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## We don't need transit turf war

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It should be no surprise to find concern periodically rising over some impending collision between the TTC, which operates Canada's largest commuter system (460 million riders last year), and Metrolinx, the agency created in 2006 to co-ordinate transportation planning throughout the Greater Toronto Area. Fortunately, for the sake of commuters in the GTA and beyond, an open confrontation between these agencies has so far been avoided. The situation needs to stay that way. The public can't afford a turf war between Ontario's transit heavyweights.

A draft report, leaked this week, suggests that the two agencies are set to clash over an Eglinton Ave. transit line, with Metrolinx supporting a full-blown subway on the route and the TTC preferring "light rail." Certain "transit advocates" and Toronto politicians seized on this report to bash Metrolinx for proposing an unaffordable plan.

But Metrolinx chair Rob MacIsaac explains that the report is out of date and that his agency and the TTC agree that ridership levels in the Eglinton area probably don't warrant a subway.

To be sure, there are still areas where Metrolinx and the TTC differ. "We're not in perfect alignment at the moment," MacIsaac says. "But I think we can get there."

Everyone who travels from one place to another within the Greater Toronto Area should hope MacIsaac is right. The region desperately needs a sweeping and well co-ordinated expansion of everything from highways to public transit to bike lanes. That's what Metrolinx is proposing in its regional transportation plan, which its board is to discuss at a special retreat today and tomorrow. The TTC also has a long-range vision, called Transit City. It would extend a network of light rail lines into every major area of Toronto. These two plans need to be seamlessly woven together.

That may be the easy part. Likely more difficult will be answering the question of how to pay for Metrolinx's plan. Early estimates have pegged the cost as high as \$55 billion, although MacIsaac says the final version won't be that expensive.

Options for raising necessary money include charging road tolls, imposing a sales tax, boosting vehicle registration fees or some combination of these and other charges. Reaching an effective agreement on that will be the ultimate test of whether our policy-makers have what it takes to steer transportation and public transit into the 21st century.