, *Chief Communications & Public Affairs Officer*
Date: June 28, 2017
Re: **Communications & Public Affairs Quarterly Update**

Overview

As Metrolinx advances on planning, building and operating regional transit, our various teams continue to keep our neighbours, stakeholders, the media, and the general public engaged and updated on our progress.

The Communications & Public Affairs (CPA) team supported a variety of announcements such as the Crosstown LRT's energy storage facility, strategic partnerships with Tim Hortons and Shoppers Drug Mart, and procurement for the Kipling Bus Terminal and Rutherford GO Station, as well as launched a number of new community initiatives and began a region-wide Municipal Council tour in support of Regional Express Rail.

Highlights, Updates & Announcements

Regional Express Rail (RER)

Progress continues with several community-level working groups whose objective will be to ensure our projects reflect the needs of the communities where we are building:

- A newly created group comprised of local community associations, elected officials, landscape architects and project staff is exploring ways to mitigate potential impacts of our work to the Toronto West Railpath, a multi-purpose linear park along the Barrie corridor in Toronto's Junction neighbourhood.
- Furthering our commitment to community safety, the new rail crossing strategy approved by the Board in February, 2017 was presented to elected officials and community associations. This strategy includes the newly announced region-wide community advisory committee focusing on rail crossing safety, which will begin recruitment next quarter.
- The community relations team brought Toronto and Region Conservation Authority, Parks Canada and City of Toronto staff together to discuss shared community engagement along the Lakeshore East corridor. Metrolinx is working with these organizations to create community focus



groups to help inform the work along this corridor.

- The community office in Agincourt opened earlier in June, providing residents and business with a place to go with their questions or for more information.

This quarter, the RER team also began the Regional Municipal and Community Tour with the start of formal presentations conducted at more than 10 municipal councils (York Region, City of Vaughan, King City, Newmarket, Aurora, Markham, Richmond Hill, Whitchurch-Stouffville, Niagara Region, City of Barrie, Innisfil, Bradford West, and Gwillimbury). This process was developed to ensure that both municipal councils and residents receive information annually about the comprehensive GO Expansion vision for their community and the infrastructure that will be built to support it. A pre-determined schedule is being organized for presentations to council and a multi-channel content strategy will ensure that residents receive the information at the same time from Metrolinx through various channels, including online, local media, and municipal website/social media channels.

Rapid Transit Projects

In mid-March, the public, the media and several key stakeholders were invited to watch as the first piece of the two east tunnel boring machines was extracted from the ground at Yonge and Eglinton. A full communications plan was in place with nearly 9,000 views of photos and video.

To demonstrate progress of the build, a series of videos will be produced from aerial footage taken above the sites to show progress along the corridor. The first of this series was produced and shared online in May.

The community relations team continue to be visible community resources. In May, team members were on-hand to inform and direct pedestrians as crosswalk and sidewalk closures altered local walking routes around Don Mills Road and Eglinton Avenue.

Building on the interest and success of our past walks, the community relations team hosted an expanded five-part program for Jane's Walk 2017. Each of the five walks focused on the Crosstown LRT project itself but also explored the challenges of building a major transit line through the centre of the city. Approximately 50 participants joined the two-hour walks across the LRT route.

At the beginning of June, stakeholders and media were given an inside view of crews preparing the tunnels for tracks and signals. As with previous tunnel tours, this one generated much attention online as the invited guests took to social media to cover the concrete pour, which ultimately levels the flooring of the round tunnels.



Between March and June, 13 station open houses were held along the Eglinton corridor to provide construction updates to local residents and businesses. To offer an alternative engagement format, the team also hosted four tele town halls in March and April. A total of 7,557 people participated, asking 78 questions that were answered by staff online.

Over the last four months, the Crosstown community relations team continued to engage local stakeholders, attending over 110 meetings with elected officials, Business Improvement Areas, schools, local businesses and residents to keep them informed about construction progress.

With construction of the Hurontario LRT to begin in 2018, work is well underway to reach out to those communities along the future transit route. The team launched a series of corridor committees comprised of representatives from key stakeholder organizations in five different sections of the Hurontario LRT corridor. The committees met with Metrolinx and the Cities of Mississauga and Brampton to gain timely, relevant information and engage in dialogue on the project.

Three open houses, held in community centres and an arena along the LRT corridor, were well attended by local residents. The meetings focused on renderings featuring stop designs in the context of identifiable Mississauga and Brampton landmarks. Residents along the Mississauga section of the corridor were also invited to participate in the first of a series of tele town halls.

Over the quarter, the Hurontario team has been attending community events, such as the National Public Works Week Family Fun Day, to pass out information and the ever-popular cardboard trains.

In February, members of the Hamilton cycling community were invited to attend a consultation session regarding some anticipated impacts to cycling infrastructure in the west-end of the Hamilton LRT corridor. Early discussion around community benefits began at two meetings with Hamilton stakeholders in April and May, and the Community Connectors teams completed their third canvass, knocking on every street-level door along the route.

The team supported the Hamilton Chamber of Commerce's launch of a 4-part workshop series aimed at preparing businesses along the LRT corridor for the impacts of construction. The first workshop was well-attended and focused on construction experiences of others who have "been there."

The team continues to not only engage and update various



stakeholders and community groups in person at local community events, but also online via social media and the project's e-newsletter. Since its launch in January, the Hamilton LRT Twitter account has reached nearly 1,200 followers.

Stakeholder Relations

Over the last four months, staff addressed over 55 direct inquiries from stakeholders, reached out to 300+stakeholders via the Corridor Committee/Regional Communicators table monthly e-blast, tracked over 93 transit-related items at municipal councils and the provincial/federal government, and facilitated over 70 stakeholder and public meetings (including 29 public-facing speaking engagements).

Media & Social Media

The media team averaged 60-80 media calls per week in the past quarter—a 28% increase over the same period in 2016 and a 31% increase over the previous quarter. Most calls were service-related but media interest continues to be intense regarding the delivery of Light Rail Vehicles. Journalists continue to cover the PRESTO rollout on TTC but as reliability improves, calls are becoming less frequent. There has been lots of coverage of light rail projects across the region, including Crosstown progress. Media impressions (number of people who potentially saw media stories or articles about Metrolinx) continue to increase over last year, rising by 40%. Twitter and Instagram continue to drive interest in Metrolinx-related stories—reporters monitor for ideas, and follow up on human interest stories. We have focused on showcasing progress and forward thinking by posting more relevant multimedia content on our channels, and we will continue with this approach into the next quarter as it has proven to be a successful way to drive engagement and channel growth.



Respectfully submitted,

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