

# MOSS PARK COALITION

March 20, 2023

To: TEYCC Sub-committee on Metrolinx's Ontario Line Construction

Dear Councillors Malik, Moise and Fletcher,

Re: Item TM1.2, Update on Metrolinx's Ontario Line Construction

I am writing as a member of the Moss Park Coalition, a community advocacy group that has been involved in the public process for Metrolinx's Moss Park Station from the beginning and therefore have a detailed knowledge of the agency's engagement activity for this station. From the outset, the Moss Park Coalition has aimed to bring forward positive ideas to create beneficial solutions for Moss Park. I am also on the Steering Committee of the BOLD (Build Ontario Line Differently) Coalition.

I was also selected to join the Moss Park Local Advisory Committee on the redesign of Moss Park and the community centre concurrent to the Metrolinx construction. As such I have a unique insight into this city plan as it is being developed.

The Moss Park Coalition is grateful to Toronto-East York Community Council for creating this sub-committee as a forum for discussion and carrying forward recommendations for Ontario Line construction.

Since March of 2021, the Moss Park Coalition has made numerous efforts to engage with Metrolinx and key stakeholders involved in the Ontario Line Moss Park station project and to share important community priorities that were identified through our community outreach and engagement. Our concerns were most recently outlined in a January 13 letter to Metrolinx, as a result of which we have set up a meeting with the Coalition and Metrolinx on March 23, 2023

Despite our ongoing efforts to ensure the community's priorities are heard, Metrolinx has disregarded these important community concerns and continues forward with its project plans, including the recent removal of dozens of mature trees in Moss Park. While we support good transportation infrastructure, it must also come with equitable transportation planning that includes involvement and transparency with the communities that will be severely impacted by the construction activity and what flows from it for many years.

The removal of trees and the planned use of the park for a construction staging area were not supported by Moss park residents and were brought up numerous times as concerns to Metrolinx community engagement staff. We have no idea whether promises made to preserve some of the rare mature trunks were honoured despite requests by the coalition for confirmation.

**Transit Impacts to Local Park and Neighbourhood**

The Moss Park Coalition is concerned about the significant short and long term impacts that the Ontario Line project will have on Moss Park park and Moss Park area. We have relayed these concerns numerous times to Metrolinx and all levels of government who have invested significant public taxpayers money in this project.

To date, Metrolinx has not provided transparency on its community engagement in Moss Park nor any assessment on short or long term impacts of the project. As an example, several requests for an arborist and naturalist report about the removal of the Moss Park trees have gone unanswered.

A preliminary survey launched by the Moss Park Coalition shows 71% of residents were not aware of any consultation or engagement opportunities for the Ontario Line Moss Park Station. Almost all who were aware knew of a table set up by Metrolinx at the Moss Park Market, but not one knew that the destruction of the trees was a part of the plan.

### **Moss Park Community Liaison Committee**

In December 2021 Metrolinx convened the Moss Park Station Community Liaison Committee. This came after significant community advocacy efforts and a [request](#) by Toronto City Council for Metrolinx to establish a working group to identify and co-develop solutions on many community focused issues as well as long-term and short-term impacts on the community.

As part of the Terms of Reference (see attached) for the Community Liaison Committee, some of the areas that committee were to focus on include:

- *Identifying local priorities and perspectives from the community and working together to identify solutions that are within the projects' purview.*
- *Working cooperatively to inform and review efforts by the project team and Metrolinx to mitigate the short and long-term impacts of works and activities.*

At the first meeting of the Community Liaison Committee, many issues of community impacts and concerns were brought forward by the Moss Park Coalition representatives. To date, no minutes of the meeting have been shared with the committee and there has been no transparency or process established to work with this committee on identifying and co-developing solutions to the impacts in Moss Park area.

Since the launch of the Community Liaison Committee in December 2021, we have only had two meetings. During critical project planning stages, between March and November 2022, the Moss Park Community Liaison Committee did not meet even though Metrolinx committed in the terms of reference that “*The CLC will meet approximately bi-monthly/or quarterly until construction starts when the frequency will likely increase to monthly*”.

The last meeting held on November 4, 2022 was for a site tour where only design-related issues were discussed. Also, the committee was informed at the site tour that Metrolinx has made an arbitrary decision to change the group name from a “Community Liaison Committee” to “Construction Liaison Committee” which leaves us even more concerned that many of the community issues raised in this forum will continue to be ignored. We request an immediate reconvening of the Community Liaison Committee to further discuss important community priorities and the promised Community Benefits Agreement.

### **Ontario Line - Community Benefits Agreement**

As part of the May 2021 funding announcement, it was promised that all new Metrolinx transit projects including the Ontario Line would include a Community Benefits Agreement. However, no details on a Community Benefits Agreement for the Ontario Line project has been shared with the community.

The Moss Park Coalition has been diligently considering how the Ontario Line construction can benefit the community. One of our inquiries has been the use of Moss Park as the site for a new community centre. As a member of the Local Advisory Group I have seen first hand how difficult it is to fit all of the programming desired by the community into the park. For example the proposed off leash dog park is not following city guidelines for its size due to space limitations.

We are looking at the redevelopment of the Park as a whole, not just an Ontario Line project. As such we propose that this Sub Committee consider several needs of the community, including the construction of more affordable housing above a new community centre . We have met with our Councillor, Councillor Moise, who sits on this subcommittee, and proposed an alternative location for the new centre to be located just east of Sherbourne Street on the current largely unused parking lot of the Moss Park Apartments. It may seem too complicated to mix projects, but if we don’t think and act holistically, we risk designing and building projects that provide much less benefit to the community than could be possible.

Below and in my deputation I will comment on: specific requests for this Sub Committee to consider. This is an important moment for the community, our elected officials at every level, and City staff to come together with Metrolinx’s decision-makers to find a mutually agreeable way forward that fulfills Metrolinx’s promise and results in an overall improvement to the public realm at Moss Park.

Sincerely,

Diane Devenyi  
Moss Park Resident

## Recommendations:

1. Invite the Ward 13 MP (Marci Ien) to attend meetings of this committee and provide specific requirements to Metrolinx for meeting its obligations for community involvement and CDP benefits (after consultation with the Moss Park community).
2. Direct Toronto staff to oversee the Pausing of the current Moss Park Redevelopment plan until all levels of stakeholders come together to consider the redevelopment holistically. This includes considering moving the new community centre to the Moss Park apartment land (owned by TCHC) and building affordable housing above it.

## Benefits of such a park design modification include:

- a. Maintains 100% of the remaining green space in the park during the Ontario Line construction. The current plan is to remove access to the community garden, playground, space for dogs to play **plus** the current community centre for the time of the construction. This loss of park and community centre access will last for more than 5 years as the community is swelling in size (and more park space is needed).
- b. Provides an opportunity to build affordable housing in the area that has been unsuccessful by the city due to loss of opportunities to private developers.
- c. Allows for future development of replacement Moss Park apartments without displacing current residents as they can move into new buildings as they are built.
- d. Saves at least 20 mature trees north of the current community centre that are intended to be killed for the new footprint. **MOSS PARK CANNOT AFFORD TO LOSE ANY MORE MATURE TREES** after what Metrolinx has done!
- e. Increases the size of the park for desired programming that is not available in the current plan. This additional land is very much needed for park land, not a community centre.
- f. Moves additional construction traffic, noise out of Moss Park park area, which is already going to be a traffic nightmare for the 8 years of the Moss Park station construction.

3. Require Metrolinx to provide arborist reports to determine the ages and sizes of the trees that were removed in Moss Park. If such information is not available in the arborist report, direct Metrolinx to gather accurate information about the diameter of every tree that was removed and justify its replacement plan in accordance with current tree replacement standards, or more. Direct city staff to create a compliance plan with Metrolinx for the replacement, or within the city if the obligation has been transferred.

4. Require Metrolinx to provide proof of its compliance with the tree removal permit to safely store the rare tree trunks of the removed trees; provide evidence of the trees with photographs that show how many logs were kept, where stored, photo of storage, access so that community members can begin to consider the potential for creative uses of the logs.

5. Require Metrolinx to provide an inventory of buildings of historic significance adjacent to Moss Park that are at risk of damage due to vibration from trucks and construction activities. Demonstrate the plan for monitoring as well as remediation plans should damage occur. What strategies is the Transit Expansion Division pursuing to ensure full compliance with standards for protection from vibration damage?
6. Direct staff to oversee the Metrolinx truck route plans that are currently untenable for Shuter Street, especially if there are trucks also for the new community centre construction. Liaise with Federal government to use Armoury road and parking to ease congestion on surrounding streets.
7. Invite Metrolinx CEO Phil Verster and one of the Ontario Line Sponsors to a meeting to discuss the full community benefit obligations for Moss Park.