

# PATRICIA SINCLAIR

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August 2, 2014

Planning and Growth Management Committee Members  
Toronto City Council

Dear Sir/Madam,

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**RE: Agenda Item PG 35.23 -- TTC'S MCNICOLL BUS GARAGE PROPOSAL**

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TTC has expressed the need for a new full service, round the clock, 250 bus garage<sup>1</sup> with 500 support workers. While we are all for improved transit service, the proposed location, within the Milliken Employment District adjacent to high-quality neighbourhoods, is the wrong location for a variety of compelling planning and growth management reasons.

**1. The proposal runs contrary to the objectives of Provincial and City official plans**

A garage in the proposed location does not comply with the *Ontario Places to Grow Act* nor *City of Toronto's Official Plan* which encourages intensification... adjacent to rapid transit stations [Milliken GO Station]; growth to be directed to... Employment Centres;

*requires municipalities to develop and implement policies to phase in and achieve intensification, including intensification corridors and major transit station areas as a key focus for development.*

**2. The plan doesn't take into account plans for GO – the real downtown relief line**

Plans are in progress to double track the Stouffville Corridor GO line<sup>2</sup> adjacent to the proposed site to provide 30-minute all-day service. Metrolinx has not yet assessed their land requirements for future electrification. Regardless, increased service on this line will occur as an essential part of gridlock relief in the GTA.

And, unless we want to be “Taken for a Ride”<sup>3</sup>, we need to use land development to help pay for it.

Toronto City Planning's recent approval of a postage stamp sized ‘Regeneration’ zone around Milliken GO Station is not large enough to provide value; increased gridlock is not a benefit of regeneration.

The regeneration zone needs to expand to include all lands in the Milliken Employment District in order to achieve any real benefits of regeneration.

*Piecemeal planning is a narrow vision of urban development that takes no account of future requirements. It affects the economic attractiveness of this area and contradicts sustainable development.*

### 3. Current Zoning is incompatible, inappropriate and inconsistent

While we await the next Great Industrial Age, our employment lands sit vacant. The Milliken Employment Lands have the 3<sup>rd</sup> largest percentage of undeveloped land of all the City's Employment Districts<sup>4</sup>. Industry within the city is leaving for a variety of reasons: land value, gridlock, high commercial and industrial tax rates, operating costs (i.e. electricity), encroachment.

The GTA has moved away from factories to offices<sup>5</sup>. Statistics Canada reports how Ontario's economy has drastically shifted away from manufacturing while being replaced by Finance<sup>6</sup>.

Changing the zoning and addressing property tax inequities<sup>7</sup> will encourage new employment creation that is compatible with the neighbourhood, i.e. BMO Institute for Learning.

At present, we await the Minister of Municipal Affairs & Housing's decision on area landowners' objections to the Five Year Municipal Comprehensive Review. They rightly argue that Heavy Industrial Zoning is inconsistent with site and area specific policies and supports inappropriate visions for future development.

*The proposed bus garage rather than supporting the prime economic function of an Employment Area<sup>8</sup> detracts from it and should not be permitted.*

### 4. Compatibility with Policy 104

Policy 104 (site and area specific) permits the development of business and trade schools, long term care facilities... It applies to the east side of Kennedy, west side of Midland, both sides of McNicoll and all lands bounded by Passmore, Kennedy-Steeles-Midland. It was recently upheld at the OMB [Vintage Garden-VP/McNicoll<sup>9</sup>].

This policy has resulted in the development of Mon Sheong Long Term Care and seniors' apartments, Scarborough Chinese Baptist Church, TransCare, McNicoll Manor, Carefirst Seniors, Yee Hong ... among others.

And, with the additional attraction of extensive transit service, we now have thousands of seniors happily and safely living and/or receiving services in close proximity to the proposed site.

Today, no 'heavy industrial' business would consider buying or building here due to the proximity to these sensitive land uses and nearby residential development. It is not desirable to see this occur and an environmental assessment is unlikely to pass.

It is common knowledge that our **population is aging: currently 14% of Toronto's population is over 65 years and that percentage will rise to 25% by 2050**. We need more nursing homes, seniors' accommodation and support services. In addition to serving seniors, these facilities provide a wide variety of employment, as do their complementary sectors (e.g. medical and recreation facilities), all of which are compatible with the existing neighbourhood.

*The quality of life and well-being of seniors continues to be a major focus in Canada.*

## 5. The site is prime Real Estate

Why situate an industrial garage on expensive land in a desirable location when better<sup>10</sup> and cheaper locations – for example the CP Rail Yard at Markham Road - are available close by?

The TTC is already facing a \$101 million funding shortfall<sup>11</sup>. It is imperative therefore that the TTC achieve their objectives in the most cost effective manner. Instead of sterilizing a major piece of property – and foregoing tax revenue forever on the land – a better solution would be to improve an existing facility, perhaps deck over an existing yard (Malvern or Eglinton). (Reference: Los Angeles Division 13 Bus Garage<sup>12</sup>.)

Not only would we avoid incurring land costs, but by rezoning and selling land within the proposed site we would realize some of the money necessary for the new garage.

To sum up, we could get the job done for less cost, greater utility and no waste of prime land if we:

- co-develop the garage with the new Scarborough Subway;
- move it to another city owned location;
- buy/build alongside the huge CP Rail Yard<sup>13</sup> facility;
- remodel an existing garage.

## 6. Traffic issues

As the TTC notes, McNicoll/Kennedy and McNicoll/Midland have “poor overall intersection operations” generally due to traffic growth in the area. Eleven percent of Scarberians work in Markham and Kennedy is a major arterial roadway to/from the 401. McNicoll serves to access Highway 404 and as congestion relief for Steeles and Finch Avenues. Local traffic is heading to Milliken GO Station, high school, community centre, seniors facilities, retail....

Although TTC Bus Frequency is outside traditional ‘Rush Hour’, Mon Sheong management have pointed out the Bus Distribution Inbound/Outbound coincides with workers serving the seniors’ facilities. This applies to all the seniors’ facilities in the area.

*250 buses sitting in congestion adds to operating costs which at some point impacts fares.*

## 7. Increased Accident Potential

The intersection of Kennedy/Steeles is the 13th most dangerous for collisions in Canada<sup>14</sup>. Preceded by Kennedy/Sheppard (the worst in Toronto), Kennedy/Finch must be recognized as a traffic oasis and obviously not a good spot to amalgamate 125 buses with local traffic.

We have a large concentration of senior and student drivers. One of Canada’s top schools, Mary Ward Catholic Secondary School, serving 1300 students, sits across the road from the proposed site. Introducing a large volume of buses into this mix is a sure way to increase TTC’s accident rate which, according to recently released figures, is already deplorably high at 1.43 accidents per bus per year<sup>15</sup>.

The proposed garage would be situated beside a level crossing.

There are actually four level crossings in this corridor: Steeles, Passmore, McNicoll, and Finch. All are located where TTC will merge the buses into the local traffic stream via a new 'to be built' roadway - Redlea. Some of these buses will be the significantly longer articulated buses (6.1 meters longer in length than current standard size bus).

The risk of train/bus/automobile collisions in busy rail corridors is high.<sup>16</sup> Last year in Ontario there were 41 rail crossing accidents with 15 fatalities and 15 serious injuries.

TTCs and GO Transit's worst accident occurred at the then level crossing of St. Clair/Midland killing nine people and injuring twenty passengers when a TTC bus collided with the GO train.<sup>17</sup>

Added to all this, TTC site plans show the above ground fuel storage alongside the track where a derailment at the level crossing places the train and TTC's garage fuel storage/body shop in direct contact.<sup>18</sup>

*There are 5 components to an Emergency Response Plan: Prevention, Mitigation, Preparedness, Response, and Recovery. With 1,000 seniors as next door neighbours, clearly the 'Plan' should be to move to another location.*

## **8. Environment I - Inherent Dangers and Disruptive Impact to the Community**

- Health: noise levels<sup>19</sup>, vibrations<sup>20</sup>, emissions/fumes<sup>21</sup>, air quality<sup>22</sup>;
- Biohazards: fuel storage<sup>23</sup>, storage and disposal of service materials<sup>24</sup>, fire<sup>25</sup>/explosion risk<sup>26</sup>;
- Decreased property values<sup>27</sup>.

Biodiesel<sup>28</sup> or Diesel<sup>29</sup>: Initial information stated that TTC would be purchasing new biodiesel<sup>30</sup> buses and they would operate out of this garage. However, biodiesel<sup>31</sup> comes with a variety of problems.

The effects of diesel are well documented. Diesel exhaust contains significant levels of small particles which pose serious health risks as they lodge themselves in the lungs causing lung damage and premature death. "Diesel particulate matter is likely to cause cancer in humans and cause other acute and chronic health effects."<sup>32</sup> (They are in the same category as asbestos and arsenic, which are banned.) The people most at risk are elderly and children.

Quite simply, the proposed garage presents a broad range of unnecessary risks to the community.

*Now would be a good time to explore alternative clean transportation<sup>33</sup>.*

## **9. Environment II – Natural Hazard Limit and Vimy Oaks**

A portion of the proposed site is located in the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority (TRCA) regulated area and there is a "Natural Hazard Limit" in effect. The creek which runs through the property is part of the Highland Creek Watershed and although a permit can be requested to close the creek headwaters the water must still be able to reach the culvert. Approval from TRCA must be sought before TTC can build and designing around the natural hazards will be problematic and may not allow enough land space for TTCs purposes.

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Why risk water contamination from bus garage related hazardous materials from leaks or accidents when better sites are available?

*Why is heavy industrial zoning even allowed on TRCA regulated areas?*

A Canadian soldier who fought at Vimy Ridge planted acorns he had gathered from the battlefield at his farm on Kennedy. He named the farm “**The Vimy Oaks**”<sup>34</sup>. Some of the oaks still stand and later this year plans are in place to gather up 150 acorns to take back to the Commonwealth War Graves site in Vimy, France because two world wars devastated their oaks.

*The activities of a large garage and bus traffic place these trees at risk.*

### **10. Proximity to Markham**

Markham is the third largest employment centre in the GTA. The potential to partner with and accommodate the overspill of Markham’s success is being hindered by inappropriate zoning.

The garage, if built, would impede our ability to grow this area after the necessary rezoning.

*The lost opportunity costs are high.*

### **In Conclusion**

There is a clear choice to be made here.

Either we face the facts and - through appropriate zoning, planning and economic development - work to create viable employment growth, bring much needed economic prosperity and provide a supportive and pleasant environment for our seniors and the community at large.

Or, we proceed with this costly proposal which has no planning merit, and will be a barrier to quality of life, good growth, economic development and intensification.

**Is this the way to build a brighter, stronger tomorrow?**

Yours truly,

Patricia Sinclair

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- <sup>8</sup> Reference Section 4.6.1 of the Official Plan: Employment Areas are generally defined as places of business and economic activity, and that the permitted uses include offices, manufacturing, warehousing, distribution, research and development facilities, utilities, media facilities, parks, hotels, ancillary retail outlets, and, restaurants and small scale stores and services that serve area businesses and workers.
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