

City Council

Notice of Motion

MM22.8	ACTION			Ward: All
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Trains Not Tunnels - Alternatives to the 401 Tunnel - by Councillor Mike Colle, seconded by Councillor Jennifer McKelvie

** Notice of this Motion has been given.*

** This Motion is subject to referral to the Infrastructure and Environment Committee. A two-thirds vote is required to waive referral.*

Recommendations

Councillor Mike Colle, seconded by Councillor Jennifer McKelvie, recommends that:

1. City Council request the Province of Ontario to consider the feasibility of a high speed rail system instead of the disruptive and costly tunneling under Highway 401 running through the middle of Toronto.
2. City Council request the Minister of Transportation to conduct a cost-benefit analysis for the construction of a high speed rail system that would potentially connect cities like Hamilton, Toronto, Kingston, and Montreal – increasing the frequency of trains and significantly reducing travel times for Ontarians and reducing congestion.
3. City Council direct the City Manager to estimate the possible costs of tunneling under the 401, using examples such as the “Big Dig” in Boston and the State Route 99 in Seattle to inform their calculation.

Summary

The Premier of Ontario is proposing to tunnel under Highway 401, a major transportation route used by hundreds of thousands of Ontarians and Torontonians every day as they commute to work, visit family, and partake in other day to day tasks or events. The 401 is one of the busiest and widest highway corridors in the world with over 500,000 cars and trucks using it daily.

This proposal for a tunnel is expected to be incredibly costly, with preliminary estimates ranging far above \$50 billion. This massive cost does not include the expected impacts on hundreds of thousands of Toronto residents, businesses, and industrial spaces spread across 15 of the City’s wards and hundreds of residential neighbourhoods. A tunnel would be disruptive, costly, and is not guaranteed to fix the congestion woes we are currently facing.

Instead, the City of Toronto and other municipalities in the region will be better served by a proven transit and congestion management solution used in over 30 countries for the last 60 years – a reliable high speed rail system.

High speed rail will help Toronto and Ontario reach our environmental targets, significantly reduce the travel time between Ontario's biggest cities, further integrate residential and business hubs across the Quebec City-Toronto corridor and allow Toronto to benefit from the thousands of permanent jobs created through transit expansion.

Canada is the only G7 nation that does not yet have a high-speed rail system. Ontario and the Greater Toronto Area deserves a second opinion before over \$50 billion dollars are spent to tunnel under the 401.

Background Information (City Council)

Member Motion MM22.8

(<https://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2024/mm/bgrd/backgroundfile-249147.pdf>)