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buildtheparkto@gmail.com

Donald Wright, Chair
Metrolinx Board of Directors
97 Front St W Toronto, ON
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29 June 2022

Dear Mr. Wright and Metrolinx Directors:

We, the undersigned, call on the Board of Metrolinx to revisit its plans for the proposed diesel train parking and service facility in the Don Valley Park and we urge it to work with other stakeholders to find a transit system solution that appropriately considers the strategic importance of urban green space, along with transit system optimization.

We also encourage Metrolinx to act with utmost ecological restraint when developing infrastructure in Ontario's Greenbelt, including Toronto's river and ravine system and other ecologically sensitive areas. For this reason, we ask you to provide full transparency around decisions that could have significant ecological impacts, including the criteria and decision-making around alternative sites.

Metrolinx Go Transit has proposed the establishment of an obtrusive parking and service facility for diesel trains in an environmentally sensitive section of the Lower Don Valley. This is completely unacceptable, reversing fifty years of progress restoring the Don Valley, and is directly in conflict with successive visions and strategies recognizing the potential of the Don Valley as both an important ecological resource and an iconic park showcasing Toronto's unique natural landscape. The Don River valley has long been the focus of restoration efforts, culminating in billions in public funds spent on flood protection and revitalization.

Today, the Don River valley is part of Ontario's award-winning Greenbelt due to its central role as a wildlife corridor that connects the Oak Ridges Moraine to Toronto's ravine system and Lake Ontario. Once a key First Nations travel route connecting the shores of Lake Ontario with its hinterlands, this history should be celebrated and reconciled as opposed to paved. The Valley is also widely recognized as an important green space and wetland that mitigates climate change and biodiversity loss, supports birds and wildlife, and increases urban quality of life.

Municipally, the Don River valley has become an essential environmental resource encapsulated by a multitude of community-driven, publicly funded, and City supported plans for its use as natural parkland, including Forty Steps to a New Don, the Taskforce to Bring Back the Don, the Lower Don Trail Master Plan, the Don Valley Superpark, as well as the City of Toronto's

Ravine, Parkland, and Biodiversity Strategies. As the pandemic has illustrated all too well, realizing these visions will become ever more critical as Toronto's population grows, and accessible nature becomes even more important for public health and a more resilient city.

Metrolinx threatens to reverse this progress by proposing a parking lot and service facility for diesel trains in the exact area that has been painstakingly cleaned up and revitalized by thousands of volunteers over almost half a century, one tree at a time, to the benefit of all citizens. The agency itself acknowledges that this facility will have severe negative impacts on the park setting and imposes considerable ecological impacts within an environmentally significant area. Transit experts, community groups, politicians, urban residents, and environmental stewards have expressed dismay over the prospect of the proposed permanent damage to our urban river valley; this location appears inappropriate, unreasonable, expensive, and intrusive. A better choice must be found.

The lower section of the Don Branch rail line (west of the Don River) has been suggested as a viable alternative to the proposed layover site. The approximately 1.5km long Don Branch rail line runs north from Eastern Avenue to Rosedale Valley Road, is easily accessible from Bayview Avenue, and could be used for daytime storage – a possible solution that Metrolinx has not even included in the list of other options explored by the agency. The least Metrolinx can do is to show what would be involved in the use of a different site that meets the essential operational requirements for a layover.

We urge Metrolinx's Board of Directors to work with stakeholders and representatives from all levels of government to meet its layover requirements in a way that marries transit planning considerations with established policy goals for the protection of urban green space and the development of parkland. A parking lot and service facility for diesel trains in the Don Valley Park is unthinkable and unacceptable.

Thank you for your consideration.

Signatories Listed on Following Pages

CC: Hon. Caroline Mulroney, Ontario Minister of Transportation
Hon. David Piccini, Minister of Environment, Conservation and Parks
Peter Tabuns, MPP Toronto-Danforth
Jessica Bell, MPP University Rosedale
Kristyn Wong-Tam, MPP Toronto Centre
Mayor John Tory, City of Toronto
Councillor Paula Fletcher, City of Toronto
Councillor Michael Layton, City of Toronto
Ms. Julie Dabrusin, MP for Toronto-Danforth
Hon. Chrystia Freeland, Deputy Prime Minister and MP for University Rosedale

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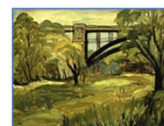
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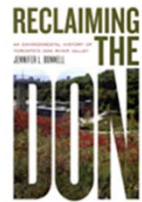
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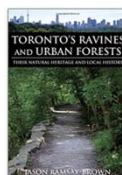
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