

City of Toronto/TTC Expert Advisory Panel on Ontario-Toronto Realignment of Transit Responsibilities Review

Governance

Meeting Four – Minutes

July 23, 2019 – 4:30PM to 6:30PM
Munk School of Global Affairs & Public Policy
1 Devonshire Place, Room 208N, Toronto

Attendees

Tracey Cook (for Chris Murray)
Rick Leary
Enid Slack
Pedro Barata
Debbie Gillespie
Drew Fagan
Shirley Hoy
Andy Manahan
Joe Pennachetti
Shoshanna Saxe
Matti Siemiatycki
Patricia Wood

Absent

Joe Berridge
Steven Farber
Bill Robson
Hana Syed

Presentations

The Expert Advisory Panel heard introductory remarks from the City on transit governance, including the complexity of transit planning and delivery in the GTHA and the interrelationships between all major organizations involved in transit in the region. The presentation identified governance challenges in the current transit governance model from a City and TTC perspective, including local accountability on the Metrolinx Board, a need for a joint prioritization framework for decision-making on transit expansion projects, a need for a stable source of funding, and the ad-hoc nature of arrangements for transit expansion projects. The presentation also reiterated recently proposed changes through Bill 107, and City Council's Guiding Principles for the transit responsibilities review.

The Expert Advisory Panel also heard a presentation on international transit governance models from panel member Patricia Wood. The presentation focused on accountability within these governance systems, especially with respect to board representation. The presentation looked at transit governance models in Boston, Houston, Vancouver, Washington D.C., Barcelona, Paris, Los Angeles, Hamburg, Montreal, Chicago, London, and Tokyo.

Panel Discussion – Key Points

The Expert Advisory Panel discussed risks associated with the Province's Bill 107 legislation and regulation to upload expansion projects and identified potential measures that the City /

TTC could consider to ensure good governance in light of the proposed changes. The Panel also discussed a long-term vision for transit governance in Toronto and the GTHA. The following are the main themes, ideas, and comments from the panel's discussion. They do not necessarily reflect a consensus position from the panel.

Potential Risks from the Upload of Expansion Projects (Bill 107 and Regulations)

- The City could lose influence over important local planning functions such as transportation planning, land use planning, and development.
- Continued lack of funding could result in unmet state of good repair needs for the TTC.
- There is the risk that projects under discussion never get built. Not only are there risks for Toronto's transit system but also for public trust in the ability of governments to deliver transit.
- It was pointed out that the current process underway for Ontario Line lacks transparency, and open information sharing and consultation, which could lead to cost overruns and delays.
- Ad-hoc project prioritization and funding could continue rather than systematic planning for the region. A consequence of this could be that the region loses the opportunity to address ongoing governance challenges.

Proposed Changes/Measures to ensure Good Governance in light of Bill 107

- Establish a forum with the Province and representation from across the region to discuss transit planning and priorities.
- Several panel members agreed that ad-hoc, project-based funding and governance is problematic and that the City should push for a multi-partner, transparent, principles-based approach to transit planning.
- The City should be demanding transparency and information sharing. The public should be aware of transit plans that are under consideration, as well as the business cases and cost-benefit analyses associated with them.
- The City should push for transit planning from a user-centric perspective. This form of transit planning requires local partners at the table as well.
- The City needs to push for continued control over the rest of the transit system as well as land-use planning.
- The City should ask the Province to put a pause on the upload until there is a conversation about a longer-term, sustainable, governance structure.
- Prioritization of the Ontario Line/Relief Line is essential, as is continued advocacy for other priority projects, such as Eglinton East and the Waterfront LRT.
- Funding should be part of the conversation from the start. It is important to have a conversation about both stable, ongoing funding, and funding for interim projects that can relieve pressure on the system while transit lines get built.
- The City should push the Province to have a conversation about how transit expansion will be connected to broader policy areas affected by transit, such as housing, community infrastructure, and economic development. This conversation is particularly important if different orders of government are ultimately responsible for some of these functions.

Long-term Transit Governance Model for Toronto and GTHA

- In any new governance system, cities should maintain control of operators in their jurisdiction due to the need to be able to plan for local needs.
- Rethinking representation on transit boards is a big part of rethinking transit governance for the region.
- Several panel members agreed that the process of building a regional system should start with reforming Metrolinx, including greater local representation.
- Although some felt that political influence on Metrolinx needs to be reduced, it was also recognized that political accountability is essential if a regional transit authority is to have funding responsibility.
- A mayors' council could give overarching direction to transit in the region. The board of the transit agency could include technocrats and citizens. Broad representation in governing a regional transit system is essential.
- It was proposed that an advisory board for regional transit be created with other municipalities in the region as an interim step toward broader regional transit governance.
- There was some support for a two-tier transit governance authority for the GTHA. The upper-tier would be in charge of broader policy and planning, including for transit expansion, road and highway planning, broader mobility planning, land-use, and housing. The lower tier would be responsible for implementing plans, operations, and neighbourhood planning.
- A regional governance system could also split responsibilities based on modes. Commuter and metropolitan rail could be a regional responsibility while buses, bikes, and smaller-scale modes could remain at the local level.
- It was pointed out that, as the most experienced operator in the region, the TTC should not be buried in a regional model but rather be the backbone of it. If working toward a two-tier model, Metrolinx could be backbone of the upper tier, and the TTC could be the backbone of the lower tier.
- Competing systems may have benefits – cities could be inspired by successes and learn from others' mistakes.

Next Meeting

Thursday, August 22 – 4:30pm to 6:30pm
Munk School of Global Affairs & Public Policy
1 Devonshire Place, Room 208N, Toronto
Topic: Governance and Funding