

June 8th, 2021

Sent via E-mail

Derrick Toigo
Executive Director, Transit Expansion Division
Toronto City Hall
24th fl. E., 100 Queen St. W.
Toronto, ON M5H 2N2

Dear Derrick,

Thank you for your ongoing support and close collaboration in advancing Metrolinx transit expansion projects across the City of Toronto. The purpose of this letter is to respond to your letter dated May 13, 2021 which transmitted City Council's decisions of April 7th and 8th, 2021, where Toronto City Council adopted the recommendations in agenda item MM31.12: [Ontario Line - Getting Transit Right: Federal Environmental Assessment and Hybrid Option Review - moved by Councillor Paula Fletcher, seconded by Councilor Joe Cressy](#) with amendments, we provide the following information.

Request for Federal Environmental Assessment

In response to the request made by Save Jimmie Simpson! and the Lakeshore East Community Advisory Committee in March 2021 to conduct an environmental assessment of the above-ground section of Ontario Line (the "Project") through Riverside and Leslieville, on April 16, 2021, the Honourable Jonathan Wilkinson, Federal Minister of Environment and Climate Change (the "Minister"), announced the Project does not warrant designation under the *Impact Assessment Act*. The Minister's response is available at the [Impact Assessment Agency of Canada website, Reference Number 81350](#).

In making his decision, the Minister considered the potential for the Project to cause adverse effects within federal jurisdiction, adverse direct or incidental effects, public concern related to these effects, as well as adverse impacts on the Aboriginal and Treaty rights of the Indigenous peoples of Canada. The Minister also considered the [analysis](#) of the Impact Assessment Agency of Canada.

The Minister's decision not to designate the Project under the Impact Assessment Act confirms the validity of the provincial environmental assessment process. Metrolinx remains committed to complying with all applicable environmental review and permitting requirements and will continue to work with community members and organizations, including the Lakeshore East Community Advisory Committee and Save Jimmie Simpson! to address concerns and questions.

Feasibility of the Community Proposed 'Hybrid Ontario Line' option

Per directive 2b in MM31.12, City Council requested Metrolinx to review the feasibility of the proposed hybrid Ontario Line developed by the local community. This option proposes a route from the Don River to Gerrard Street, which maintains the at-grade station at East Harbour and



creates a portal to underground the line immediately to the east of the station through the South of Eastern employment area and moves the Ontario Line station to Queen and Carlaw in the vicinity of Leslieville.

Metrolinx has explored similar options, specifically the Relief Line South, through the [Initial Business Case](#) and decided that an underground alignment in this area would not be advantageous to the reference alignment that utilizes the existing rail corridor. The considerations noted below, were shared with City Council, and communicated to community members through various meetings and town hall discussions.

City Councillor Paula Fletcher had also requested Metrolinx to look at underground options once trains exit north from East Harbour Station. In February 2021, Metrolinx met with City Councillor Fletcher and discussed the Underground Alignment Analysis of those options. The analysis which was shared with the City provides insight into the options Metrolinx considered. Again, none of those options proved to be better than the reference alignment. The hybrid option has many of the same disbenefits as the alternative options already studied and will not perform better than the reference alignment.

The decision not to pursue a fully underground or partial underground alignment is based on the following main reasons:

- **Improves customer experience** - surface stations in this area will provide customers with a much better experience because customers will save significantly more time in their journeys than they would if these were deep underground stations. Building these stations above ground avoids long connection times while providing customers with a fully accessible experience that is shielded from the elements and encourages more transfers to the Ontario Line from GO services and the crowded streetcar network
- **Results in fewer community impacts** - running Ontario Line trains within the joint rail corridor will result in fewer impacts to the Riverside and Leslieville communities compared to tunneling alternatives. Tunneling and excavating is complex, time-consuming and disruptive, and comes with a large construction footprint. Coordinating Ontario Line and GO expansion plans within the existing joint rail corridor that Metrolinx already owns streamlines construction work that would have otherwise been spread out into separate areas. We will also use this as an opportunity to shield this corridor from the local neighbourhoods by significantly reducing the sounds from and visibility of the railway, which already accommodates GO and VIA rail services. We will do this by adding well-designed and effective sound barriers, plantings, and new trees. Thanks to new noise walls and the use of quiet, electric-powered trains the Ontario Line will use, noise levels are expected to be lower in most areas along the rail corridor.
- **Minimizes property impacts** - by containing our work to the existing rail corridor, we are significantly reducing the amount of property we need to accommodate near-term construction and long-term operations, not to mention avoiding considerable impacts to local traffic. This is especially impactful when considering the major excavations and adjoining construction laydown areas needed to build stations as well as the



emergency exit buildings that would have been needed between them. Since both Ontario Line and GO expansion upgrades will fit almost entirely within the property boundaries of the rail corridor, no neighbouring parks will be lost and important community destinations like the Jimmie Simpson Recreation Centre will stay in operation during construction and beyond.

Metrolinx looks forward to continued collaboration with our partners at the City, as both agencies advance important transit expansion projects which will transform the communities where we live, work and play.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading 'Karla Avis-Birch'.

Karla Avis Birch, Chief Planning Officer, Metrolinx

Cc: Tracey Cook, Deputy City Manager, Transit Expansion Division, City of Toronto
Duncan Law, Head Sponsor - Subways, Metrolinx
Malcolm MacKay, Program Sponsor, Ontario Line, Metrolinx
Daniel Cicero, Sponsor, Ontario Line, Metrolinx