



Councillor Josh Matlow

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January 29, 2015

Ulli Watkiss
City Clerk
Toronto City Hall
100 Queen St. W.

Dear Ms. Watkiss,

Administrative Inquiry Re: Ridership projections for the Bloor-Danforth Subway Extension in CC 37.17 - Scarborough Rapid Transit Options

I am submitting this Administrative Inquiry (under Municipal Code S27-61) to obtain information on CC 37.17 - *Scarborough Rapid Transit Options* presented Council in July 2013.

The Scarborough LRT is still part of the Master Agreement with Metrolinx. Council will soon be faced with a very important decision. It can either reaffirm its support for the fully-funded, planned and ready-to-go, traffic-separated, 7-stop rapid transit LRT line for Scarborough or spend more than \$1 Billion on a shorter subway extension- serving fewer residents for more money.

Before this choice is made it is vital that Councillors are provided with further information underpinning the increased ridership projections contained in CC 37.17 - *Scarborough Rapid Transit Options*.

A January 21, 2013 report to the TTC Commission, *Response to Commission Enquiry: Service/Technology Choices for Sheppard East and Scarborough RT Corridor*, states that ridership on Bloor/Danforth Extension into Scarborough would be "upwards" of 9,500 passengers per hour per direction (pphpd) during peak hour. This figure is well below the 15,000 riders needed during the busiest period to begin to justify a subway.

Just six months later, however, staff reported in CC37.17 that "recent work" produced a range of 9,500 – 14,000 pphpd during peak periods. The upper end of this range pushes the project to a point just on the cusp of justifying a subway. The report cites the implementation of the Relief Line as the primary justification for the rapid increase in the projection without any further explanation.

There is no certainty that the Relief will be constructed any time soon nor do I accept, without explanation, that its implementation would result in a 50% increase in ridership.

Staff qualified the ridership projection in CC 37.17 by stating that it is the result of a "preliminary assessment" and that the "...lack of time to consider all of the necessary assumptions in further detail is reflected in the high degree of variability in the ridership projections for a subway. Further work is required to accurately report on forecast subway ridership...."

The work to date is not sufficient for Councillors to make a final decision that will have significant cost and transit planning implications far into the future. Also, ridership on the Scarborough subway extension will almost certainly be reduced by the implementation of SmartTrack. Low ridership could saddle the city with high subsidies for decades to come, as we have seen with the Sheppard subway.

Indeed, there are echoes of the ridership projections for the Sheppard subway in the optimistic projections for Scarborough. *Toronto Transit: Back on Track* (better known as the Chong Report) stated that the 1992 Environmental Assessment for the Sheppard subway concluded that:

"... a Sheppard LRT option was deemed not capable of meeting projected demand. The base ridership estimate for the Sheppard Subway was estimated at 14,000 passengers in the Peak Hour per Direction, with conservative estimates of 23,000 passengers by 2031, a passenger volume that LRT could not accommodate."

The actual ridership for the Sheppard subway today is 5,000 pphpd during the peak period – lower than many bus routes.

Questions:

- Will more detailed ridership forecasts be presented to Council before the City of Toronto moves any further with the subway extension project?
- What modelling system was used to project the increased numbers? Was the modelling system consistent with that used for the previous projections?
- Will ridership projections be factoring in the implementation of SmartTrack?
- Have the erroneous projections for the Sheppard subway been considered?

Sincerely,

Josh Matlow
Toronto City Councillor
Ward 22- St. Paul's