

SCARBOROUGH TRANSIT *ACTION*

February 12, 2018

Mr. J. Robert S. Prichard, Chair
Metrolinx
97 Front Street West
Toronto, Ontario
M5J 1E6
chair@metrolinx.com

Dear Mr. Prichard,

Re: Metrolinx Review of Kirby and Lawrence East Stations

In your [letter](#) of September 8, 2017, wherein you announce the review of the Kirby and Lawrence East (now called Kennedy-Lawrence) SmartTrack Stations you state that “management’s work will also include updating the business case analyses for the stations, reviewing the proposed station designs and associated cost estimates, and incorporating the Regional Express Rail service plans for the Barrie and Stouffville corridors.”

Would you please confirm that the business case analysis for the stations will follow the [Metrolinx Framework](#)? Quoting from the framework document, these analyses should be conducted in such a way that:

“a sufficiently broad range of solutions has been considered and the options developed from this long list of solutions have been selected through a transparent and defensible process. These options are evaluated against a base case which considers a “business as usual” scenario.”

In light of this industry-standard methodology, we expect that the solutions being considered would include the proposed Scarborough Subway Extension (SSE) and the previously-planned-and-approved seven-stop Scarborough LRT and that the base case would consist of the existing Scarborough RT. Will this indeed be the methodology of the revised business case analyses?

The single rationale for the proposed GO/SmartTrack station at the Lawrence East site is to ameliorate the fact that the proposed one-stop subway extension (SSE) from Kennedy to Scarborough Centre would involve closing the Lawrence East, Ellesmere, Midland and McCowan Scarborough Rapid Transit (SRT) stations, thereby eliminating access to rapid transit for the more than 16,000 daily riders who rely on these stations.

The overall cost of the SSE is currently estimated at \$3.57 billion, including the \$260 million cost of the SRT life extension, decommissioning and demolition. The \$23 million estimated capital cost of the new station would bring the total cost of the SSE project to \$3.59 billion. The provincial government has pledged \$1.48 billion for the SSE, the federal government has committed \$660 million and the City of Toronto is contributing \$910 million, for a total of \$3.05 billion. That leaves a significant shortfall, including for the Kennedy-Lawrence Station – and the public has not been told how that large funding gap, which is very likely to keep increasing, will be filled.

Despite its enormous cost, Metrolinx has never conducted a business case analysis of the one-stop SSE. Although Metrolinx prepared one for the previously-proposed three-stop subway and found that it was “not a worthwhile use of money,” this omission is an unusual lapse of Metrolinx’s longstanding approach to evidence-based planning.

We note that the Business Case Framework is a strengthening of Metrolinx’s practice that was embraced by its [Board](#) at the December 7, 2017 meeting. At that meeting Metrolinx’s CEO Phil Verster emphasized that the business case analysis is only “one part of our advice to elected officials.” To ensure that our elected decision-makers have the benefit of such advice, we believe that it is incumbent on Metrolinx to include the SSE in its updated evaluation. As the provincial body responsible for transit planning, it is essential that Metrolinx ensure the money be deployed on a project that is supported by evidence.

The City’s October 26, 2017 [letter](#) reinforces our argument in favour of including the SSE in your business case analysis. The letter claims that Metrolinx underestimated ridership because “the Metrolinx model assumed the original three-stop Scarborough Subway Extension which included a station on Lawrence Avenue East” and that this together with a GO fare assumption “greatly diminished the anticipated ridership.” The City’s letter claims that in regard to the one-stop subway extension “If the proposed Lawrence-Kennedy Station was not built, the lack of any rapid transit station on Lawrence would have a significant negative impact on the connectivity of the transit network – resulting in longer travel times on surface transit routes to access a rapid transit station.” We agree that access to rapid transit at Lawrence is critical, so surely it makes sense to consider what benefit the one-stop SSE has compared to the seven-stop LRT, the latter coming at a far lower cost to the city than the combination of the SSE and the Lawrence-Kennedy SmartTrack station.

As to the City’s complaint that Metrolinx underestimated ridership because it based its projections on a GO fare, we know from our own [research](#) that riders would not pay a higher fare to use the proposed new station. But the other reason our survey respondents gave for not using the station is simply because they aren’t travelling downtown. The proposed station wouldn’t help them get to where they do want to go – to other parts of Scarborough or elsewhere in the city.

We can’t assess some of the claims made by the City in its letter - for example its reference to there being “multiple development inquiries.” But we cannot help but note that much of the information provided could also support a seven-stop LRT. For example, the City’s letter refers to the development potential of nearby Lawrence Avenue and identifies it as an avenue that should be supported by high-quality transit services. The seven-stop LRT would obviously be a high-quality transit service and would also provide a “transfer point for the busy Lawrence 54 bus route” – another reason the City lists for its proposed station. Moreover, the LRT would provide other critical linkages, including to Centennial College and Sheppard Avenue East.

It is also important to note that the major selling point for the SSE as opposed to the seven-stop LRT was that the SRT could continue to operate while the SSE was being built. Yet Metrolinx disclosed last October that the SRT may have to be [shut down](#) in order to build the GO/SmartTrack station at Lawrence East, thus negating the benefit of the SSE. Transit riders could be forced onto buses for nearly 10 years while the station and the SSE are built (compared to four to five years if the LRT were to be built). Although a [November](#) report to Council says that construction of the new station will be co-ordinated to allow the SRT to stay open, no details were provided. Is it Metrolinx's view that indeed the station could stay open during construction if the station is approved?

And finally, on a related matter, the TTC is currently working on the redesign of Kennedy Station to accommodate the SSE, Eglinton Crosstown LRT (ECLRT) and GO Regional Express Rail/SmartTrack. It is our view that unless the [Master Agreement](#) is amended Metrolinx has a mandate to ensure that the redesign of Kennedy Station does not preclude the Scarborough LRT option. Would you please confirm that the redesign will respect this option and if not, at what point would the LRT option no longer be viable?

We look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

Brenda Thompson, Vincent Puhakka, Richard Hennick and Moya Beall, Scarborough Transit Action

Rosemary Frei

Cc: Phil Verster, CEO