



June 28, 2016

His Worship John Tory
Mayor, City of Toronto
100 Queen St. W.
City Hall, Second Floor, West
Toronto, ON M5H 2N2

RE: Developing Toronto's Transit Network Plan to 2031 – Prioritize the Relief Line

Dear Mayor Tory:

In May and June 2016, the Ontario Society of Professional Engineers (OSPE) was honoured to participate in the nine public consultations held by the City of Toronto regarding the future of the Relief Line, SmartTrack, the Waterfront Transit "Reset", and Scarborough Transit Planning. OSPE, the voice of the engineering profession in Ontario, commends the City of Toronto for its demonstrated commitment to transparent and collaborative public engagement on matters of transit planning and development.

These public meetings helped shape the report [Developing Toronto's Transit Network Plan to 2031](#), which will be considered by Toronto's Executive Committee today, June 28, and by City Council on July 12 and 13. The report offers a series of recommendations that help define the key projects that will form Toronto's transit network by 2031, and will identify the steps necessary to advance to the next phases of analysis and discussion with the Government of Ontario, Metrolinx, and the Toronto Transit Commission (TTC).

Considering the recommendations presented in this report, **OSPE believes it is critical that the City of Toronto prioritize the advancement of the Relief Line project ahead of all other recommended actions.** Only by advancing this project into its first phase of planning and environmental assessment will enough information be collected for engineers to adequately assess the best path forward for relieving transit congestion downtown.

With their votes, Council has the opportunity to transform the way people move throughout the region by providing much needed congestion relief to the Yonge subway line and improving mobility across the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area (GTHA). Although many of the projects recommended in the report have merit, the Relief Line is a critical transportation infrastructure project that is paramount to the continued prosperity and growth of Toronto and the surrounding area. As skilled professionals who understand how to execute outcomes-focused tasks at the lowest cost to the public, it is critical that engineers are involved in the continued planning, design, and ultimate completion of Toronto's transit projects.

The Challenge

The GTHA is experiencing unprecedented growth, but is increasingly constrained by a limited transportation network. Many people use transit to access downtown Toronto and other employment areas; however, supply has not kept up with demand. In particular, the Yonge subway line, which serves both local and regional trips, is over-crowded today and, even with committed improvements, is projected to be over-crowded in the future.

Countless studies and the 'Feeling Congested' consultations have illustrated the scope of the problem facing city officials. South of Bloor, the Yonge subway is currently operating at more than 11% above its capacity of 28,000 passengers per hour per direction (pphpd), and by 2031 passenger movements at Bloor-Yonge are estimated to increase 45% above current levels.

In that same time period, the population of Toronto's downtown core is expected to grow significantly. Estimates suggest 83% growth above current levels, which translates into an additional 130,000 people. Employment downtown will also grow by 28%, exceeding 400,000 workers by 2031. All told, by 2031, demand for downtown transit is expected to increase by 55%.

Today, new trains, ATC systems, the University-Spadina subway extension, and the implementation of Regional Express Rail are intended to both increase capacity and alleviate pressure on the Yonge subway line. These improvements are expected to improve capacity to 36,000 pphpd by 2021, though current peak ridership already exceeds 31,000 pphpd and is growing.

It is obvious that more must be done to take pressure off the Yonge subway line. Short and medium term considerations include fare integration, fare parity with TTC and GO, co-fare opportunities between GO/TTC/York, peak premiums (or off-peak discounts), improved TTC/GO connections, increased express bus routes (downtown), and improved transit priorities planning.

Much Needed Relief

Though improvements to existing transportation infrastructure and short and medium term initiatives buy the city valuable time for proper planning and consultation, Toronto must take immediate action to advance new transit projects that will enable the rapid movement of riders to the downtown core. It is OSPE's position that the Relief Line best addresses this need. The Relief Line will divert passengers from the Bloor-Danforth line before reaching the Bloor-Yonge or Bloor-St. George stations – two of the TTC's most congested areas. Furthermore, this project will provide routes into the downtown core from the east, thereby lessening Toronto's dependence on the Yonge-University line and providing much needed transit network flexibility in the event of service disruptions.

Beyond providing relief to the extreme overcrowding at Bloor-Yonge station, the Relief Line offers a number of other potential advantages:

- Creation of a multi-modal hub in the core
- Creation of an interchange at Nathan Phillips Square at City Hall
- Creation of a strong connection to the Financial District, including universities, hospitals, and public institutions
- No addition to already substantial pedestrian congestion at Union Station
- Shorter crossing of the Don River, which minimizes soil stabilization needs and results in relative cost savings versus other options
- Future development potential; optimization of line via extension to Sheppard Avenue

The Relief Line is a clear example of an evidence-based subway expansion project that will enhance local and regional economic growth and improve quality of life for riders. OSPE advocates for evidence-based decision making and correspondingly champions professional engineers as individuals who have the knowledge and skills necessary to conduct accurate simulations related to large infrastructure projects. Engineers assess challenges that involve complex sets of data and understand the overall systems integration required. It is with this in mind that OSPE offers the following recommendations.

OSPE’s Recommendations:

1. Council should authorize the Chief Planner and Executive Director, City Planning and the Chief Executive Officer, Toronto Transit Commission to work in partnership with Metrolinx to confirm station locations for optimal connections between the Relief Line and SmartTrack/Regional Express Rail, including future extensions of the Relief Line. Connection optimization will be more readily achieved if clarity regarding the core purpose(s) of the Relief Line is/are decided (i.e. line relief [rapid rider movement] meaning fewer stations, or local economic development meaning more stations).
2. Council should support commencing the Environmental Project Report (EPR) for the Relief Line and issue the Notice of Commencement for the Environmental Assessment (EA)/Transit Project Assessment Process (TPAP).

OSPE believes the Relief Line project is a key priority that Council must forward to the advanced planning, design, and EA/TPAP process for the first phase of the project. The first phase of the Relief Line, between Danforth and downtown, is a critical component of the long-term vision for the new subway line, which would extend north to Sheppard Avenue and west to connect to the Bloor subway line.

As the voice of Ontario’s engineering community, OSPE lends its support to Council to advance the development of the Relief Line project. OSPE is a non-profit membership organization that represents the interests of the engineering community in Ontario, and this letter stands as just one of many actions we have taken to encourage the City of Toronto to retain expert engineering input on the topic of transit infrastructure to guarantee short and long term transportation planning that best serves the region.

The know-how and ingenuity of the engineering community will help shape a well-planned and functional future for Ontario, ensuring that Toronto and the GTHA continue to grow, attract investment, and thrive.

Sincerely,



Sandro Perruzza
Chief Executive Officer
Ontario Society of Professional Engineers



Michael Monette, P.Eng., MBA
President and Chair
Ontario Society of Professional Engineers

cc: Andy Byford, CEO, Toronto Transit Commission
Bruce McCuaig, President and CEO, Metrolinx
Honourable Steven Del Duca, Minister of Transportation
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