



Economic and Community Development Committee
Toronto City Hall
100 Queen Street West
Toronto, ON M5H 2N2

EC15.2 - Economic Benefits of High-Frequency Rail - Toronto to Quebec City Corridor

September 16, 2024

The Toronto Community Benefits Network (TCBN) commends the proactive approach taken by the Economic and Community Development Committee and Councillor Shelley Carrol in recognizing the unique economic development opportunities presented by the construction of a High Frequency Rail (HFR) Corridor extending from Toronto to Quebec City.

The priorities identified around achieving greater connectivity between major cities, creating job opportunities, fostering a competitive travel market, and ensuring equitable access to services for all Canadians demonstrate a recognition of the community benefits that can be achieved through the HFR project.

While these are favorable recommendations, there are additional benefits that can still be obtained from this project. We believe the City can utilize the following existing initiatives to maximize the economic development opportunities from the HFR project.

City of Toronto's Community Benefits Framework (CBF)

The City can maximize the potential benefits from this project by integrating community benefit deliverables into project tenders and agreements to support the City's Community Benefits Framework. A Community Benefits Agreement for the HFR project should include commitments to targets such as a minimum 10% equity hiring for apprenticeship hours, 50% local and equity hiring for professional, administrative and technical positions, in addition to targets for social procurement for individuals and vendors from Indigenous, Black and historically marginalized communities and social enterprises.

Federal Community Employment Benefit (CEB)

The Government of Canada has already committed to providing sustained economic growth, building stronger, more inclusive communities, and creating meaningful jobs for more Canadians through the Community Employment Benefit (CEB). This program provides a framework for establishing project targets and reporting on results achieved by infrastructure projects receiving funding under the Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program.



Gordie Howe International Bridge CBA

Including community benefits in federal-led infrastructure projects is not new. The [Gordie Howe International Bridge Community Benefits Plan \(CBP\)](#) presents an ambitious framework for establishing project targets and reporting on results achieved by the Windsor-Detroit Bridge Authority (WDBA), a federal crown corporation. This plan represents a cross-sectoral effort among community organizations, the WDBA, contractors, labour and government to establish a Workforce Development & Participation Strategy and Neighbourhood Infrastructure Strategy as part of the Gordie Howe International Bridge project.

Community Benefits on Metrolinx Provincial Projects

In 2015, the TCBN negotiated the first Community Benefits Framework with Metrolinx, a historic agreement which established community benefits targets and commitments for its transit program including the Eglinton Crosstown LRT. Such targets included commitments to apprenticeship training, local and equity hiring, procurement opportunities for local businesses, diverse owned business and social enterprises in addition to a Community Benefits Working Group with public reporting on outcomes.

[Between April 2023 to March 2024](#), Metrolinx has reported on the following community benefits outcomes from their LRT and subway projects:

- 28.8% of new hires are self-identified women
- 74 new apprentices were hired on to the project
- 45.8% of new hires came from BIPOC communities
- \$35.7 million on procurement spending on local businesses and social enterprises
- 115 Construction Liaison Committee (CLC) meetings were held for communities to provide direct feedback on projects being constructed in their neighbourhoods
- 148 public realm projects were incorporated into projects. These include:
 - \$173.2 million in active transportation investments
 - \$127.7 million in local access and accessibility improvements.

The HFR corridor from Toronto to Quebec City is a transformative multi-year project that holds immense potential. Overall, we believe that Community Benefits Agreement (CBA) deliverables should be integrated into the HFR project tenders and agreements to ensure that economic and social benefits are widely and equitably distributed. By adopting a CBA the City can ensure that this project not only enhances Toronto's transportation infrastructure but also contributes to strengthening the local economies that will be impacted by this project.

We urge you to consider these initiatives and we welcome the opportunity to meet with the City staff who will lead this project and the team at VIA HFR to discuss how the HFR corridor can truly serve the needs of Canadians.



Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "R Powell", is positioned below the word "Sincerely,".

Rosemarie Powell
Executive Director
Toronto Community Benefits Network

About the Toronto Community Benefits Network

Since 2014, TCBNs advocacy and engagement in local communities across Toronto has led to formalized frameworks and agreements to ensure equitable development with commitments to community benefits, social procurement, neighbourhood improvements and targets for inclusive local economic pathways for Black, Indigenous and equity deserving groups into good jobs and opportunities including apprenticeships, professional, administrative and technical and long-term stable careers.

TCBNs programs involve collaborating with community and labour member organizations, as well as working with employers and contractors to create pathways into the construction industry for Indigenous, Black, and equity-deserving groups, particularly Black youth, women, newcomers, and contractors who have historically been underrepresented and faced significant barriers to opportunities in the sector. Our efforts have also included hosting events like the Green Build Career Fair and working with employers, unions, and contractors to promote green careers, skills development, and training opportunities in neighborhoods across Toronto.

The TCBN also hosts the Building Diversity Awards, the premier event celebrating diversity, equity, and inclusion in the construction sector across Canada.