



ADVOCATING FOR SUSTAINABLE PUBLIC
AND FREIGHT TRANSPORTATION
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May 11, 2015

**Re: PW4.1 - Gardiner Expressway and Lake Shore Boulevard East Reconfiguration
Environmental Assessment (EA) and Integrated Urban Design Study - Updated
Evaluation of Alternatives**

To the Chair and Members of the Public Works and Infrastructure Committee:

Summary

Transport Action Ontario highlighted the following staff conclusions in its 2014 submission, and they still apply in 2015:

- "Remove" is the lowest NPV cost alternative, freeing up hundreds of millions of dollars for other infrastructure such as transit. "Remove" also brings in the greatest revenue from land sales.
- The Gardiner East only affects 3% of downtown-bound traffic, and is therefore manageable.

In addition, Transport Action Ontario highlights the following observations:

- The "Hybrid" option has no appreciable difference with the "Maintain" option, other than relocated access ramps from Logan to Cherry. Transport Action Ontario urges Committee and Council to reject this option.
- In the "Remove" option, drivers that take the Gardiner to downtown destinations will experience a travel time increase of two to three minutes, and five minutes from The Beaches. In contrast to media reports, the work by the University of Toronto Transportation Research Institute (UTTRI) for the Gardiner Coalition came to a nearly identical conclusion as the work done by staff for the City. The UTTRI work suggests the increased travel times may only apply to westbound trips to downtown while eastbound trips to downtown would see marginal reductions in travel time, reducing eastbound congestion, which affects more drivers than those making trips westbound.
- The Regional Express Rail and SmartTrack proposals were too recent to have been included in any of the modeling work, but would have a positive impact on travel times by car into downtown.

Background

Transport Action Ontario, formerly Transport 2000 Ontario, is a non-government organization active for 39 years in the advocacy of economically, socially, and environmentally sustainable passenger and freight transportation. Transport Action Ontario has been participating as a member of the Stakeholder Advisory Committee in the consultations for the Gardiner East EA. Transport Action Ontario is pleased to have participated in this process and thanks Committee and Council for the opportunity to participate along with their consideration of this correspondence.

Rejection of the "Hybrid" Option

Last year, Transport Action Ontario endorsed the staff report that recommended the "Remove" option. For 2015, Transport Action Ontario sees no appreciable difference between the "Maintain" option and the "Hybrid" option. One of the objectives for the original "Hybrid" option put forward in 2014 was to open up access on the west side of the Lever Site, which was found to be infeasible. The "Hybrid" option is now effectively identical to the "Maintain" option save for the relocation of access ramps from Logan to Cherry. Since staff rejected the "Maintain" option, and still reject the "Maintain" option in 2015, Transport Action Ontario urges Committee and Council to reject the "Hybrid" option as well: The "Maintain" and "Hybrid" options have most of the same advantages and disadvantages, especially on cost, for which "Hybrid" is actually even more disadvantageous than "Maintain."

Observations from the University of Toronto Model for the Gardiner Coalition

Transport Action Ontario has also examined the study by the University of Toronto Transportation Research Institute (UTTRI) on behalf of The Gardiner Coalition. Transport Action Ontario would like to thank UTTRI for providing excellent due diligence and highlights that the UTTRI work in its "Option One" model came to conclusions nearly identical to what City of Toronto and Waterfront Toronto staff currently have before Committee. The "Option Two" model by UTTRI is likely comparable to the 2014 "Remove" option, while "Option One" is likely comparable to the 2015 "Remove" option. Previous media reports of the increase in travel time being ten minutes was only applicable to "Option Two," or the 2014 "Remove" option. Of particular note is that eastbound trips in the UTTRI's work in its "Option One" model with the Gardiner East removed actually were faster, by up to one-and-a-half minutes faster. The eastbound direction, used by 4% of morning downtown trips, is more heavily used than the westbound direction, used by 3% of morning downtown trips.

Absence of Regional Express Rail and SmartTrack

All studies done for the Gardiner East did not include the recently announced and funded Regional Express Rail project. This development was too recent to have had an opportunity to be included, but it is a big deal for the region's transportation network. Regional Express Rail provides the foundation required for the Mount Dennis to Unionville portion of the SmartTrack proposal, which indirectly acts as a partial funding for SmartTrack. Both of these projects involve the use of Electric Multiple-Unit vehicles on the GO Transit corridors in the region, for which Transport Action Ontario has long been advocating. Both the Lakeshore corridor and SmartTrack (Kitchener and Stouffville GO corridors) have the potential to intercept traffic from the Gardiner. Lakeshore East and Stouffville corridors would be able to intercept traffic from the 401 before it reaches the DVP. The Lakeshore West corridor would be able to intercept traffic from the QEW before reaching the Gardiner West, while the Kitchener corridor would be able to intercept traffic from the 427 (possibly via other expressways) before reaching the Gardiner West. This would have a positive impact on travel times by car into downtown.

Dedicating Scarce Funds

In terms of the economics, the "Remove" option is unquestionably the most fiscally conservative option. This is important because the undertaking is going to be on Toronto's shoulders alone, without assistance from senior levels of government. It will be on Toronto's shoulders despite a

significant portion of the users along this infrastructure not being Toronto citizens, but citizens of surrounding municipalities that are not paying for this infrastructure. As a municipality with limited powers compared to senior levels of government, Toronto is inadequately equipped to look after this caliber of infrastructure. The cost of the "Remove" option not only frees up hundreds of millions of dollars in lifecycle maintenance for application to other infrastructure across the city, like transit, but the "Remove" option also brings in revenues from land sales as the Gardiner East footprint is partially used for redevelopment, substantially offsetting the net present value capital costs by at least one-third. These land sale revenues are much greater than what the "Hybrid" option offers. For fiscal conservatives looking to keep capital and operating budgets under control, the "Remove" option shines.

Conclusion

Is the City able to justify spending half-a-billion dollars more over 100 years to save a very small percentage of people 2-3 minutes while at the same time, based on the UTTRI work, denying a comparable percentage of people up to 1.5 minutes of travel time savings? Transport Action Ontario does not see how a half-billion dollars can be justified on this.

Can Toronto afford to forfeit the urban design, economic, and environmental benefits that come with removing the Gardiner East? Transport Action Ontario believes these benefits easily outweigh those of the marginal travel time impacts of maintaining the Gardiner East, and that the City would be worse off with its forfeiture of the "Remove" option's benefits.

Transport Action Ontario urges Committee and Council to advance the "Remove" option as the preferred alternative for completing the Gardiner East EA.

Sincerely,

Karl Junkin
Gardiner East Stakeholder Advisory Committee Representative
Transport Action Ontario