

Sept 6, 2006

Air Rail Link Update – Public meeting Wed Sept 13 – 6:30 PM Faith Sanctuary – 1901 Jane St.

When last we wrote to you (July 10) we had written to the minister of the Environment complaining about the quality and quantity of the 'consultation' GO Transit had provided in developing the Terms of Reference (TOR) for the upcoming Environmental Assessment. We asked her to appoint a mediator to try and get the parties talking again. Unfortunately, the Minister declined, stating that as no Terms of Reference had yet been filed, there was nothing for her to 'mediate'. So in order to fix problems with consultation to develop a Terms of Reference, we have to wait until it's filed. Seems a bit backwards to us, but we will try to comply with these regulations.

However, since complaining to the Minister, we have received responses to our questions, and had another Public Liaison Committee Meeting (August 31). We are not completely satisfied with the responses to our questions, so further complaints may be necessary. For example, GO intends to make 'trade-offs' to determine which environmental choices to make. We have not been able to get any indication of what value systems they intend to use to make these trade-offs. We guess that the final choices will be driven by cost, not environmental issues, but we can't tell from what they have provided as their terms of reference. In addition, they refuse to consider losses in property value as worthy of mitigation measures. So if you live by the tracks and the new services reduce your property by \$100,000, too bad for you. We won't know what the final words will be until we actually see the final version of the Terms of Reference, which won't be until it is actually filed with the Minister. GO Transit has not provided, nor will they provide, copies of draft documents with the changes they have agreed to make. We won't see any 'works in progress' until they actually file.

GO is planning a 'conclusion' to the aborted Faith Sanctuary meeting many of you attended in June. That meeting is next Wednesday evening, Sept 13, at the Faith Sanctuary, 1901 Jane St., starting at 6:30. Those who were in attendance will recall that there were far too many questions from the audience for GO to complete its presentation.

We still do not have any reply from either of our letters to Mayor David Miller (April 10 or May 26), nor to our letter to Rona Ambrose, Federal Minister of the Environment, complaining that \$33 Million of federal taxpayers' money was spent on the Air-Rail Link BEFORE the EA was completed, in violation of federal law. We did get a meeting with the new Provincial Minister of Transportation, Donna Cansfield. She listened carefully to our comments, and suggested that overall GTA transit planning may well be left to the new Greater Toronto Transit Agency (GTTA) which will be up and running next winter. One of the problems, we advised her, is that this EA points out the lack of visionary structural transit planning for the wider area, and for Toronto specifically. It seems that transit decisions are political not practical.

We will continue to keep you posted as developments occur. Please feel free to distribute this to friends and neighbours who don't get our e-mails. If anyone wishes to sign up for our e-mails, send them to the website (www.westoncommunitycoalition.ca) where there is a link to send us an e-mail address. As always as we get new or revised documents, we post them on the website. Our questions and comments on the Terms of Reference are there, as are GO Transit's answers. GO Transit has taken some of the documents we paid to get through Freedom of Information requests and posted them on their website (www.georgetownpearsonstudy.ca) . Interestingly, one of those documents (the Halcrow study of potential ridership of the Air Rail Link) had many pages censored by the federal Minister of transport. Even GO transit can't get those pages!

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Chair
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