

DON'T BE RAILOADED BY THE BLUE 22



Dear Friend and Neighbour along the Georgetown corridor:

Metrolinx, the newly created Ontario Crown Corporation, has now unveiled their proposal for a high speed, diesel driven Air-Rail Link (dubbed the Blue 22) that will run every **7.5 minutes** up and down the Georgetown Corridor. This polluting, downtown "**business class train**" is opposed in its present form by several community groups including the Weston Community Coalition, the Mount Dennis Community Association, and others throughout the city of Toronto who have been active in raising the questions concerning the viability of this project. Recently, we were successful in having a motion passed unanimously through Toronto City Council that articulated some of our concerns.

The City of Toronto Motion states in part:

- **Opposition to any road closures** along the route;
- Calls for **adding new stops along the route**, including Bloor Street, Weston and others along the route;
- Calls for the **system to be electrified** as opposed to the current proposal to use 55-year old diesel powered Budd rail cars;
- Calls for **public transit alternatives to be a component of any service improvements** rather than the current proposal by Metrolinx to build this transportation system with public money and then hand it over to a private, unregulated consortium.

As citizens who live and work in the City of Toronto, we feel that now is not the time to be privatizing the public transportation system. In this difficult economic climate, we should be expanding public transportation services, not handing them over to a private-for-profit operator like with the toll driven 407 Highway. **Our public tax dollars should not be used so that a private operator can charge an unregulated ticket price on this folly for many years to come.**

Please join us in demanding that Metrolinx build a public transportation system that we can all ride and all be proud of **and they were mandated to build.** Let's build one that is environmentally safe and accessible for future generations. With a currently estimated expenditure of \$500 million to \$800 million in taxpayer dollars, **let's tell Metrolinx to**

BUILD IT RIGHT THE FIRST TIME!

For more information, please visit www.westoncommunitycoalition.ca or call 416-241-5801 or 416-240-7836.

Below are a list of questions and answers to inform you of what we have been asking. We encourage you to ask these questions of Metrolinx either in person, by phone, email or fax.

Q. *What happened to the promise to 'study alternatives'?*

WCC Answer. The provincial government ordered Metrolinx to take over the EA, and to use the new 6 month process, which does not permit the study of alternatives. Metrolinx claims they are implementing all of the 'alternatives' except the subway. This is not true. There is no plan for an air rail link along the Lakeshore/427 route, for example.

Q. *I understand John Street will be the only street to close along the whole route. I think this will harm Weston. Can the EA overturn that decision?*

WCC Answer. The new process can look at socio-economic impacts, but there is no appeal if we don't like the conclusion. We can only appeal based on the 'natural environment' or Native Rights issues. It will not permit John St. to remain open, though an option for a hump bridge with a very steep climb is on the Metrolinx charts.

Q. *I understand this corridor is slated to become electric at some point in the future. Why not now?*

WCC Answer. The private operator will be buying the trains, and they will likely have at least a 50 year working life (Budd cars are 55 years old). If it is not electric from the start, there will be no reason to switch before these trains are worn out. Canada and Toronto should be leading the world in the elimination of fossil fuel technologies. **This will be the only diesel link directly into an airport in any major city in the world!**

Q. *I have heard we will have trains every 3 minutes? Isn't that an exaggeration?*

WCC Answer. There will be 140 Air-Rail Link trains over a 19 hour period (1140 minutes). The plan is also to expand the GO service to 15 minute service from Brampton, meaning another 136 trains. There will also be rush-hour service to Bolton by GO, another 10 trains. There will be 4 Via Rail trains, although the federal government is upgrading the lines west of Georgetown, so there may be many more. There are 30 Freight Trains each day. 1140 minutes divided by 320 means an average of one diesel train every 3.5 minutes, more frequently in rush hour. Each Freight has usually 3 diesel engines, GO and Via have one diesel engine, and each ARL 2 car set has 6 smaller diesel engines.

Q. *How much pollution is caused by these diesel trains? Can it be measured?*

WCC Answer. The EA will have to study the actual vehicles. However, the plan is to have an average of 20 people in each ARL vehicle. Greenhouse gas emissions will be roughly equal to those 20 people in individual cars to downtown. We could buy a lot of hybrid or electric taxis and buses with a billion dollars.

Q. *I hear we're getting a stop and a tunnel and a proper station. Isn't that good for Weston?*

WCC Answer. Yes. Although in the Metrolinx boards it is now listed as a 'proposed future station'. The station and large parking lot will be at the S-E corner of Lawrence and Weston road. The tunnel will be for a short part of Weston only, and will not include the CP tracks on the east side. The Blue 22 stop may not be for sure.

Q. *What about the connection to Woodbine? What's that all about?*

WCC Answer. Woodbine appeared as a stop in the original plan in 2004, then became an 'optional stop'. It is clearly back as a 'future' stop. The argument against stopping in residential communities was the extra time it took. No one lives at Woodbine, so clearly it's about delivering gamblers.

Q. *Why is the fare so high?*

WCC Answer. In 2003 consultants suggested a \$14 fare in order to ensure that the trains were not too crowded at rush hour. That translated to an average of 20 people per car. The private operator advised in 2005 that they would be charging \$20. Like the 407, the fare will be set to keep the trains at an average of 20 persons per railcar, so the business clientele will not find it too crowded in rush hour. It is also to maximize the profit of the private partner. We are afraid the fare will deter people from using it to the point the private operator will have the excuse to close the Weston stop.

Q. *I don't like the plan. What can I do about it?*

WCC Answer. Metrolinx claims they want to listen to all concerns and you should tell them your concerns. However they do not have to actually do anything about those concerns. This is, in our opinion, being directed by the government in Ontario. Your MPP is a member of that government, so you should tell your MPP in no uncertain terms what you think. The original concept was the brainchild of the federal government in 2003. Your MP is a member of the federal government. You should tell your MP in no uncertain terms what you think.

Q. *I understand the city has said there should be no roads closed and that the city wants the trains to be electric. Won't that mean anything?*

WCC Answer. We understand that the city has no actual power to change the plan, though as with the public, the city's concerns will be 'considered' in the EA.

