

Weston Community Coalition

Air Rail Link Update

Mike Sullivan

Dear Neighbours,

You do have influence! Almost 3000 of you attended GO Transit and SNC Lavalin's presentation at the Faith Sanctuary on April 28. Just being there helped. Many of you were able to ask questions of GO and SNC which helped focus the debate on the effects the proposed link will have on our community, our churches, our schools and our history.

As a result of seeing so many of you so determined, all of our politicians wrote letters on your behalf to various parties. City Council passed another motion on the subject. Finally Harindar Takhar, the Provincial Minister of Transportation, wrote directly to GO Transit urging them to 'bump up' the Environmental Assessment.

At the May 13 meeting of the GO Transit Board of Directors, two important things happened. First, SNC Lavalin voluntarily withdrew as the consultant for GO Transit on the Environmental Assessment. They did this because they hoped it would calm the citizens of Weston enough that a 'bump up' would not be necessary. Second, and most remarkably, GO Transit voluntarily 'bumped up' the Environmental Assessment to a Full Environmental Assessment.

What does all this mean?

It does not mean the plans for the Air Rail Link are dead. They are still very much alive, but they are significantly delayed, and significantly more costly. GO Transit will spend over \$1 million more on this assessment, and has already paid SNC Lavalin some \$250,000 for its work so far. The Full EA will add 1 to 1 ½ years to the time it takes to study the matter.

What happens next?

GO Transit must now develop formal 'terms of reference' for the ministry of the environment to begin the full EA. The Weston Community Coalition intends to demand to be part of the process of developing those 'terms of reference'. We have already been in touch with an environmental lawyer to assist us in that process. Once the minister accepts the 'terms of reference' a full study occurs. That study can include a referral to an Environmental Tribunal, which would have more powers, though that decision is at this point up to the minister herself.

What can you do?

Obviously public meetings are now put off somewhat. But the pressure should continue. You should phone or write to your MP, MPP, the mayor, the ministers, the premier and

the prime minister to express your concerns. Among the concerns of the Weston Community Coalition are the failure to study other options or methods, such as the 427 corridor or the Eglinton Subway or electrified trains, the 'public vs. private' transit issue (should the private sector be operating publicly funded transit?), the ownership of public transit, (should this be a TTC or GO project?), and whether this study should spark a full public discussion of the use of rail corridors throughout the GTA for public transit and bikeways.

For further info see our website: www.westoncommunitycoalition.ca