

May 3, 2010

To: Councillor John Filion Chair
and Members, Toronto Board of Health

From: Rick Ciccarelli, Mount Dennis Community Association

Re: Response to report of the Medical Officer of Health concerning the
Public Forum on the Proposed Metrolinx Service Expansion
in the Georgetown South Corridor

I am here today on behalf of the Mount Dennis Community Association to address the report on the Georgetown South Service Expansion and the Public forums being jointly convened by the Board of Health and the Parks and Environment Committee. We thank you for creating this useful public dialogue, and for validating the concerns of our community in the face of this development project.

Mount Dennis Community Association is in favour of seeing public transit built in a way that meets the needs of the region without putting our local residents at risk. This is why we strongly endorse electrification and support the Medical Officer of Health and the efforts of the Public Health Department to ensure the Georgetown South GO service expansion and Air Rail Link are built right, from the start.

In our perspective the first forum was an overwhelming success. It provided the public with important information on a project which has to date been handled as a public relations exercise rather than a public planning initiative for vital transit infrastructure. We congratulate Metrolinx for agreeing to participate, and for their panel representative Gary McNeil for his candor.

In the hope that the results of the forum and today's meeting will be forwarded to the Board of Metrolinx and the Minister of Transportation in advance of the May 19th Metrolinx Board meeting, MDCA would like to make the following comments.

The report on the Forum before you summarizes the four main points of the presentation made by Metrolinx Senior Vice President of GO Operations, Gary McNeil. It is very informative, and begs response:

'No Decision Point': We noted that in stating that there is no decision point for changing technology, Mr McNeil has changed his public position from what he expressed during the media conference the day the Electrification Study Project was approved. Last November, Mr. McNeil stated publicly that the Georgetown South rail corridor improvements were technology neutral and could accommodate electrification, but added that the decision to electrify, should it happen, would be based on the Electrification Study recommendations, the Metrolinx Board's decision, the Minister of Transportations approval and the allocation of necessary funding. We understand that at very least a Transit EA amendment will be required as well.

So long as there is no decision point clearly identified as Mr. McNeil now indicates, there will be no decision on electrification. We call for the Board of Health to request that the Metrolinx Board determine a critical path for electrification of the Georgetown South corridor in time for the Pan Am Games, and to clearly identify the necessary decision points for making this happen.

'Emissions Less Than Predicted': We understand there are several reasons why such a statement could be offered by Mr. McNeil. First is the numbers game. Mr. McNeil stated that the numbers used by Metrolinx for the Environmental Approval were theoretical planning figures, and that planning for actual operations does not contemplate the high volumes of regional commuter trains within the initial 10 years that would reach the

corridor's newly-rated capacity. This, however, does not preclude running as many trains as approvals permit. If the capacity is not required, why is the Province spending its limited transit dollars on building it? Will the approvals be adjusted as the numbers were inaccurate and there is no operational agreement with the planning models?

But most importantly to the people of Mount Dennis is possibility that the emissions levels could be found acceptable because of what is not being measured by the air quality monitoring studies. There is still no plan to measure the micro-fine particulate emissions that are known to be the most dangerous elements of diesel exhaust. If the Minister of the Environment is prepared to agree with Metrolinx that Ontario's air quality standards are no longer the highest standards to be used, we request the Board of Health to advocate for state of the art health science to be the standard and insist that the air quality monitoring study include micro-fine particulate.

'Reductions in Transportation Emissions unlikely': We would like to thank Mr. McNeil and Professor Kennedy for highlighting the flaw in the Georgetown South Service Expansion project rationale and agreeing with Clean Train Coalition's analysis. Not only will regional growth mean that additional commuter rail will at best moderate the rate of increase in traffic congestion, but GO's operating plan has now lowered the numbers of commuter trains, meaning less people out of cars than projected by the planning demand models which generated the flawed claims in the first place.

Fundamentally, the prospect of a choosing a diesel based train technology, a recognized source of carbon and ghg emissions, is contrary to ensuring Toronto's air quality. Furthermore, expanding a diesel train service will be adding a new source of local pollution with concentrated impacts adding health risk to the 300,000 residents who live immediately along the Georgetown rail corridor. Upgrading a commuter rail network using existing electric train technology is cost affective according to CalTrain, and achieves the transit goals without damaging air quality or risking public health.

'Commuter Rail is not a local service': This position sounds like more like a defense of bureaucratic silo boundaries than a policy for integrated regional transit services. Many people across north-west Toronto would use these services to get to work at the 50,000 jobs of the Pearson eco-Industrial District, as an example, if there was better access for communities along the line. Few stops are also a disincentive for Brampton residents who should not have to take the train to Weston to get to the Airport nor to transfer at Union Station in order to commute to Liberty Village or the CNE.

Making connections at Woodbine, Lawrence, Eglinton, St Clair, Dundas West, Bloor, Liberty and Strachan would ensure that there is a seamless transit system that does not require users to significantly bypass their logical TTC access points in order to get on and off the train. More access means more riders, more riders means less private car travel and more passenger revenue. It also means more equity of service for lower income people across the region. The Board of Health should request that Metrolinx expedite station planning at Woodbine and Eglinton, and request a review of future stations for the Air Rail Link so that the public investment going into infrastructure gets maximum return on transit ridership.

As this deputation is part of the continuing dialogue between community stakeholders, the City and Metrolinx, I would like to refer back to three earlier City decisions on this project.

- **In May of 2009, Toronto City Council unanimously called for acceleration of the electrification of the GO Transit 10 Year Plan, particularly the Georgetown Corridor.**

Further discussion with Metrolinx indicates that the ARL is being handled separately from GO by the Province through the Ministry of Infrastructure. This separation between Metrolinx, GO's operating planning and the future Union to Pearson Service provider creates a challenge to expediting electrification.

Mount Dennis Community Association requests the Board of Health and City of Toronto to call upon SNC Lavalin and the Province to engage in priority planning for the electrification of the Air Rail Link so that it can be operational by the Pan Am Games.

- **In November of 2009, Toronto Board of Health called on Metrolinx to defer purchase of diesel equipment until studies completed**

At the Public Forum, Gary McNeil identified that Air Monitoring Stations are being built along the corridor and stated they plan to do evaluations during 2011 once the electrification study is completed.

Our concern that these diesel tests do not in any way delay the potential purchase of electric train equipment or infrastructure once Electrification Study reports in December, as it is already known that electric trains surpass tier 4 environmental standards.

ALSO OF NOTE: The Board of Health has not requested that SNC Lavalin or the Province defer purchase of diesel equipment for the Air Rail Link.

- **In consideration of the same report by the Medical Officer of Health in November 2009, Toronto Board of Health called for strengthening of the Electrification Study**

Has there been any response by Metrolinx or the Electrification Study Team to the Medical Officer of Health on the proposed changes? We fear that this has not taken place.

Mount Dennis Community Association believes the study can be strengthened in additional ways. The Georgetown South line was recognized as an electrification priority in the Big Move due to the expected growth in usage and the need to relieve growth pressures on major highway congestion in North west GTA. However, the Electrification Study was scoped as system-wide, and did not give any relative importance of making connections between Canada's busiest rail station and its busiest airport.

We consider it imperative for the Electrification Study to have an action plan ready for implementation on the electrification of the Air Rail Link as part of the study's products. A first task in this area of work should be developing a critical path to electrify the ARL by Pan Am Games as a demonstration project that can move into fast track implementation upon reporting of the Electrification study.

To date the Electrification Study has held one stakeholder consultation and staff identified that they intend to have three more sessions in June, the end of summer and in the fall. So far the study project has used half of its allocated research time without having updated any of the public information on the website nor reporting written material back to stakeholders. Timely reporting of the proceedings of consultation sessions back to the participants is needed to re-build public trust and enable stakeholder participation in this project. Reinstatement of a Community Advisory Council by the Board of Metrolinx is also recommended.

MDCA requests that the Board of Health actively pursue these matters to ensure the strengthening of the Electrification Study and increase the likelihood of its implementation getting accelerated.

Thank you for this opportunity to address these issues.

Rick Ciccarelli,
Mount Dennis Community Association