

November 17, 2017

Leslie Woo
Chief Planning Officer
Metrolinx
97 Front Street West,
Toronto, ON M5J 1E6

RE: *Transforming the Region: The Draft 2041 Regional Transportation Plan*

Dear Ms. Woo,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on Metrolinx's Draft 2041 Regional Transportation Plan. The comments contained within this letter build on the dialogue that we had with Metrolinx representatives at the Regional Stakeholder Forum held on October 25 in Toronto.

For more than a century, the Ontario Chamber of Commerce (OCC) has been the independent, non-partisan voice of Ontario business. Our mission is to support economic growth in Ontario by defending business priorities at Queen's Park on behalf of our network's diverse 60,000 members. We represent local chambers of commerce and boards of trade in over 135 communities across Ontario, steering public policy conversations provincially and within local communities.

The OCC applauds Metrolinx for developing a long-term regional transportation plan for the province of Ontario. Long-term planning is an essential component in ensuring that the movement of goods and people, and transportation planning at local, regional and provincial level are responsible and adaptable to the present and future needs of Ontarians.

The OCC would like to see the Draft Plan contain strong emphasis and focus on the concept of "movement of goods", which is an essential element that affects business and impacts Ontario's ability to remain competitive. In Southern Ontario, particularly in the GTHA, explosive suburban labour force in the goods movement corridors, coupled with inadequate investments in transportation infrastructure, has led to crippling congestion. The congestion has led to a significant drain on the economy and places Ontario businesses and municipalities at a competitive disadvantage to other regions in terms of attracting new investment.

To address unique regional issues, while regional transportation plans, such as The Big Move, have been developed, there is a lack of province wide focus. The OCC would like to see as part of the Draft Plan a greater emphasis on a province wide, long-term focus on how the movement of goods can be improved and facilitated. As trends in population growth, manufacturing activity, foreign trade and investment indicate, there is an expansion in the amount and value of goods transported across Ontario's highways. Additional transportation infrastructure capacity is

required to provide better links for goods movement between existing and new economic centres.

In regard to governance, in order to streamline transportation services and remove operational silos, the OCC would also propose that the Province establish a single transportation authority to serve the GTHA. Although the Draft Plan makes a mention of strengthening the regional transportation governance model to promote greater alignment between municipal, regional and provincial priorities, the OCC believes that this needs to be taken a step further.

A single transportation authority would operate to implement and develop transportation planning and infrastructure in a cost effective and timely manner. An ancillary benefit of a single transportation body would be fare integration and network connectivity; making transfers easy and efficient. Connectivity must not stop at any municipal boundary; rather it should be continuous throughout the GTHA and be based on an integrated fare system which incorporates “smart” card technology. A fully integrated fare system would make for a more customer-friendly, seamless and affordable transit network, and help alleviate wider-region traffic congestion and gridlock.

We encourage Metrolinx to continue to engage with the OCC and broader business community as it further refines the 2041 Draft Plan. Continued engagement with industry is essential in creating a system that helps the Province improve its transportation system while fostering the conditions necessary for economic growth and prosperity.

Sincerely,



Richard Koroscil
Interim President & CEO
Ontario Chamber of Commerce