

Metrolinx is considering today a report on the development of a Prioritization Framework for decisions about future projects. Included in that framework is consultation with the public. Recently a set of public consultations took place which were lacking in both transparency and substance, and were confusing, contradictory, and misleading. While not required by the Environmental Assessment process 'per se', they are, as we understand it, an integral part of the development of the final shape of the project to be submitted for an EA in the very near future. As we understand it, the Ministry of Environment expects that there will be considerable pre-planning before the launch of the EA process, and we commend Metrolinx for attempting to consult with the public in that pre-planning exercise. However, as the Environmental Commissioner has stated,

"First, consultation is not simply telling people what you intend to do and, then, listening to their comments. Consultation begins with engaging all the parties that have an interest in the proposed project and determining to what degree they understand what the project is, the full range of its potential impacts and how it may be important to them.... The parties have to get a position where they all know the full implications of proposal before a meaningful dialogue can occur. The second crucial aspect of public consultation relates to the perceived sincerity of that dialogue....

To be legitimate, an approval process must be able to reach a decision not to proceed....Without that possibility, there is no value in consultation."

Some examples of the lack of transparency, and, we believe, deception in the recently completed process.

The public statements by Metrolinx were, quoting from your press backgrounder:

- Upgrading the GO Weston Stop to a full Weston GO Station for GO and Union-Pearson trains
- Maintaining Weston community connectivity by adding a GO rail tunnel in Weston...

The storyboards called the Weston GO station a 'proposed Future Weston Station' and at Eglinton Avenue a 'Future Eglinton Station' and at Woodbine a 'possible Future Woodbine station'. Very carefully chosen wording. Metrolinx representatives, when questioned about the different wording, actually were quite combative, and dismissed it as 'semantics'.

In fact, representatives of GO transit informed the public that the GO station in Weston would almost certainly close if a Hub were to be built at Eglinton. In addition the so-called tunnel is only through a very short piece of the community (approximately 300 metres). The tunnel does not include the GO Bolton train corridor through Weston. The public has been seriously misled by Metrolinx.

The EA will study the effects of a seven-fold increase in rail traffic in the corridor, from 50 to 350 diesel trains per day. Yet the consultation storyboard deliberately identified only 220 trains per day.

The Metrolinx representatives, including Infrastructure Ontario representatives could not answer questions regarding the negotiations between Infrastructure Ontario and SNC Lavalin, which is the real proponent of the Air-Rail-Link. When asked whether those negotiations could require electric rather than diesel trains, the answer was left vague and unclear. Yet the storyboards on display stated categorically that the Air-Link vehicles will be 'two car fully modernized rail passenger trains with stringent emission controls.' This seems to indicate that the decision has been made to buy diesel.

Metrolinx representatives suggested that the use of Tier 3 Diesel engines in the Air Rail Link would be a 90% reduction in harmful pollutants. In fact, Tier 3 is an interim standard, and provides only a 20-30% reduction from Tier 2. The Air-Rail-Link cars, if the presumption is correct that the intent is to use refurbished BUDD railcars, will emit approximately 6 times more 2.5 micron Particulate Matter, a seriously harmful pollutant, than the cars they take off the road.

Metrolinx representatives, when asked why the 'covered depressed corridor' in Weston could not be extended beyond Lawrence Avenue in order to keep John Street open, advised that the city of Toronto had refused permission to close Lawrence Avenue for that construction. So far as we can determine, the city was never asked.

Metrolinx representatives suggested that the cost of electrification of the Air-Rail-Link was prohibitively expensive (Billions of dollars was the figure given). No cost studies have been done, and our information suggests that the actual figure is in the range of \$20 Million.

Metrolinx representatives, when questioned about the possibility of expropriations for the project, particularly around Denison Avenue and in the north end of Weston, suggested that they would not be necessary. When pressed, the answer was that you hope that landowners will voluntarily sell their properties. Semantics indeed!

Metrolinx representatives stated that traffic studies have been done, and suggested that water table studies under the 'covered depressed corridor' in Weston have been undertaken. We could find no evidence of this, and none has so far been forthcoming from our questions.

Metrolinx representatives have stated that all the various alternatives which were to have been studied in the full EA will be implemented, except a subway. That is not the case. So far as we can determine, the only 'single technology' alternative being implemented is the Air-Rail-Link through Weston.

Some Metrolinx representatives have stated that the vehicles will be 'light rail' vehicles which in turn for reasons of safety require their own exclusive tracks. Other Metrolinx representatives have denied that this is the case.

Based on these misleading, erroneous and opaque pieces of information, it is our view that the consultation process must be repeated, with accuracy, transparency, and in the true spirit of consultation as is stated by the Environmental Commissioner.

We in Weston are very concerned that we will be subjected to the same 'bait and switch' Environmental Assessment process as happened to the poor merchants in Vancouver, where the EA promised a bored tunnel and afterward was changed to a cut and cover tunnel, thus closing Cambie street for 3 years. The reason for the switch was to build it in time for the Olympics.

We are afraid that the same ploys are being used here, to build this in time for a Pan Am Games bid. Promises of a tunnel, to be told later it's not possible for some geological reason. Promises of a station, to be told later it must be removed due to the Hub at Eglinton. Promises of 'future electrification', to be told later it won't apply to the Air-Rail-Link and that it's more important to electrify the Lakeshore corridor, despite the significantly lower number of trains.

You are proposing to create the busiest heavy rail corridor in the world, with diesel trains more frequent than the subway. That is a hugely significant environmental event. The residents along that corridor deserve the greatest degree of honesty, transparency and diligent, meaningful consultation. We deserve to understand that our ability to make changes to the project be real, be taken seriously, and that the time necessary to truly study and mitigate the impacts is not driven by an external agenda such as a sporting event.

Thank you for your attention,

Mike Sullivan
Chair
Weston Community Coalition

cc Laura Albanese MPP, York South-Weston
Dalton McGuinty, Premier
James Bradley, Minister of Transportation
John Gerretsen, Minister of the Environment
George Smitherman, Minister of Energy and Infrastructure
Gord Miller, Environmental Commissioner of Ontario